

Kansas Trails Council

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Newsletter

June 2011

Howard C. Reynolds

Nature Trail

(Sternberg Museum of Natural History – Hays)

March 21 – we burned most of the 20ish acres of the Park's property that was designated to include a new natural surface trail. This is on a State of Kansas property managed by Fort Hays State University. An EPA grant was obtained last year by FHSU and a local KSU watershed group, which included funds for, among other things, building a walking trail. KTC will receive a portion of the grant for providing volunteer expertise in designing and implementing the trail. As of mid-June it is nearly ready to go. James Leiker and I did most of the trail work.



The trail totals 1¾ mi. There is a large main loop of about a mile, with 3 shorter cutoff options. There are also 2 spur loops off the main. The project also includes trail logistic support, interpretive signage, a kiosk/gazebo, and an outdoor amphitheater. Formal dedication of the trail is scheduled for August 13, 0900 at the Museum. Contact the Sternberg for more information.

Timeline for new trail:

May 20 – the first flagging of the trail route
May 27 – more flagging and first actual clearing and construction in wooded areas
May 29 – first hand spraying of trail route - I sprayed an 18-20" swath on all non-wooded areas.
June 8 – more flagging
June 12 – sprayed last sections
June 13 – mowed previously sprayed swath using high wheel, walk behind string trimmer.
June 14 – more clearing in wooded areas

June 16 – more mowing of previously sprayed swaths

June 17 – more clearing and mowing

June 21 – last mowing of spraying of June 12



Every new trail build or rehab is a learning experience. A very painful lesson I learned here via induction (aka, the hard way) - do not power mow or power trim prickly pear cactus. There are buhzillions of areolar glochidia (micro spines) that will easily penetrate clothing, gloves, and skin. Cactus juice on the equipment is loaded with micro spines. Once spines are in the gloves – discard! If not, they will end up in your hands. Glochidia feature retrorse barbs (think fishing spear). If you have presbyopia, like most of us >50, carry with you a magnifier and tweezers. I concluded that this local variety of big rooted prickly pear (*Opuntia macrorhiza*) produces a super abundance of glochids. Unfortunately there are a lot of these lovely specimens on this route yet to be cleared. I will get my revenge!! Think propane and picloram.

I also learned from my local Stihl dealer that most regular gasoline has alcohol in it and accounts for lots of carburetor repairs on small gas engines, such as saws. Casey's label their alcohol-free pumps. Apparently alcohol labeling is voluntary in Kansas. My saw repair cost \$60. Yet another reason not to ferment corn.

Bob Nicholson (rnicholson@fhsu.edu)



Trail News

Clinton Lake – North Shore Trails

Recent rains have fueled typical summer growth, but the trails are in good condition. We lopped most of the western half of the trails on the June workday thanks to 11 dedicated volunteers. We also armored a short section of the blue trail near the swim beach.



Pitched Rock Armoring

We are planning a workday for July 14 with youth volunteers from the Roger Hill Volunteer Center. We'll be working on the shoreline trail to improve the sustainability of several sections near the water that are eroding from wave action when lake elevations are high.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Fall River Lake Trails

Over the winter and early spring we have cleared/opened another mile of new trail on the north hillside of the Badger Creek area at Fall River Lake. This section will extend to approximately a three mile loop to compliment the completed 4.8 mile loop on the opposite south hillside. I'm still scouting to find a way to connect the two to form a continuous looped trail and have several options to make that happen when the time comes. Both trails will ride/hike in either direction and both can be accessed from the paved Badger Creek Rd. Hope to have signs up to mark the trail heads before long as well.

Both the north and south trails had the expected growth explosion in late April and early May. One day you have a clear trail corridor and the next trip out poof, the trail has disappeared. I have given the backpack sprayer a thorough test drive and should see good results on the next visit. The north trail head has a fair amount of poison ivy that was sprayed with a Crossbow generic equivalent as well as some field blackberry. The blackberry is particularly difficult to target and has to be sprayed early before the higher temperatures set in for a good result. I'll

be monitoring that over the summer but feel confident that I have found the correct treatment, the long creepers have a tendency to try to saw your leg off so they have to go. Persistence seems to be the key to eliminate the plants where they pose a nuisance. Beyond that the only thing left to do right now is get out and use the trails as trails only improve with traffic.

On another note I've learned that the prairie Sunflower Hill area is now within the State Park boundary, the Deed has been transferred to the State Park. A prescribed burn project was completed this spring and that seems to have been very effective in cleaning out a lot of the invasive cedar trees and woody type of growth that has a tendency to take over without a regular burn plan.

Terry Plenert (PPLENERT@aol.com)

Ford County Lake

Shortly after the last newsletter, March 2011, our local crews spent over 80 man hours mowing and spraying for poison ivy. Most of our local workers have either been on Bike Across Kansas or Mountain and Road Racing which has left little time for trail maintenance. With the extreme heat and wind we have been experiencing in Southwest Kansas, the mountain biker and hiker count has been down from early spring. We expect the count to pick back up after the heavy poison ivy areas are reopened.

Our FACEBOOK page has been very beneficial in keeping local interest. We will continue to post trail conditions, areas that are reopened and scheduled rides. Find us on FACEBOOK at Ford County Lake Trail or you can reach me at jwentling@buyggautos.com.

John Wentling (jwentling@buyggautos.com)

Mt. Mitchell (South of Wamego)

This spring we worked with Michael Stubbs, manager of the Mt. Mitchell Heritage Prairie, to develop a trail section on the south side of Mt. Mitchell. The new section connected to the north trail near the west trailhead and the parking lot trailhead on the west making a complete loop trail in the park.

Mt. Mitchell is a prominent hilltop on a 50 acre site about three miles south of Wamego with panoramic views of the Kansas River Valley and the surrounding hills. Mt. Mitchell has a rich history involving the Beecher Bible and Rifle colony.

mountmitchellprairie.org/mitchellprairie/Home.html

Trail News



New South Trail section (Narrow White Line)

Mt. Mitchell Prairie Guard, the volunteer organization that maintains the park, is an affiliate member of the KTC. This new trail section was entirely a mechanized construction using the KTC's excavator and Ditch Witch loader. Michael Stubbs then "finished" the trail by mowing the corridor.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

Perry Lake Hiking Trails

Spring finally occurred at Perry Lake and we took advantage of it. In three trips, we re-blazed, cleared, and lopped section 4 from the Ferguson trailhead north to 82nd Street – a distance of 4.4 miles. Note the photo – don't the jackets make you wish for cooler weather? With the section 4 work, in conjunction with the same work done to section 3 last spring, all of the trail east of Ferguson Road is blazed, clear and open. Part of section 2 also got the re-blaze treatment this spring.



This fall it's back to section 1 and 2 to bring them up to date.

Dave Brackey (dbrackey@att.net)

Perry Lake Bike Trails

Growing conditions and timing have made the mowing and trimming process difficult this season. Trails have all been mowed once but many are needing another pass. 2 miles of trail in the camp area were completely eliminated and about 1/2 mile of trails on north end of system have been re-routed or closed to shorten the trail to a more manageable distance. It is a difficult decision to close awesome trail but all volunteers working on the trail voted unanimously to shorten the trail because of the amount of time available to keep trails in proper shape.

Lyle Riedy (lriedy@usd345.com)

Tuttle Creek Trails

We are in the process of maintaining the Carnahan Trail. The last two summers have been rough on the hill side. The high water has made it difficult to maintain as well as the fact the waves from the high water being at one level for so long did major damage to several spots where we didn't have much ground to use below the Corps Line. We have actually moved the trail down several feet and have moved "lots" of rocks to make what I like to call a "Sea Wall." Brush cutting is in progress to spruce to the area and make the trail more visible.

The Randolph State Park Trail is open and being used except for the two mile north loop, due to flood

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water/mud. Riders and hikers on that loop need to be attentive/

Olivia Huddleston (opieh@bluevalley.net)

Topeka Trails

Dornwood Trail

Dornwood is looking good! Trails are mowed and trimmed back. I have made some small re-routes due to erosion but nothing to major. We have been getting a lot of hikers and mountain bikers using this great nature trail.

Russ Rupp (russ11@cox.net)



Spring on Deer Creek

MacLennan Park (Cedar Crest) Trails

The trails are in great shape for summer. On our last workday we finished lopping on the west side of trails. Our dedicated volunteer, Jeff Hanson, has been clearing some of the invasive honeysuckle on the lower trail near the new park road.

Mike Goodwin (goodwinmw@cox.net)

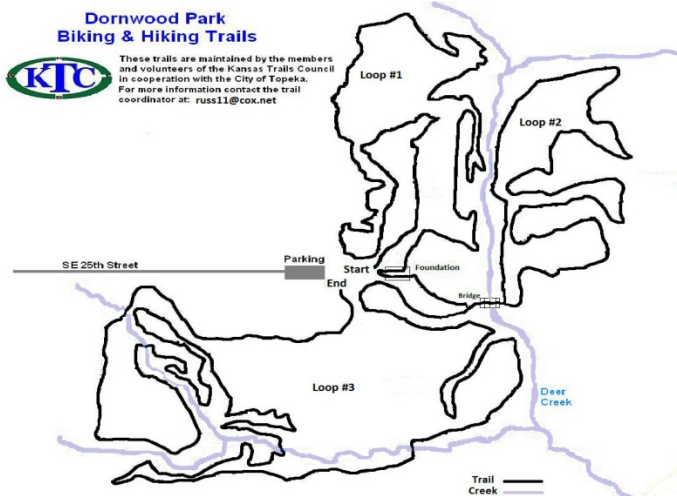
Wilson State Park – Switchgrass Trail

April

The initial version of the Brokebike Mountain loop was completed late in the month and was used in the first mountain bike race of the season. Racers were complimentary, although much of the loop was still quite soft at the time. Nice trail video at <http://vimeo.com/23182596>. New construction added 1.5 miles to the section, which produced a loop of 2 miles. I was able to complete it all by myself, with a few long days, burning the area (with help) on March 15, and the mechanical advantage. The new loop has lots of open flowing sections with a few rocky patches and spectacular exposures. The scenery is great with constant views of the lake, the marina, and Hell Creek Bridge.

Since April 4, I now have use of a camper situated in the park, which means I do not have to commute from Hays every day. It has been great and extremely beneficial for my trail work. Thank you DP!

On April 17th, the Switchgrass Trail was the venue for the 10k Hell^Creekon Heels – the first of 4 trail runs sponsored



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by the Hays Recreation Commission and the Hub Bicycle Shop in 2011. A few sections were sprayed April 20th, where annuals were growing mostly in low-lying areas with deeper, more fertile soils. Because of new construction on the trail, I had to move all the milestones and create 3 more. The total length of the Switchgrass Trail is now 21.6 miles.

May

The Brokebike Mountain loop was refined further. I spent a lot of time getting materials ready for the annual redo of the kiosk postings. Most all of the trail was sprayed using the atv unit to control vegetation on the tread. I use a single nozzle that covers about 18". I also sprayed the Smoky Valley Ranch Trail on May 3rd.



I began mowing the trail on May 12. It seems to be later each year, which I attribute to the use of chemical control of vegetation growth on the tread. Spraying is simply more efficient and produces a much more rideable trail. About 20% of the trail cannot be sprayed by ATV, hence I use a backpack sprayer with the same nozzle. But I can't use the same spray mix, because I can't hold the nozzle steady when I run 9 mph with 5 gallons on my back!

Through May 18, the Wilson area was quite dry for the year with only 1.3" accumulated. However within a short time in May, the trail's sustainability features were severely tested. Between May 19 and June 2, over 10½" fell. Two of those storms were 4 ½" and 3". Almost all the trail was affected to some degree, with a few instances requiring attention. Regardless of a few surprises, the trail was quite rideable. A few more places could still use some TLC.

June

Despite prior heavier rains, it seemed to me that the last storm of 1½" on June 2 caused the most severe trail erosion. It certainly was the worst for the vehicles, including my Chevy Silverado. This storm produced

abundant 2-3" hailstones, which damaged vegetation, roofs, vehicles, and recreational vehicles. The KTC cargo trailer lost most of its clearance lights, but otherwise fared pretty well.

Bob Nicholson (rnicholson@fhsu.edu)

Board Members

Board Positions 1 – 6 (2010 & 2011)

- 1 - Chris Kaegi-Stephens - Valley Center
- 2 - Jim Thomas - Lyndon
- 3- Doug Palen - Glen Elder
- 4 - Olivia Huddleston - Vermillion
- 5 - Neil Taylor - Lawrence
- 6 - Susan Haynes, Secretary - Shawnee

Board Positions 7 – 12 (2011 & 2012)

- 7 - John Wentling - Dodge City
- 8 - John Haynes - Shawnee
- 9 - Lyle Riedy, Vice President - Topeka
- 10 - Michael Goodwin, Treasurer - Topeka
- 11 - Bob Nicholson, President - Hays
- 12 - Terry Plenert - Wichita



2011 3rd Quarter Board Meeting

The third quarter KTC Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for sometime in August at a time and place yet to be decided. Due to schedule conflicts, the second quarter meeting was cancelled.

**Kansas Trails Council
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Supporting Kansas Trails

We would like to extend a special thanks to the Trail Nerds Association for their continuing support and generous contribution to the Clinton Lake North Shore Trail and the Perry Bike Trail. We would also like to thank Darryl Younger, Kyle and Lori Stone and Steven and Marilyn Errebo for their recent donations to support the Switchgrass trail at Wilson lake.

If you have a favorite trail you would like to support, we hope you will consider making a donation 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. We appreciate your continued support of Kansas Trails!



Cactus Flowers – Along Switchgrass Trail at Wilson Lake