

Kansas Trails Council

ESTABLISHED IN 1974

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Newsletter

March 2014

Happy Birthday KTC!

This year, the Kansas Trails Council turns 40 and 2014 marks the 35th year of the publication of this newsletter. Our members who were there at the beginning, started out with sweat and determination and relatively few tools. We have all heard the stories of opening trail corridors with machetes and hand saws and bench cutting with picks and shovels. Over the years our hand tools like pulaskis and Mcleods and power equipment like chain saws, gas trimmers, brush cutters have all improved. And we've learned a thing or two about sustainable trail building.

The science of designing and building sustainable natural surface trails has also advanced greatly since our founding. Groups like the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) have developed and published what are widely accepted as best practices for building trails that withstand usage and the effects of Mother Nature.

Looking back at the accomplishments of our founders, we realize that many of the first trails in Kansas are still here being used by thousands of happy runners, hikers, bikers and equestrians. We have continued to expand and improve those original trails, but we recognize that we continue to benefit from the dedication and creativity of our early trail builder predecessors.

From a humble beginning, armed mostly with hand tools owned by each volunteer, the Kansas Trails Council now manages and builds trails all across the state. Today, we manage around 250 miles of trails and assist with trail maintenance and new trail construction on many more miles. We also teach people how to build trails.

Our regular membership is at an all-time high and we now represent around 4,000 trail supporters and volunteers through our affiliate member organizations. Our arsenal of tools and equipment now includes four fully stocked equipment trailers and the Trail in a Box which we loan to volunteer groups who want to build trails (see update in the Trail News section). Our big equipment includes a mini-excavator and a small skid-steer when we need to move serious dirt and rock. All of this enables the KTC to leverage the time contributed by our volunteers.

One example is our current trail maintenance process in the northeast part of the state. Only a few years ago, our

volunteers spent around 100 hours doing the first spring clearing of the 23 mile Clinton North Shore trails. This was mostly accomplished using hand tools like loppers and hand saws and gas trimmers. It was messy work especially when mulching the occasional poison ivy plants while trying not to step on snakes.

This approach took around 4 volunteer hours per mile just for the first spring cutting. And we repeated the process once or twice more during the growing season. Then we found that the walk behind brush cutter cut that time in half in areas where the terrain permitted access. So the 100 hours per cutting was reduced to 50 hours.

We then discovered that many trails, indeed most parks, used glyphosate (e.g. Roundup) to "trim" annual plant growth. This approach virtually eliminated the mechanical cutting process except for limited mid-season touch-ups and again cut the time in half to about 1 hour per mile.

Reflecting on our history it is also important to recognize that much of what the KTC has accomplished is a result of the generosity of many donors. We routinely receive contributions of money or materials which make it possible to leverage our volunteer's time and dedication. Our volunteers contribute around 4,000 hours of their time each year.

We have also been fortunate to forge many partnerships over the years with a variety of land managers and organizations. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT), the Westar Green Team and various US Army Corps of Engineers managers are among our most valued partners. We strive to make them proud of the trails we have developed and that we maintain on an ongoing basis. Likewise we appreciate their willingness to share their resources so we may build trails on public land.

While the KTC and its members, affiliates and volunteers have accomplished much in 4 decades, we are not complacent. We are still committed to improving and expanding trails across the State. For some of us the motivation is a sense of accomplishment. For others, it is a love for the outdoors and the natural environment. And for many of us "old-timers" it is for our kids and grandkids who will enjoy our trails for many years to come.

Michael Goodwin - Editor & KTC Board Member

Trail News

Clinton Lake – North Shore Trails

This winter the only activity seemed to be cutting the occasional fallen tree from the trail or waiting for the snow and ice to melt. This spring we plan several small projects including rerouting some short fall line trail sections for greater sustainability and re-blazing the trails. We're also considering an extension of some of the skills loop features.

Thanks to all of our regular trail watchers who regularly report downed trees and are always picking up and clearing the smaller debris from the trails. This team effort makes our job much, much easier!

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Eisenhower State Park – Crooked Knee Trail

Trail riders and equestrian campers can look forward to a new open-sided shelter house this summer at West Point Equestrian Camp at Eisenhower State Park, Melvern Lake. This shelter house was made possible through a matching grant and proceeds from the October 2013 ESP benefit trail ride.



Groundwork and a retaining wall make way for a new open-sided shelter at West Point Equestrian Camp

Volunteers will be trimming and mowing the trail and repainting trail markers in preparation for the 2014 riding season. Come out and enjoy the trails at Eisenhower State Park!

Jim Thomas (thomasjc68@gmail.com)

Fall River Lake Badger Creek Trail

Like most trails around the state the Badger Creek Trails had a lot of snow, ice and moisture this past winter keeping work and use to a minimum. The hillsides seep water for several weeks after the snow melts and without direct sunlight a lot of spots stay muddy for a long time. We managed to get several ride dates in this winter. Also had a couple of productive work days when we could work around the wettest winter in several years. We re-routed one black hole water crossing to a nice, totally dry ridge of rock that is perfect for cold weather keep-your-feet-dry ride or hike.



Before

One project checked off this year's list. The next project involved gathering a ton of rock and doing the traditional stone-pitching style of armoring. That project improved a technical, tight, have to get it just right or you're done climb to a much friendlier place that will be ride-able for most and a better experience overall. Project #2 completed. Plans in the future for other improvements in some tough spots.

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After

Terry Plenert (PPLENERT@aol.com)

Ford County Lake Trail – Dodge City

March 17, 2014, Ford County Lake Trail is in fantastic condition and completely open to ride, hike or just let your dog run while you enjoy the beauty of the area. Many locals have been riding the trail with scheduled rides on Wednesday night beginning at 6pm and Sunday afternoon at 2pm. There are early and late arrivals but we always manage to come together at some point on the trail. Things are beginning to green so we will be planning a work day, sometime within the next three weekends and will post the day and time on our Facebook page. We welcome comments on the page about interesting events or wildlife that you've seen while on the trail. Our Facebook page is Ford County Lake Trail. For additional information regarding the trail, I can be reached at jwentling@buygautos.com.

Hope to see you there soon.

John Wentling (jwentling@buygautos.com)

Perry Lake Bike Trails

Because of the winter conditions we experienced this year there was little or no trail work completed until mid-March. To date all the trails are cleared of fallen trees and branches and a little water bar/erosion control on Mad Mile is complete. March 14th the last area of snow drifts finally melted and rest of the trail thawed out enough to allow for the bike traffic to pack in a nice tread again. We had planned to do major re-routes on Blackfoot and Logan's to bypass the slump area, but this late in season that will most likely be pushed back until next fall.

Lyle Riedy (lriedy@usd345.com)

Perry Lake Hiking Trails

The winter / spring of 2014 saw two main areas of work. In late December, about three miles of Section 4 between the Ferguson Road trailhead and the Audubon area were cleared and blazed. Trail turns were better marked. Fields that may need the taller carsonite posts were noted. Then in March, a one-mile stretch of Section 2 between Mileposts 8 and 9 was mowed, lopped and blazed by a joint workgroup from KCOC and Sierra. That stretch was mostly in open fields that are being overrun with our friend -- the red cedar. This was one place where mowing lespedeza took a backseat effort-wise to trimming and removing the invasive trees. Succession is interesting to read about and see in time-lapse on video, but not so much when one needs a saw in one's hand.

A few short trips are contemplated in April to finish some blazing issues throughout the trail system.

Dave Brackey (dbrackey@att.net)

Topeka Trails

Dornwood Park Trails

We have had a couple of projects going on this winter at Dornwood. I have added a small section off of loop #1 adjacent to the grass field. It is a little tight and twisty. Also, I have added two more sets of drop-outs in the channel on the east side of the park (loop #2). Fun stuff!

The usual trail maintenance will be ongoing and I plan to do more spraying this spring. Future plans include having a work day to clean up the channel and rid it of the old tires scattered about.

In general the trail is in very good shape and is well used.

Trail News



MacLennan Park (Cedar Crest)

Our honeysuckle removal project proceeded in parallel with the Kaw River State Park project last fall. We should see the benefits of this project as the forest begins to grow this spring. The primary area for the project is east of the park road on the north side of the park. We have used a dual strategy of spraying with glyphosate last fall when all other plant foliage was dormant as well as mechanical cutting. Spraying was not feasible on some of the areas because the honeysuckle canopy was 20-25 feet high. The larger honeysuckle “trees” had to be cut to open the areas for eventual spraying this fall. We also have sprayed a 15 foot path on about 80% of the trails throughout the remainder of the park. This should greatly reduce the side encroachment this season. This will no doubt be a multi-season, perhaps ongoing, project with the ultimate goal of complete removal of this invasive non-native species.

We would also appreciate help from our trail watchers and friends regarding some unauthorized trail building. An unauthorized fall line trail was created last year going down the bluff from the double red blazed trail down to the lower red trail. This trail section descends a roughly 80% slope on extremely fluid soils. Less than 100 feet from this location, the entire bluff sloughed off several years ago, sending thousands of yards of dirt and numerous trees down the slope. This is a potentially dangerous trail that we have blocked numerous times only to have it repeatedly reopened.

If you know who the rogue trail builder is, please let us know. If you see anyone using the trail, please note the time and day and let us know. We're hopeful that we can educate whomever is responsible about sustainable trails as well as the danger this trail potentially poses.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Kaw River State Park Trails

The park is in the process of building new trailhead kiosks and working on trail maps and brochures. The honeysuckle removal project begun last fall should show some progress this spring as the forest understory begins to get nutrients and light that had previously been monopolized by this invasive species. This will undoubtedly be a multi-season project as some regrowth occurs, but it already looks more like a normal forest.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Russ Rupp (russ11@cox.net)

Trail News

Skyline Park

Last fall, we completed the south loop trail (green) which brings the total mileage to about 2 miles and completes the loop from the main trailhead.



The next section of trail (blue) is flagged in and ready for clearing this spring. This one-mile section is extremely overgrown with honeysuckle so much clearing will need to be done before getting the normal crews started working on the trail tread. This is best done with our bigger equipment, then followed by our regular trail crew for detail work. Our goal is to complete this new section this spring.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Tuttle Creek Trails

Randolph State Park

The Randolph State Park Trails are open and in use. Some more trimming will be needed when all the "green" gets going. With the wind we have been having, I imagine we will have more down limbs. I just hope no big trees. Been there done that this past winter.

Carnahan

We have been working on the old Carnahan to Garrison Trail. Parts are open, but it is still very rugged going. We have been looking into adding some new loops and miles in the Garrison Area which is the far north part. These will be accessible from the gravel roads and should not be affected by the fluctuating water on the lake. The older Garrison Loops are open and ready for use. Looking forward to a great summer of horseback riding and hiking.

Olivia Huddleston (riverrat@bluevalley.net)

Switchgrass Mountain Bike Trail (Wilson Lake)

January was a pretty good month for both riding and trail work. On a very nice Sunday early in the month, a group of 36 showed up for the first mountain bike race of the new year.



On a nice day in mid-January, with help of SK Carrell, I created a small reroute on one of the narrow exposures above the lake shore. Now riders have an alternative of the narrow exposure or continue to use it. I did discover however, that despite the warm weather, sections of the trail that had been well-shaded from the low winter sun were still frozen. After hacking at the

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frozen ground for a while with a pick, I decided I'd come back later after a thaw.

I've been working with a Boy Scout from Hays, Trey Lumpkins, whom I coached in building a bridge for the trail. After planning, building a model, gathering materials (all salvage except screws), we got it installed on a small drainage in the Birdy Loop on a warm sunny day in January. In March we went back and he applied the first



coating of water seal. He still needs to create a flood tether, but it might be a long time before it is needed (see comments below).



Not much happened on the trail in February and March. A few small snow events over the winter resulted in a few shady places that were soft on the warmer days. This trail

has remained rideable off and on for the entire winter. Unfortunately, the watershed is in need of much more precipitation. According to the USACE data, the most significant precipitation event was 0.37" on 10/20/13. The lake has dropped 6' in 2 years, which is very noticeable in the upper reaches of the shallow coves.

First quarter is always a good time of the year to work on equipment maintenance, such as replacing chainsaw chain, sharpening tools, changing oil, replacing worn parts, and redoing maps and signs. I am still hopeful as I continue to try to make an electronic counter for trail use adaptable for bicycling.

At the end of March, I'll be attending the Professional Trail Builders Association's Sustainable Trails Conference in Stonewall, WV. I am looking forward to learning lots of new trail stuff, drooling over all the new power trail building machinery, and meeting some folks who actually get paid to build trails!!

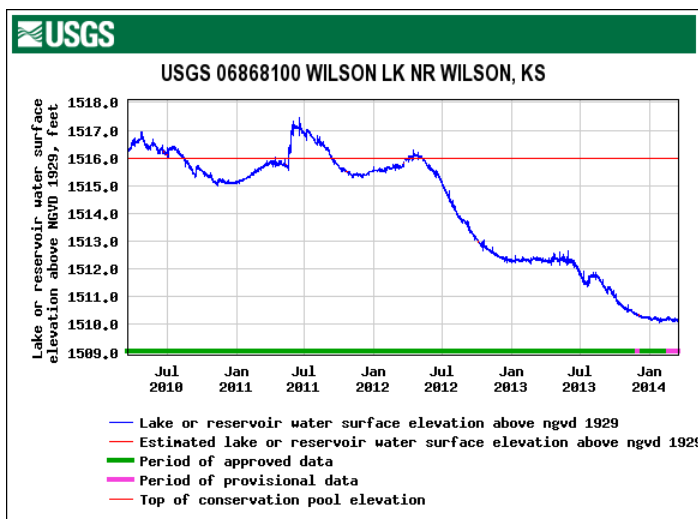
Bob Nicholson (bob.44.nicholson@gmail.com)

Trail in a Box Update

Trail in a Box spent the winter in either Ft. Leavenworth or Manhattan, building trails when weather permitted. One of our new affiliate members, Cultivate Fredonia, began work on the Fredonia South Mound trail in March. Trail in a Box is on location in Fredonia for three weekends through April 5. Terry Plenert assisted the Fredonia volunteer team this winter with trail design and training. Mike Goodwin worked onsite with the local crew on March 22, laying out and flagging the basic trail corridor and clearing one section of trail. The new trail will provide amazing views from 80 feet above the town as it wanders through huge rock slabs for an interesting geologic experience. The new trail is located on the south edge of town near the high school for easy access by area residents.

In mid-April, Trail in a Box will travel to Baldwin City to build a new trail on the west edge of Douglas County Lake. Mike Goodwin has been working with our newest affiliate member, Baldwin City Economic Development and representatives of the Lawrence Mountain Bike Club, to design the new trail and develop a trail construction plan. The new trail will be open to hikers, runners and bikers.

If you know about a group of volunteers who would like to build new trails, but don't have the equipment or perhaps the training, please let us know. Trail in a Box is available to any group wanting to build public access natural surface trails in Kansas. More information is posted on our website at: www.kansastrailscouncil.org





Happy Fredonia Trail Builders!

Supporting Kansas Trails

Welcome to our newest individual members: Brian Powers, Chris Rohrbach and Joe Witham and Jeff Gartin and our new affiliate member:

- Baldwin City Economic Development

Thank you for supporting Kansas Trails!

Would you like to support Kansas trails? Just make a donation to the KTC Friends of the Trail program. The KTC is a non-profit, 501c3 organization. While our on-line PayPal membership feature is easy to use, if you would rather send a check, please fill out and print the on-line membership form and mail it to KTC, PO Box 695, Topeka, KS 66601-0695.



Trail in a Box Delivered to Fredonia

Click here to join the KTC and support your favorite trails: <http://www.kansastrailscouncil.org/join/ktc-membership-sign-up/>