

# Kansas Trails Council

ESTABLISHED IN 1974

Volume 40, Issue 3

Newsletter

Winter 2018

## Join us for *Sunflower State Trail Appreciation Day* at the Capitol on January 31st

The date is coming up fast, so check your calendar to see if you can join KTC and trail champions across the state for a day of trail promotion, education and advocacy at our state's capitol. Last year, lawmakers voted for two new state parks: the Flint Hills Trail (117-mile rail-trail from Osawatomie to Herrington) and Little Jerusalem Badlands in Logan County. In a time of significant budget concerns, this move represents an incredible endorsement to the positive role of public lands and trails. Let's thank our elected officials when they do something right, and then use this opportunity to share with them why trails matter to Kansas communities – whether for health, outdoor recreation, connections to nature and wildlife, economic development, tourism, quality of life, or all of the above!



**When:** Thursday, January 31 from 10am to 3pm

**Where:** 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Rotunda of state capitol – there will be space for some trail groups to set up displays/exhibits, and lunch for participants in the North Wing.

**Why:** if you've never been to the capitol or spoken to your elected official, this is a great introduction in a positive setting. This is still early enough in the session that lawmakers are in a "learning" frame of mind. The day will be structured to maximize this opportunity, including the chance to invite your own elected official to lunch and have a 1:1 conversation.

This is also prime networking time to meet other trail champions – many of whom you might not expect. Many economic development councils, chambers, health departments and coalitions, and small business owners realize the value of trails. Come share ideas, make connections, and get recharged.

**How:** If you are interested in participating, reach out to Mike Goodwin ([goodwinmw@gmail.com](mailto:goodwinmw@gmail.com)) or Elizabeth Stewart Burger at the Sunflower Foundation ([eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org)). They can provide more details.

**Plus:** Mileage reimbursement is available for those traveling from outside Topeka, and lunch will be provided to trail champion participants. You don't need to attend the entire day to participate. Contact Elizabeth at Sunflower for details on reimbursement, etc.

**Finally:** There will be an epic **Make-Your-Own Trail Mix Bar** set up all day to "attract" lawmakers and others to the exhibits, maps and conversations with trail champions.



## Give the (Belated) Gift of Trails...

The holidays are over, but meaningful gifts that support good causes never go out of season. Make sure you continue to give the gift of trails to yourself by renewing your KTC membership, if you haven't done so already. Renewing or joining online takes seconds – all the information can be found here <https://www.kansastrailsCouncil.org/join/>

You can also give the gift of membership to someone in your life whom you know values trails and the outdoors. Make sure you tell them about [getoutdoorskansas](http://getoutdoorskansas.org) and its awesome trail finder program, especially via the free app.

## Trail Reports for Fall 2018

*(Quarterly reports sent in by trail managers for KTC-managed trails across the state)*

### Clinton Lake – North Shore Trails (Douglas Co)

We had a number of trees down this fall but overall not much maintenance has been needed. We appreciate all of our trail watchers who are out there reporting down trees and removing the smaller stuff that falls on the trails. You make our work much easier!

We rebuilt the bridge on the Blue Trail at Mile 6.6 on Dec. 15 with a great crew (Jim, Mike, Michael, Chip and Kim). The before and after photos show the old and new bridge as well as the intrepid crew. Thanks to Jim Day for suggesting the project and for all the lumber preparation. Our continued thanks to Westar Green Team for the recycled lumber. In just 2 hours, we replaced the old 13 foot bridge with the new 16 foot bridge that should last for many years.



**Mike Goodwin** ([goodwinmw@gmail.com](mailto:goodwinmw@gmail.com))

### South Shore Trails at Clinton Lake (Douglas Co)

The Sunflower Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Kansas put almost 500 hours of volunteer labor into keeping the equestrian and hiking trails at Clinton Lake South Shore Trails cleared. Thanks to these hardworking volunteers the trails are in great shape right now. However, harsh weather conditions – high winds, lots of moisture, no moisture, etc – might change those conditions quickly. We realized recently that the average age of our volunteers is 69! We would love to get some new faces in the mix, helping to clear and maintain the trails we all use. If you love trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding, whatever reason... and you like outdoor physical work with defined goals... please consider volunteering on your local trails. If you're not sure who to contact, check the trail's Facebook page, or pose the question on the [Kansas Trails Council Facebook page](#). Thank you!

**Diana Skinner** ([Dgskinner85@gmail.com](mailto:Dgskinner85@gmail.com))

### Badger Creek Trails at Fall River Lake (Greenwood Co, 70 mi east of Wichita)



The Badger Creek Trail can be difficult to navigate when the leaves fall and cover all of the loose rock "mulch" that is a pretty constant feature of the trail. Because of that, we have used backpack blowers to move the leaves and keep the trail tread clear through the winter months. While not ideal from a freeze/thaw standpoint, the rocky terrain makes for a lot of surprises with loose and rolling rocks buried in the leaf litter. A couple of weeks ago that project was completed. Luckily it was a quiet day and no Bow hunters were in place; we always try to play nice with all of the trail users. With some recent light snows, the trail was mostly good with a few boggy spots. Without sun on the ground that is pretty normal for this time of year. The trail is in good shape and no re-routes are needed. I have plans to armor a couple of places to help sustain the original routes.

I was lucky enough to hit the trail recently for a hike with just the conditions to find a few "Frost Flowers" on a short section of the trail (*photo at left*).



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Seldom seen, they seem to appear with just the right kind of temperatures, soil moisture and location. First seen, they look like someone shredded some white paper but looking closer these miniature ice flowers form from some particular type of weed stalk and each ice flowers shape is different. It was a nice treat and topped off a good walk in the trees. I seldom hit just the right conditions to see the “flowers” and with a little change of temperature, sunlight or wind they are gone. Always something new to see on the Badger Creek Trails.

**Terry Plenert** ([PPLENERT@aol.com](mailto:PPLENERT@aol.com))



### **Crooked Knee Trails at Eisenhower State Park (Osage Co)**

2018 has been a busy, productive year for the West Point Equestrian Campground and the Crooked Knee Trails at Eisenhower State Park, Melvern Lake. Despite the cold, wet forecast, the annual fall benefit ride, October 12-14, raised \$3,489 that will be used to improve the equestrian camp and trails at the park. This ride continues to be a successful event due to the efforts and contributions of the Friends of ESP, the park staff, and countless other volunteers. We welcomed Linda Craghead, interim Secretary of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWPT), and she joined us for the Saturday ride, chili feed, and live auction. We were able to show Linda equestrians' commitment to supporting and improving public trails in Kansas. She continues to be impressed and appreciative of volunteer efforts across the state in support of public lands and trails. Mike Pierce, photographer with KDWPT, took several photos which can be viewed on the [Eisenhower State Park Facebook page](#).

*Below on left:* More than 40 riders braved the wet chill to enjoy time on the trail for a 4-hour Saturday ride.

*Below on right:* KDWPT interim Secretary Linda Craghead and ESP Ranger Ted Craig also joined.



Winter projects will include adding gravel screenings to the horse pens and building two additional 20'x20' pipe pens at the West Point Equestrian Campground. The addition of two pens will make pens available for each of the cabins and yurts. Trail maintenance and clearing will continue through the winter in preparation for another riding season at ESP.

**Jim Thomas** ([jimcherylthomas@gmail.com](mailto:jimcherylthomas@gmail.com))

*Photo at left:* Park staff, Friends of ESP, and numerous volunteers contribute to the success of the annual fall benefit ride. Thank you everyone!

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### MacLennan Park – Cedar Crest (Topeka)

This winter, our main effort involves cutting the occasional tree that has fallen across a trail. Much thanks to our regular trail watchers who report down trees and other issues needing attention. It makes our job so much easier!

We replaced one missing tread board on a bridge on the Blue Trail. When temperatures permit, we'll be replacing one of the mid-trail map signs on the Red Trail that had been vandalized many times and was recently stolen. Despicable as this is, considering the 180 lbs of concrete attached to the sign, it must have been a herculean effort to remove it! We would appreciate hearing from our many dedicated trail users if they happen to observe this in process in the future. If only we could channel such energy to productive trail work!

**Mike Goodwin** ([goodwinmw@gmail.com](mailto:goodwinmw@gmail.com))

### Skyline Park (Topeka)

This fall the trails have often been too wet to use or work on due to rain, snow and the freeze thaw cycle. While frozen, the trails are great, but by mid-morning as ground temperatures rise above freezing the surface becomes "greasy" and any traffic leaves ruts and tracks. We're fortunate that most trail users recognize these conditions and use the trails only when they are dry or frozen.

We began clearing the invasive honeysuckle in the middle of the Sunset Loop on December 8 with a great trail crew (see photo at right). The honeysuckle is so dense in this area that it is virtually impossible to lay out a new trail until it is cleared. Several more clearing workdays will open the area so that we can begin trail design work then construction.

**Mike Goodwin** ([goodwinmw@gmail.com](mailto:goodwinmw@gmail.com))



### Dornwood Trails (Topeka)

Make it a point to come visit Dornwood Trails this winter – they are in good shape! We recently blew the leaves off and re-blazed the trail markers with the standard colors that Shawnee County Parks and Recreation are using. Based on the new flags that have cropped up, it appears that trail blazing for the paved trail project has started – this path will pass through Dornwood and across the bridge. More on that at a later date.

Shawnee Co. Parks & Rec also has plans for a new kiosk at the trail entrance. A lot of people still don't know this gorgeous oasis of nature (see photo at left) exists on the east side of Topeka – you can find more information at [GetOutdoorsKansas](http://GetOutdoorsKansas.com) (website or app) or the [Dornwood Trails Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/DornwoodTrails).

**Russ Rupp** ([rrupp201@gmail.com](mailto:rrupp201@gmail.com))



## Perry Lake Hiking Trail (Jefferson Co)

It was the best of times and it was, well, still almost the best of times. Yes, autumn at Perry Lake was very good for the hiking trail. First, we had the usual small one and two-person efforts to mow, spray (yeah!), clear deadfall, trim encroaching brush and roses, and hike the trail to check its overall status. All good efforts to keep problem areas in check.

But the second part worked better than we could have anticipated. Our usual one-day effort morphed into a Saturday – Sunday project with an overnight campout in Longview in between. We gathered 23 volunteers (5 trail watchers and 18 combined from DGA, KCOC, Sierra, and meetups) through sending several club and meetup announcements. Not all spent the entire time, as Sat. was the preferred day; only five camped overnight. But that was enough to finish all of our tasks.

Our main goal Saturday was to tackle the re-route near Apple Valley that had been scouted earlier this year – see previous KTC newsletter. It was to follow the ridge near Apple Valley, give overviews of the valley and lake, and eliminate a poor creek crossing and often leaf-concealed set of switchbacks. With ideas and tools from KTC (thanks Mike for the idea to blow the leaves off the proposed trail to make it easier for the rest of the crew to follow along) we split into several teams to clear and benchcut. A few capable volunteers lead each team. We completed the reroute late that afternoon. We all had a sense of real accomplishment as walked the new route back to our vehicles.

The overnight was cool (upper twenty's) but we stayed warm enough after a calorie-laden dinner at a local bar and grill. No sense getting too far from civilization.

Sunday was a short day to mow a reroute near the Corp's wetlands. One of the levees provided a perfect route for the new trail – replacing a long weed-choked loop with a shorter, clearer, visual connection.

Not sure how we can top that in 2019 – although organization and multiple notices to various meetups may be a start. Hmmm, sounds like good management for any project. One thought for next year is improving / replacing the aging signs along the trail. The trail has changed a bit since they were first placed - better trailheads, reroutes, etc. – and the trail users have changed as well – trail runners, a few overnight campers. Not all hard-core hikers. The times... they are a changing.

**Dave Brackey** ([dbrackey@att.net](mailto:dbrackey@att.net))



*The weather was chilly but these trail volunteers were on fire! #Willworkforfood*



### **Perry Lake Biking Trail (Jefferson Co)**

With what seems to be an unusually early start to winter, we quickly moved into off-season riding and trail work. The trails are clear from any deadfall branches and major leaf bowing is complete. We will address specific leaf build up as it occurs. Currently we have no specific plans to add more trail but have considered doing a couple of small re-routes to better use some terrain. Winter plans are to freshen up trail markings, address any erosion or tread damage issues, and prepare for what may be a long cold riding season... or not, given the erratic nature of Kansas weather!

**Lyle Reidy** ([lriedy@usd345.com](mailto:lriedy@usd345.com))

### **Switchgrass Trails at Wilson State Park (border of Russell & Lincoln Co)**

It has been a quiet quarter for the Switchgrass Trail, but volunteers and I still did manage to get a few items done. Some of the mild temperatures in the fall and early winter kept the Switchgrass Trail busy! We are still seeing lots of folks signing in for bike rides and hikes. In October a mountain bike race was hosted on the Switchgrass trail.

In September, Ron Leiker, a Switchgrass trail rider enthusiast hosted The Stone Post road bike tour. All proceeds from the ride were donated to the Switchgrass trail maintenance funds. Several hearty souls came out to brave the weather and pedaled their way along Highway 232 to view all of the hand carved stone posts between I-70 and Lucas. Thank you all for participating and donating!



The reroute that volunteers helped build in April has burned in nicely; we have at least one more re-route to work on come springtime. This re-route will add in a nice sweeping curve around a hill and will take out a high erosion slope.

Still on the work list for the new equipment storage unit: get electricity into it! The manager of Wilson State Park has volunteered to run their trencher to put in a line from their shop over to the storage unit. I just need to sort out the logistics with their electrical provider on wire, breakers, disconnects and other technical details. With so much mowing and trimming to do over the summer, this project kinda fell to the back burner!

In October and November, I set a couple workdays for tree trimming and string trimming along designated parts of the trail. Having a couple volunteers on each trimming day was fantastic!! We completed all of the string trimming in one day!! There are still some sections to work on tree cutting, so be ready for some more volunteer work days before the growing season begins!

After a little break for the holidays and a break to recharge my trail maintenance spirit, it is time to hope for nice weather on the weekends so I can get back out on the Switchgrass trail to take care of the winter trail work projects list. As always, I cannot express enough gratitude for all of you that donate your time volunteering, your funds, and your skills!!

**Sara Kay Carrell** ([wildmountainhoney\\_sk@yahoo.com](mailto:wildmountainhoney_sk@yahoo.com))



## Ford County Lake Trails (near Dodge City)



The Ford County lake trail is in fine condition. We had a lot of moisture in November, rendering some parts of the trail too wet to ride, but most of the trail is dried up enough to ride into the new year. Even with rain or snow, there are six miles of dry trail that are packed and clear and ideal for fast single track riding. We ride each Sunday at 2:00 pm except for the holidays so everyone is invited to drive or ride to the trail head and mount up. The photo at left is from last winter, so you can see that a little cold won't hurt you.

**Van Z. Hampton** ([vzhampton@hotmail.com](mailto:vzhampton@hotmail.com))

**John Wentling** ([jwentling@buyggaautos.com](mailto:jwentling@buyggaautos.com))

## Tuttle Creek State Park Trails (Pottawatomie Co, near Manhattan)

This year has been a strange one for the weather. We put in 159.5 reported hours and over 20 hours with saws and trimmers. I know Luc Valentin crew, from Manhattan, has done some fast and hard work for us but I have never been able to get actual hours. The weather with early winds and late fall with the high water has given us problems.

The Randolph State Park has its own crew doing the actual mowing, etc. We get called for trees or limbs down on the trails. There has been minor washouts, and limbs down, but these have been taken care of as needed. The plan for next year is to go over the entire trail at this park and find the areas that need work. Then later, create a workplan with Luc. He has been so helpful in taking on some major downfall and clean up on high water damage. Some work has also been done on access to trails, which makes it handy and safer for all.

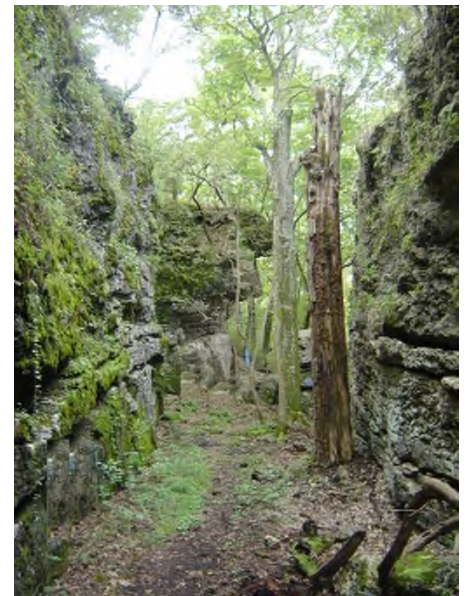
The Carnahan Creek camp trail has taken the worst hit during the fall flood season. The water was over the entire trailer parking area several times for long periods of times. The water also reached into the lower trees and has left damage behind. This area will be addressed when the mud dries or freezes. The south part of the trail has been redone this fall, incorporating two trails into one due to damage from prior floods. This may have cut back the mileage a bit, but it has all been trimmed and marked and ready to go. We are hoping for a nice spring.

**Olivia Huddleston** ([kayakkid346@gmail.com](mailto:kayakkid346@gmail.com))

## Elk River Trail (at Elk City Lake)

The Elk River trail is in great shape and is well marked and trodden so not to lose your way. A run and walk of the whole trail this past Monday was a nice day. Plans are for this coming weekend to do some trail maintenance which this time of year means removing fallen branches. With no leaves on the trees and shrubs, now is a great time to hike and see the beautiful scenery of the area, the rock bluffs, river valley, and old stone walls that surround and cross the trail. The Elk River trail is not too far from anywhere, but feels like the middle of nowhere. A perfect place to be. Off the trail exploring is also great this time of year, especially in and around the rock bluffs. Recommend a hike from the Oak Ridge trail head eastward for 2 to 3 miles and back on a sunny afternoon. It will be beautiful. Happy trails to all.

**Steve Siegele** ([stevesiegele@gmail.com](mailto:stevesiegele@gmail.com))





### Celebrating the New Year with First Day Hikes across the state

All across Kansas, people of all ages braved the cold to participate in the First Day Hikes, sponsored at 19 state parks (thank you KDWPT!) A spokesperson for KDWPT notes that turn-out was one of the best ever, despite the weather. The photo at left shows the almost 40 people – including little kids and one bundled up baby! – that showed up to hike the Flint Hills Trail from Ottawa. One participant posted a [First Day Hike vlog](#) that lets you see some of the great scenery on this new state linear park, including the stately old bridge over the Marais des Cygnes River.

Those of us who love trails and want to share that love

with others can learn a couple of things from this group:

- 1) Think about partnering with your local health department or health coalition. Many coalitions receive grant funds to promote physical activity, and trails can be an important part of that. They could help promote the trail to new users and, more importantly, spread the word that trail maintenance volunteers are always welcome.
- 2) These days, vlogs and other videos are easier than ever to shoot and share through social media. Research shows that social media viewers are more likely to click on a video than text.

### No More Fees at State's "Linear" Parks

If you've ever visited the Prairie Spirit Trail, you've probably wondered – where and how am I supposed to pay my park fee? Luckily, you'll never have to ask that question again, thanks to a decision by the KDWPT Commission to repeal fees on both the Prairie Spirit Trail and the new Flint Hills Trails. "We hope this serves as a great incentive for state park visitors and trail enthusiasts to visit these two truly unique trails," said Kansas State Parks director Linda Lanterman. "Our state parks have some really phenomenal trails, and I think people are going to be especially surprised by these two in particular."



### KTC Hits the Road

Thanks to a grant from the Sunflower Foundation, we have been touring the state and holding public meetings in areas where there are no "destination trails". We define destination trails as those long enough or unique enough to attract visitors from outside the area. The Wilson Lake Switchgrass trail is an example of a destination trail that draws visitors from all over Kansas and from over 40 states annually.



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Our goal for this project is three-fold:

- 1) Gauge local interest in building new trails,
- 2) Discover locations where new trails might be developed,
- 3) Gain insight into the challenges that might be holding back trail development

We began the project by focusing on several northern tier counties and have held Trail Talk events in Scandia, Beloit, Phillipsburg, Norton and Osborne. We have also met separately with trail enthusiasts in Republic, Jewell, Smith, Phillips, Norton, Rooks, Osborne, Mitchell and Cloud counties. We have been pleased to discover a high level of interest in developing new trails across the region.

During our meetings, we highlight many of the significant destination trails in the State and talk about the importance of trails to local economies as well as the quality of life and health benefits they provide. Our partner, Thrive Allen County, explains how the small community of Iola has been successful in developing over 20 miles of trails in recent years and how this has positively impacted their economy and quality of life.

We will turn our attention to several southern tier counties in early 2019 and several western counties in the spring. We hope to find a similar interest in adding trails in these new locations. Updates on our project and announcements of upcoming public meetings will be posted on the new Kansas Trails Council's Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/kansas>

Mike Goodwin