

Kansas Trails Council

ESTABLISHED IN 1974

Volume XXXV, Issue 2

Newsletter

June 2009

Smoky Valley Ranch

The Nature Conservancy of Kansas hosted a trail dedication and open house May 30th at the Smoky Valley Ranch Preserve with over 60 guests in attendance. Most hiked the 1-mile loop on a warm day on the prairie. The 5-mile loop was hiked also, but by many fewer. Wildflowers were ample with a great show by the Desert Prince's Plume.



I'm still wrestling with interpretive signage that is cow proof. I've learned that any attempt to use traditional trail signs is doomed to failure. To a bovine, any object sticking out of the ground is a rubbing post, especially if it's novel. Trail building in wide-open prairie is very different than other locations where trees, brush, and lots of rocks determine much of the routing. Traffic and/or shading on a high-use trail will maintain the tread, whereas on a grassland with no overhead canopy and only light traffic, there will be no tread without use of herbicide. The greatest aspect of this type of management requires a minimal amount of time, chemicals and labor to produce the desired result.

The funding of this new trail in western Kansas was from an anonymous contribution to the Nature Conservancy. To whomever you are, thanks for a new trail in a beautiful part of the world.

Bob Nicholson

Cool Trail

It has turned really hot. The horses are hot. It is hot to hike. So some of us have discovered a new form of trail. Not new. Just new to us. We have taken up kayaking. We have been running the Blue River from Manhattan to St. George and have been exploring Tuttle Creek and its many coves. The wind was high yesterday and we were hopping white caps on the lake. Had quite an audience between the fisherman, ATV riders and motorcyclists on the Randolph Bridge waving.

I also found a site I want to take a picture. Under the Randolph Bridge looking at a 90 degree angle the underside of the bridge looks like a long tunnel disappearing into nowhere. On my living room wall is a picture of the top side of the same bridge disappearing into the fog. Quite a contrast.

I am sure this new phase will wear out a bit, but for now we are working on this new water TRAIL. I am looking for a way to get mileage points between boat ramps on the Blue River. If anyone has any suggestions let me know. I guess I can GPS it, but would like to know if we are running 6 miles or 20 before we set in.

Kayaks are not as expensive as I had imagined. You can get a nice beginner package shipped to your door from most sports stores. We started out with a Yak board because of its stability but have found the longer, narrower kayaks go faster (if you don't tip over).

Olivia Huddleston



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Trail News

Clinton Lake – North Shore Trails

Wet weather so far this year has made trail maintenance challenging. Trails are clear except for some needed clearing west of mile 7 on the blue trail. A bridge and trail reroute is being planned for a section of the white trail east of Mile 1.

The first two miles of the blue and white trails continue to be used heavily during wet conditions. As a result, there are many sections that will need repair when they dry out this summer and fall. We plan to address some of the wet trail problems by building boardwalks, bridges and other structures this fall. We will be able to fund this effort thanks to a generous donation by the Trail Nerds Association and the Kansas City Track Club. Thanks!!

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Dornwood Trail (Topeka)

Strong spring growth has made it a challenge keeping up with trimming the trails. Maintaining the trail will be the focus for most of the summer. No new projects until the cooler fall weather has arrived. For now the trails are clear and trimmed up. Traffic on the trails seems to be light due to above average wet conditions. Watch for ticks and mosquito's as you are out on the trails.

Tom Travis (tktravis6@yahoo.com)

Eagle Rock Bike Trail (Elk City Lake)

Due to wet weather the spring growth is yet to be trimmed. The State Park plans to clear the trails when time permits.

Rocky Shire (rockbev@cableone.net)

Editors Note: After many years of working on this trail Rocky is looking for a replacement trail coordinator. If you are interested or know of someone who would like to take this job, please contact Rocky at the above email address.

Fall River Lake Trails

Lots of activity at Fall River so far this spring and early summer on the trail project. The entire trail has been sprayed to manage vegetation, Mike Goodwin completing the first three miles plus. The remainder of the trail was sprayed in bits and pieces due to high water levels that closed a road. The lake level was back to normal by the first of June and I completed the spray project by the second weekend. Managing vegetation and growth of

brush over the ten mile trail will be much easier to control with machinery after this the second year of spraying.

Year-to-date we've worked nearly 270 hours on the Badger Creek Project. Our work day on May 15th had a turnout of 15 people who enjoyed the day despite a lengthy hike to the work site due to the high water and road closure. They built some ravine crossings, lopped and cleared brush and opened up around two miles of newly marked trail corridor. We are VERY close to having a completed loop that can be extended to a longer length in the future, crossing the creek with a second loop on the west hillside.

Having completed our 20% matching for the Recreational Trails Grant, we will be making equipment purchases through the second half of this year. I just completed the purchase of an enclosed trailer (see photo) to transport and store equipment and will be working to get it outfitted to secure equipment as it comes in.



Terry Plenert (PPLENERT@aol.com)

Ford County Lake

John Wentling and his crew are working on the recreational trail grant project at Ford County Lake, northeast of Dodge City. Initial equipment purchases have provided many of the tools needed for the first phase of work.

KU Field Station

Jonathan Gabler's Eagle Scout project added about 6/10 mile of new hiking trails at the KU Field Station on June 20. The trail forms a loop from the new overlook deck and connects with a trail that starts at the McColl Nature

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Reserve on the south and the planned ADA trail from the Rockefeller trailhead on the north.



After being rained out in April we were hoping for good weather on the June workday. The morning began with overcast skies and humid conditions, but a light rain began around lunchtime. As the last trail section was completed it began to rain harder and by the time we were loading tools into the trailer, it was an official deluge! Thanks to Jonathan's planning and the experienced trail crew from Lawrence Troop 59 we finished just in time.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Melvern City Trail

The trail opening on April 25th went well with between 300 and 400 people attending. The kiosk has been completed, a shelter constructed and bathrooms installed. We still need to build a bridge to connect rocky ridge. Moccasin trail is the only loop left to be laid out and constructed. We had a fun run on "Get Outdoors" day June 13 with 24 runners participating. The 5K trail run was the most popular with 17 runners.

Tim Gogolski (gogotaz17@hotmail.com)

Melvern Lake Five Star Mountain Bike Trails

Wet weather had lake water over the trail much of April and May. June finally found it dry enough to have a good ride. Trail has been mowed and some fallen trees removed. Several flowers are blooming making walks and rides very beautiful. Rain has kept the grass growing at a rapid and steady pace.

Tim Gogolski (gogotaz17@hotmail.com)

Perry Lake Bike Trails

By mid-June all the trail has been mowed that needs it. With frequent rains the re-growth is winning the battle to keep things in pristine order. Several weekends in a row have been wet keeping riders away which leaves the trail wanting for traffic to keep things beat down. Since we did not host a bike race this year the trail is only getting about half the usual maintenance.

Lyle Riedy (lriedy@usd345.com)

Perry Lake Hiking Trails

As of late May 2009, I think the Perry Hiking trail is looking good. The late winter and early spring workdays have cleared and blazed section 1 from Lakeside to Hoover Creek and section 3 westward a stretch from Kiowa Road. Section 2 had tree falls removed. Of course, by now our not-so-friendly lespedeza is growing again making the summer walks a bit more challenging in the not-so-open fields. We may be planning another mid-September mowing of the invaders to open the fields for autumn hikers.

Dave Brackey (dbrackey@tb-engr.com)

Tuttle Creek Trails

Regular maintenance is ongoing at Tuttle Creek Lake Trails. With 34+ miles to watch over, we find ourselves going back over places already cleared due to the high winds in the area.

The campgrounds are all in use as could be expected. It is interesting to see "big" campers using the primitive campsites that are free and in the area camp where there are hook-ups for electricity and water, I am seeing lots of tents. Is this a sign of the times?

I am always looking for persons who "like" to do trail maintenance. 785-382-6886.

Olivia Huddleston (opieh@bluevalley.net)

Wilson State Park Trails

This quarter marked the beginning of growing season maintenance, which means vegetation trying to take back the trail from riders. At Wilson, that means mostly grass. But not to be. I applied glyphosate using a 12-18" spray pattern in the center of the 5' wide mowed trail corridor to re-establish the tread we want. About half of that identical tread width sprayed last year had revegetated itself. I used

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a mechanical spraying unit, purchased (at cost) from Simpson Farm Enterprises in Hays. Tony's Aerial Spraying in Great Bend donated the glyphosate. Which reminds me that I need to do a better job of letting trail users know about businesses (and others) that voluntarily support the trail, thus I plan to post something to that effect on our trailhead kiosk. I also should post more about the total volunteer nature and effort of trail building and maintenance. About 25% of the trail is not accessible with an ATV, which requires the use of a backpack sprayer. I use a Stihl, which I have found to be an excellent unit. Stihl is a corporate sponsor of mountain biking.

The area that was burned by KDWP in March (about half of Wilson State Park) looks fantastic, with abundant growth of grasses and spectacular wildflowers. The intent of our prescribed burn was to kill the extremely invasive eastern red cedar, which was rapidly exterminating the native prairie grasses. As expected, the fire was very effective. In terms of trail maintenance, it has reduced the need to either trim or cut trees that were encroaching on the trail corridor. In terms of routing new trail, removal of the dry vegetation revealed the ground surface, making routing of a new trail a much easier task. I routed and flagged about 1 mile of new trail, which along with work over the summer, should be completed in November with a volunteer trail party event.

I've been posting frequent trail maintenance and condition updates on Twitter. It's easy – no more complicated than sending a text message on my cell phone. Check it out at <http://www.twitter.com/wspk> Interested individuals can tune in at that link to see my tweets or can subscribe to receive them as a text message via cell phone.

Bob Nicholson (rnicholson@fhsu.edu)

Mt. Mitchell Trails

On an unusually hot day in May, area volunteers organized by Michael Stubbs met to build trails at Mt. Mitchell, south of Wamego on Highway 99. Mt. Mitchell is owned by the Audubon Society and managed by Michael Stubbs and the Mt. Mitchell Prairie Guard, the KTC's newest affiliate member. The KTC provided tools and conducted a hands-on bench cutting workshop.

Overlooking the scenic Kaw River Valley, Mt. Mitchell has a rich history dating back to the 1850's, the Beecher Bible and Rifle Colony and the underground railroad. (www.audubonofkansas.org/MountMitchell/mountmitchell.html)



Mt. Mitchell Volunteers

Sedan Trails

On April 11, Nancy and Mike Goodwin joined area volunteers to complete a short nature trail at Sedan's New City Lake in south central Kansas. The Sedan Area Economic Development Association has joined the KTC as an Affiliate member. We would like to thank Sue Kill and Cindy Powell for making this trail development possible.

Lawrence: DeVictor Park Nature Trail

On May 9, Ryan Marienau completed his Eagle Scout project, a ½ mile nature trail in DeVictor Park on the west side of Lawrence. The KTC provided the power equipment, tools and trail building guidance for the project.



Ryan's Crew

This beautiful trail loop wanders along a rocky bluff amidst the purple Dames Rockets then follows a creek back to the trailhead. Natural benches of limestone and tree trunks were located along the trail. Ryan's nature trail will be a great resource for the nearby elementary school and the adjoining neighborhood.

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Election Ballots

Ballots have been mailed to members for the election of KTC Board members. Please let us know if you do not receive a ballot within the next week in case we do not have your current address. Completed ballots must be returned by August 1 in order to be counted.

Third Quarter 2009 KTC Board Meeting

The next KTC Board of Directors meeting will be held on August 9 at the Perry Lake State Park Office from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. Check the Meetings page on the KTC website (www.kansastrailscouncil.org) for directions. All KTC members are welcome, and encouraged, to attend the meeting. Bring a friend and find out what is happening on nearby trails!

New Members

We would like to welcome new KTC members: Bill Clinesmith, Stephanie Clinesmith and Joe Davis. Two new affiliate members have joined the KTC: Sedan Area Economic Development Association and Mt. Mitchell Prairie Guard. We appreciate your support of Kansas trails! The Trail Nerds Association and the KC Track Club continue to support our trail work through generous donations which are much appreciated.

If you have a favorite trail you would like to support we hope you will consider donating to the KTC Friends of the Trail program. Your tax deductible contribution will be used solely to support the trail(s) you select. The KTC is a non-profit, 501c3 organization. If you haven't renewed your membership for 2008, a membership form can be found on the KTC website at: www.kansastrailscouncil.org. We appreciate your continued support of Kansas Trails!