



# HAPPENINGS

November 2021

Trail Conditions: [swedetowntrails.org](http://swedetowntrails.org) – (906) 337-1170 – [keweenawtrails.org](http://keweenawtrails.org)

## Greetings from Swedetown Trails Club!

We hope this Newsletter finds you healthy and ready to start your ski season! We want to provide you information behind some of the “Happenings” that took place over the past 6 months and that are currently underway as we enter snow season. The activities listed below could not have happened without tremendous volunteers and leadership, and for that we are very thankful. We are very happy with what has been accomplished and believe your experience at Swedetown will be better because of these changes. So, wax up those skis and get ready to visit Calumet! See you on the trails!

## Please Support Swedetown Trails on Giving Tuesday

Donations you make to Swedetown can be doubled this year as part of #GivingTuesday! During the 2021 Giving Tuesday initiative, Portage Health Foundation will match donations supporting Swedetown Trails Club. So, if you are able to make a donation to support Swedetown Trails this year, between now and November 30th is the time! You may donate online at: [phfgive.org/givingtuesday](http://phfgive.org/givingtuesday) or mail in the enclosed card.

The STC plans to use some of the donations from Giving Tuesday for land acquisition (please see “Trust Fund Grant to Benefit Swedetown Recreation Area”). A 25% match of local funds is required for the grant to purchase the land on which some of the trails are located. STC has a dedicated fund set aside, and there is still need for

donations to this fund. Your contribution can ensure areas we have been using are assured to be accessible for future generations.

STC will also use some of the funds raised on Giving Tuesday toward improving the driveway and enlarging the main parking lot.

We thank everyone who donated during Giving Tuesday a year ago. What incredible generosity - the trails received over \$23,000 in donations! Many of the changes you’re reading about in this newsletter are the result of donations from last year’s Giving Tuesday – as well as a trailer to haul equipment and a new drag for touch-up grooming to extend the ski season. We also used some of the funds to pay for land surveying needed for the DNR-supported land acquisition.

## Ski Trails

Many projects were completed on the ski trails over the spring and fall, thanks to volunteers who dedicated many hours of hard work. Thursday mornings from 9:00 am until noon were set aside for group trail work sessions, in addition to all the other volunteer time spent. Our projects focused on making the trails more skiable by fixing side to side camber issues, narrow spots, wet holes and improving intersections.

The various tasks that we accomplished include:

- Birch Trail: Fixed the off-camber uphill and rerouted the twisting downhill
- Powderhouse Trail:
  - Created a new start of trail at Valley and rerouted the end near Greenstone
  - Added two new uphill sections, to make the “most difficult” trail more challenging
  - Added high speed downhills with turns, net result is an additional ¼ km trail length



- Pine Ridge Trail: Fixed the awkward curve at the top and added a new 2-way section which will allow an alternate route from Greenstone back to the Chalet
- Valley Trail: Fixed two tight curves by adding fill, increasing radii of curves, improving sight lines and fixing off-camber side slopes
- Mama Bear Trail: A mud hole in the road was fixed by removing wet organic material and replacing it with 7 yards of 4" mine rock
- Greenstone Trail:
  - Covered two rut-filled regions with 6-12" of fill, which will help early and late season skiing
  - Extensive limb clearing was done to increase snow depth on 2 sections prone to low depth and early melting

## Summer Trails



The summer trails would neither exist nor be usable without the many volunteers who keep them cleaned up and repaired. Over 919 hours and \$3,000 were invested in the trail system in 2021. Much of the work involved smoothing out sections that had become rough over the past 20+ years of use, and 3 reroutes were designed to enhance the trails. Repairs were made on Applesauce, Two Hoots Too and the beginning of the Back Country Trail, while a section of Southside was also repaired, along with parts of Farmer's well. Sandy Bottom Bypass was also rerouted off the ski trail, and low spots on Burley were repaired. Bridges on Southside were also replaced. These are just a few of the 2021 trail improvements. There is still a lot of work to be done! Planning began for the proposed new Squirrely Trail, as well.

A bike repair station was installed at the chalet, complete with a concrete pad, and the groundwork for a bike wash station was laid. Plumbing will be installed for the 2022 season.

While riding or hiking, check out the new overlook on the Applesauce trail above the chalet! There are two benches, courtesy of Jim Hertel, where you can enjoy a great view of the Village of Calumet before continuing your trek. Also, a new ingress to the trail system from the Spruce Street Trailhead was created to give more immediate access to the single track from downtown Calumet. New map holders were also built, and maps were added for two-track users.

The Deer Chase and summer trails will be under new leadership in the coming years. We ask you to support Drew and Kim Wilson as they help lead the trails into the future. Please also consider adopting a section of trail to maintain next summer. It's a 15-20 hour annual investment of time that keeps the trails enjoyable for all who visit or use them on a regular basis. Remember that many hands make light work. The more trail elves, the fewer hours need to be invested by any individual.



*Greenstone Trail looking from start of Valley: Note the widened trail on the left and maintained bike trail*

- One section of snow fence was also added to help increase snow depth
- Changes to all trails included leveling, de-rocking, de-rooting, adding grass seed (including over 100 bales of hay) and maintaining or improving the bike trail surface at intersections



*Volunteers spreading hay on new trail section*

## Kids' Trail

We're adding a short section of groomed ski trail geared just for children, with some animal art and continual improvements planned to keep our trail system fun for all ages!



## Chalet

For this winter, we plan business as usual in the Chalet, with the upper-level lounge and membership sales counter open 7 days a week and staffed by many returning and some new volunteers. The lower level will open as soon as we start trail grooming. Opening day for the upper level will be in mid-December.



Although Swedetown Chalet usage was disrupted by the pandemic, the downtime was used productively to make numerous improvements. Inside the Chalet, restrooms have new floors, paint, and fixtures, a new security system was installed with high-definition cameras, and an upstairs door and window that had exceeded their useful life were replaced. Outside, the deck has fresh paint, nicer fencing has been installed, and new ski racks have been added under the deck. A big thank-you to Calumet Township for providing financial support for all these improvements, and to all the volunteers who helped make these things happen.

## Lights

For those who enjoy skiing in the evenings, or who just cannot get out on the trails during the daylight hours, a few improvements have been done to the lighting system. Two more of the old, inefficient sodium vapor lights have been replaced with LED units. This fixes a problem with one light cycling on and off intermittently, and another being too far from the trail to illuminate it effectively.



The other change we've made is to resurrect the lights on the old Pine Lane section of Powderhouse. The wiring was fixed in this section, and the lights have been moved to the proper side of the poles to match the skiers' direction of travel (which changed with the trail changes last year). Now evening skiers can choose another lighted section to complete their loop back to the Chalet.

## Full-Time Groomer Operator

Over time, it has become increasingly clear that the STC trail groomer positions need to move toward a more professional footing. This will help to improve grooming and equipment maintenance, lessen the load on volunteers, and increase safety by implementation of safety procedures and a safer working environment. We greatly value all of our groomer staff, and we want to make the job better for them. As stated elsewhere, wage increases are one part of that process.

Another move that we have made recently is to hire someone to act as the full-time groomer, as opposed to all

part-time groomers (who all have other full-time jobs), and a few volunteers.

After an extensive search and interview process, we hired **Nathan Fettig**, who has 7 years of experience operating heavy equipment, as well as ski trail grooming. Nathan has a degree from Gogebic Community College in Ski Area Management and has several National Park Service safety certifications, including Chain Saw Operation, Fall Protection, Construction Safety & Health, and Operational Leadership. He has spent several summers working for the National Park Service on Isle Royale, and at the Quincy unit of the Keweenaw National Park.

Please welcome Nathan to Swedetown if you see him out there on the snowmobile or the Husky!

Nathan joins our current fantastic team of groomers:

- Tom W, who will continue be our lead groomer, and will be leading the training of Nathan
- John G, who will continue to support grooming at least one day per week
- Ryan B and Dave B, who will continue to groom the snow bike trails

## Fuel Station

A new fuel station has been installed near the groomer barn, for the purpose of refueling grooming equipment, the club's tractor, and the mini-excavator. The project was determined to be a high priority for the following reasons:

- Increased safety
- Convenience – the new custom tank holds both diesel fuel and gasoline
- Costs



## Trail Etiquette in Soft Snow

As we head into snow season, we would like to remind trail users of the following rules:

Many people want to use the trails when the weather is warm, but using the soft trails can damage them or make them treacherous for other paying users. Please remember the following safety-related rules before proceeding to the trails:

1. Walking is not allowed on the snow-covered ski trails. If you want to go for a walk, please use the MUT (multi use trail) loops, located off Woodland Road. For

snowshoeing, please use the snowshoe trails or the MUT loops.

- **Footprints damage the groomed ski trail, which the club spends thousands of dollars each winter to maintain. If you walk on the ski trails in warm conditions, the divots freeze into the snow, which can lead to serious injuries to skiers.**

2. Dogs are not permitted on the snow-covered ski trails. Once again, the MUT loops are for this purpose. Dogs are also allowed on the snowshoe trail located at the M203 trailhead.
3. Snow bikes are permitted on the designated snow bike trails only. This is a safety issue, as well as trail grooming issue. The only exception to this is on Tuesdays after 6:00 pm, and then only if the ski trails are firm.
4. In soft conditions, skate skiers need to pay attention to the ruts they are leaving behind them. If your ruts are 1" or deeper in the snow, please leave and come back when it is firmer. The ruts make the conditions dangerous for other skiers once the snow refreezes. Also, ruts opposite to the posted trail direction make the downhills even more dangerous!
5. Please do not ski too soon after the groomer has been through! They give us the best snow conditions possible, but skiing before the snow has a chance to set up just spoils the surface for everyone else. Please choose alternate routes and allow 20-30 minutes for the trails to set up.

## Ski Trail Equipment Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance of our grooming equipment is necessary for extended life, reliable service, and high-quality trail conditions. Many of the club's rollers and drags are over 10 years old, and have not had extensive maintenance in several years. Additionally, annual Husky maintenance is required on the technically advanced servo-hydraulic, diesel-powered magic trail-making machine. STC personnel performed the annual Husky maintenance this



season, saving money on the travel costs of outside contractors.

We are also in the process of replacing the rollers on the roller drags, which are actually sections of 24" plastic road building culverts. Damaged and worn components on the drags, such as air springs, combing and snowmobile winch cables are also being replaced.

## Events

- The **2021 Great Bear Chase** was a huge success, with many pandemic-related changes taking place for the safety of both racers and volunteers. In-person numbers were capped at 550 this year, but a free virtual option was also available, for those who preferred not to travel or race in person.
- The **2021 Great Deer Chase** was also a success, following the pandemic-related cancellation in the previous year. The event drew 131 racers, with a new 10-mile race added this year. The GDC was featured on "Discovering" on Channel 6, in conjunction with the 2021 Pasty Fest! We look forward to many more years of Deer Chase success, with new race directors Drew and Kim Wilson taking over the reins from long-time director Marc Norton. Thanks to Marc for all his hard work over the years, building this great event into what it is today! Expect a few course changes in the future, but the Deer Chase will continue to be a family-oriented event, with lots of great single track!
- Set your 2022 calendar: Great Bear Chase on March 12th ([GreatBearChase.org](http://GreatBearChase.org)) and the Great Deer Chase the third Saturday in August ([GreatDeerChase.org](http://GreatDeerChase.org))

## Trust Fund Grant to Benefit Swedetown Recreation Area

The Club has been working with Calumet Township to expand the land area dedicated to recreational use at Swedetown, with support from a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant. The addition will include about 17 acres of hilly, wooded land that the scenic and challenging Birch Loop runs through, and 18 acres with 'the bowl', or race stadium area, with trails connecting to the Tamarack Loop. This parcel has space for race needs - a wide start area, timing booth, portable toilets and medical tent. It also provides a trail access point close to town.



This private land has been used for many years by permission of the landowners, who have been working with us through the long grant and land acquisition process to see their land permanently set aside for recreational use and public benefit. **Many steps are now complete, and the Club has started a fund to raise about \$23,000 in matching funds needed to secure \$66,000 from the MNRTF to complete the land purchases in 2022.** We are fortunate to have so much of the land our trails use dedicated to recreational use in perpetuity. Swedetown Recreation Area as we know it came about through MRNTF grants to Calumet Township in 1997 and 2007. We welcome and encourage your support of this current effort to expand on this legacy!

## Buckthorn Eradication Efforts

Invasive species eradication is a big job everywhere, and Swedetown is no exception. Glossy buckthorn is a particular problem for us. This is an ongoing project, with a lot of work involved. To help with this effort, the club purchased five Puller Bear weed wrenches in March to ensure we had adequate equipment during work bees. These work days started in April and continued into November.



Various methods of buckthorn control have been implemented. Stump treatment of herbicides was added as a tool for controlling the problem, and was used from late July into November. Repeated mowing also seems to be effective in slowing down the spread of buckthorn.

STC gratefully acknowledges the assistance from KISMA (Keweenaw Invasive Species Management Area) and the Forest Service during its June and July work days. Finlandia students also helped work on the sensitive bog area in October.

## Strategic Planning

The STC has been busy this year working on an updated comprehensive strategic plan. The club has been in existence for many years and has provided a fantastic facility and trail system for the community and region. Behind the scenes there are many decisions that go into where to put resources (labor and financial) to sustain and better the user experience. As with any organization, a



clear focus on what is important is required to maximize the precious resources. So, this year, we set off on just that – defining and agreeing upon the club’s focus.

We started by generating over 100 ideas! The ideas were grouped into a handful of categories (i.e. winter trails, summer trails, chalet, marketing/branding, etc.). Next the Board reviewed the ideas in detail, and within each category voted on which ideas were in line with our current vision and prioritized the execution accordingly. Some ideas were “just dos” and have been or will be completed soon. Other ideas will be incorporated into our planning for next year and years to come. We appreciate any feedback you may have to help us provide you with an experience that is exceptional! Please reach out to any board member to share your ideas.

## Annual Membership Rate Increase

After much consideration, Swedetown Trails Club has concluded that we must raise our annual membership rates by a small amount. The reasons for this are as follows:

- To enable the STC to pay our highly dedicated and skilled groomers a reasonable wage
- To help offset our increasing costs due to inflation
- To enable us to provide increased benefits to our members:
  - Improved quality of trails and grooming
  - Infrastructure improvements (signage, fuel station, parking lot and driveway, etc.)
  - Chalet improvements (bike repair station, bike wash station, bathroom improvements, etc.)

The details of the increase are:

- Individual annual membership has increased by \$10, from \$80 to \$90
- Family annual membership has increased by \$15, from \$120 to \$135
- The last increase was in 2013, and the new rate increase corresponds with inflation since 2013

To purchase a membership online please go to: [swedetowntrails.org/membership/](http://swedetowntrails.org/membership/)

# Wanted - New Board Members

Do you enjoy Nordic Skiing, Mountain Biking, Hiking, or just have extra time that you would like to invest into a Keweenaw gem? Look no further, a position on the Board of Swedetown Trails Club may be just for you. We are a fun, diverse group of individuals that have much in common and are searching for a few good people to join the team! If you are interested and would like to find out more information, please reach out to any Board Member (listed at the end of the newsletter).

## New Website Coming!

You heard it here first!! We are wrapping up work on a new website that will allow our visitors easier access to trail information on both desktop and mobile devices and enable visitors to easily purchase memberships to our trail system. Watch for this update, coming very soon!

## Just Some Cool Info

- The groomer loan was paid off in July 2021! Yahoo!!
- Thanks to Calumet Township, a new, easier snow bike trail will be available this season, at the Calumet Lions Park! It will follow the trail around Calumet Lake. This will help those who feel the Swedetown snow bike trails are just a bit too gnarly for them.
- Did you know that there are 26 km of daily groomed ski trails, 6 km of backcountry trails, 15 km of groomed snow bike trails, 6 km of snowshoe trails, 41 km of



summer bike trails and 4 km of multi-use trails at Swedetown? Now you know!! 😊

- Are you interested in volunteering? We have many volunteer opportunities available, including chalet, summer trail work and winter trail work! Come on out and lend a hand! Contact us by email at [volunteer@swedetowntrails.org](mailto:volunteer@swedetowntrails.org)

## Thank you Students!

Swedetown Trails Club is very grateful to a few student groups who rolled up their sleeves and helped us accomplish several projects! Two students from the Horizons Alternative High School, along with their advisor, spent a week working hard on the trails. Among other tasks, they painted the Chalet deck, entry, and steps, helped place new light poles, worked on the new single-track addition to the Fawn Chase trail, and worked on invasive species eradication. Groups from Finlandia University and Michigan Tech came out for several hours on Make a Difference Day, seeding and spreading hay on new trail sections, and clearing brush off the trails to help us get ready for snow. We deeply appreciate their hard work and positive attitudes!

## STC Board Members

Craig Hughes - President

Larry Zurawski - Vice-President

Jan Haase – Treasurer

Cynthia MacDonald – Secretary

Lois Blau, Mark Jindrich, Larry Staley, Pat Szubielak, Pat Todzydowski, Kim Wilson, Tom Wright

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