

River's Edge Trail

2023 YEAR-END LETTER



Greetings River's Edge Trail Supporters

2023 has been a busy year for River's Edge Trail! From large scale construction projects to stabilize the trail, to the installation of new original artworks, this year brings enhancements to many parts of the trail. In October, we welcomed the new Trails Coordinator, Olivia Hollis to the team. Olivia joins Great Falls Parks and Rec after working with the Conservation Corps for several years out of Missoula. Please join us in making Olivia feel welcome in Great Falls!

Much of our work in 2023 has been behind the scenes. We are busy making plans and seeking funding to repair and replace significant portions of the oldest segments of trail asphalt. Other efforts include mitigation of riverbank erosion, safety improvements and stewarding the long process of implementing the River Drive South trail realignment project. Over the next several years, we expect to move these projects forward, ensuring that the trail remains the crown jewel of our recreational community.

You rely on River's Edge Trail Foundation to identify funding opportunities and to partner with each of the agencies that manage sections of the trail. We rely on you to help us fund the many grants required to keep our trail in top shape.

Thank you for your support of River's Edge Trail. We couldn't do it without you!

River's Edge Trail Foundation Board

Bruce Pollington, President
Anders Blewett, Vice President
Debbie Corn, Treasurer
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Every dollar donated to the River's Edge Trail Foundation goes to our mission of promoting development, ensuring maintenance and encouraging utilization of the trail.

To donate to the Trail fill out and return the attached envelope or donate online at thetrail.org



Projects

A look back at what we accomplished with your support

WILBERT GRAF TRAIL SAFETY - PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Wilbert loved River's Edge Trail enough that he left a substantial gift to the Foundation in his will. We used that gift to establish a new fund titled The Wilbert Graf Trail Safety Fund. Funds will be restricted for improvements in safety along River's Edge Trail. This year the fund was used to place a much needed traffic signal at the trail crossing at River Drive North near the Skate Park. The new signals are solar powered. Trail users can push a button to activate flashing pedestrian crossing warning lights.



NORTH BANK STABILIZATION

Stabilization of the riverbank near Calumet is a two-phased project. Phase I was completed in the Spring. The City has released the second phase of the riverbank slumping and erosion mitigation project to contractors for bid proposals. With a favorable bid and contractor commitment in hand, Phase II will be completed next summer.



REPAIRING AND REPLACING ASPHALT

Great Falls Parks and Rec Department won a Federal Transportation Alternatives grant with matching funds provided by River's Edge Trail Foundation. The funds target the 30-year old asphalt trail between the Skate Park and Giant Springs Road. The segment from the Skate Park to the Ninth Street Underpass has degraded to the point that it must be removed and replaced with an all new asphalt trail. Work will begin next summer on this project.



ART ON THE TRAIL

The trail continues to be a haven of public art and 2023 was no different. A few highlights of artwork donated to the trail in 2023 include Saxophone, a memorial for Leroy "Bill" Larson and Iris, a nod to Great Falls' official flower since 1964 both by artist Alex Smithson. A sculpture designed by Sarah Justice and honoring past Athena Award winners is the most recent addition to West Bank Park.

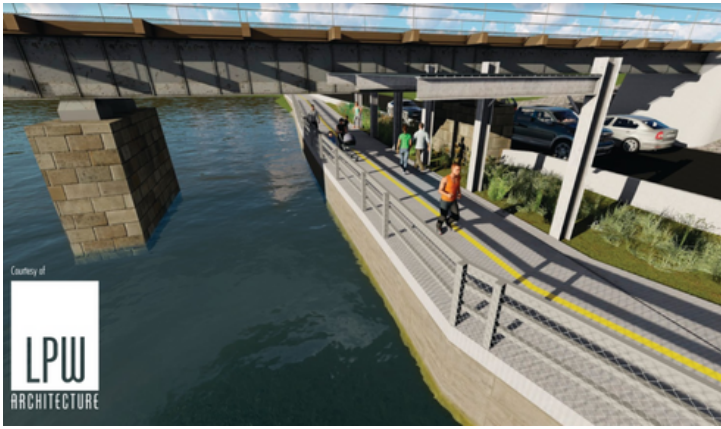
LUMINARIA WALK

We had a great turnout, beautiful weather and a gorgeous sunset for our annual free, family-friendly Luminaria Walk. Save the Date: Friday, August 16th for next year 's event



UPDATES AND MAINTENANCE

The Park and Recreation Trail crew continued their great work on trail maintenance including asphalt sealing, tree planting, signage, trash pick-up, and landscape maintenance.



RIVER DRIVE SOUTH REALIGNMENT UPDATE

The realignment will bring the trail downstream along the river from Broadwater Bay, under the BNSF rail bridge and through Tourist Park to rejoin existing trail near Central Avenue West Bridge. It will dramatically increase user safety by eliminating multiple crossings of active rail lines and busy roadways. Following unanimous City Commission approval, the proposal was forwarded to Montana Department of Transportation for construction. It is the most complex and expensive project we've undertaken but the safety and functionality improvements it will provide make the years long effort to construct it worth the wait.

WELCOME OLIVIA!

Please join us in welcoming our new Trails Coordinator for the City of Great Falls, Olivia Hollis.



Hello, my name is Olivia Hollis, and I am the new Trails Coordinator for the City of Great Falls. Just to very briefly introduce myself: my background is in volunteer management, park/museum interpretation, and most recently coordinating trail work for Montana Conservation Corps. Some of my priorities for the trail are to engage more volunteers and attract more users, and to create a comprehensive digital inventory of trail assets. I'm always happy to share more about my background and my hopes for this position, so please reach out if you'd like to chat. I hope to see you on the trail!
Olivia Hollis

CONTINUED PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN THE TRAIL

Previous Trail Coordinator, Steffen Janikula has transitioned from the City of Great Falls Park and Recreation to MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department. As Recreation Manager of Giant Springs State Park, he continues his involvement with River's Edge Trail, overseeing portions of the trail managed by Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Spring of 2023 saw the continued spirit of partnership flourish with the City of Great Falls, FWP, and the River's Edge Trail Foundation all contributing funds towards hosting a Montana Conservation Corp crew. The crew out of Helena conducted single track trail maintenance on both the South and North Shore trails as well as a tree planting project in Tourist Park and landscape work in Giant Springs State Park.





WAYS TO GET INVOLVED AND SUPPORT THE TRAIL



MEMORIALS IN THE CIRCLE OF GIVING

A memorial in the Circle of Giving includes a 4"x6" cast bronze marker for \$550.00. Larger marker sizes will be considered for approval through the Park and Recreation Department, call (406) 771-1265.

ENDOWMENTS

River's Edge Trail Foundation Endowment offers you the opportunity to support the trail for generations to come. RETF will accept and manage charitable gift annuities. Contact Debra Corn at dcorn@mtcpas.com

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS OF RECREATING ON THE TRAIL

Our mission includes increasing the utilization of the trail. We encourage you to share your photos and favorite places on the River's Edge Trail on your social channels. #riversedgetrail

LEAVE A REVIEW FOR THE TRAIL

Do you have a favorite stretch of the trail? Sections to visit for the best photo opportunities or to get out of the wind? Share your love of the trail with others by reviewing the River's Edge Trail on Google and Trip Advisor. Leaving a review helps others discover what a great resource we have right here in Great Falls!

USE THE CONTACT FORM TO LET US KNOW OF ISSUES

Our Trail Coordinator Olivia along with the Park and Rec Department does a fantastic job of maintaining the trail. But it is a big job! If you notice something that needs to be addressed, let us know with our Report a Problem form at thetrail.org/contact.



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thetrail.org

River's Edge Trail Foundation

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