

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

The Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA) was incorporated in July 2004 to promote the development and use of recreational trails throughout the province.



SECTOR VISION

Our sector vision reflects the preferred state for trails in Saskatchewan. The vision inspires people, stakeholders and members to work collectively towards achieving that future and creating outcomes that members and others can support.

“*We envision a sustainable, coordinated network of rural and urban trails throughout Saskatchewan which are designed and maintained to standards that meet a diversity of user needs and enhance the health, tourism and economic prosperity of Saskatchewan communities.*”

ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

The Saskatchewan Trails Association will play a key role in the development of this sector vision. Our organizational vision defines this role.

“*We envision the Saskatchewan Trails Association as being the key resource in the province for trail information in the areas of best practice, standards, funding and usage.*”

OUR MISSION

Our mission defines the organization's purpose and primary objective. The mission informs the key measures of our long-term objectives and the ends that we are working towards.

“*The mission of the Saskatchewan Trails Association is to assist local trail groups to develop and market their trails, to promote trails in the province, and to advocate to key stakeholders on the importance of trail maintenance and development.*”

Our strategic plan can be found on our website at:
<https://sasktrails.ca/about-us/>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Preside President: David Powell

Vice President: Alan Otterbein

Treasurer: Trish German

Secretary: Ryan Goolevitch

Board Member: John Meed

Board Member: Anna Ringstrom

Board Member: Curt Schroeder

Board Member: Chris Exner

Administrator / Ex-Officio: Pat Rediger

Ex-Officio: Joe Milligan

Ex-Officio: Andrew Exelby

PRIORITY 1

Continue to be an effective and well-governed board

The STA developed a strategic plan in 2019, which has guided our efforts since its creation. The board operates under a governance model in which the strategic plan is reviewed regularly and financial accountability is practiced.

Our strategic plan has four priorities and the actions that are taken on these priorities are reviewed at each board meeting. The decisions reached by the board are based on the impact these decisions will have on meeting these priorities.



PRIORITY 2

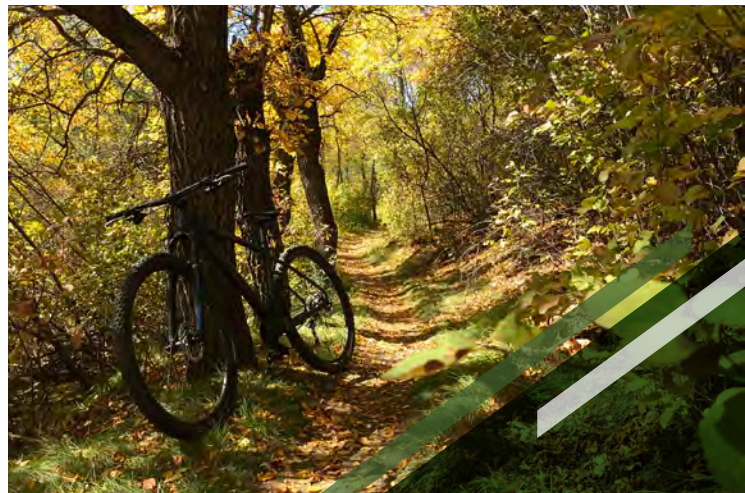
To be a resource for accurate trail location and operational information accessible to the public and the membership

The STA has a variety of tools and resources to assist members, stakeholders and the general public on finding the most accurate information on trails in the province.

Our website remains one of our primary methods of reaching the public, members and trail enthusiasts. It contains information on trail maps, safety, etiquette, environmental awareness, bridge designs, landowner agreements, processing donations, and promoting the benefits of trails. Our blogs remained popular this year with our active and frequent postings. Posts ranged from “the Ghost Town Trails of Saskatchewan” to “Virtual Valley Run” to “September Grasslands Hike”. You can read more of the posts at <https://sasktrails.ca/blog/>.

We continued to be active on social media over the past year, sharing information on trails that people should visit and illustrating these posts with videos, photos and the perspectives of people who have visited them. By the end of the year our followers had reached almost 1,700 on Facebook, nearly 1,250 on Twitter, and about 3,000 on Instagram. Our total following exceeds more than 5,800 people.

Our 4th annual Give Us Your Best Shot photo contest was our most successful to date. Similar to previous years it began on Saskatchewan Trails Day, the first Saturday of June, and concluded June 30. Entries were made by posting a picture of your favourite trail on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, using #SaskTrailsPhotoContest. We had over 440 photo entries, more than twice as many as the previous year. Applicants were allowed to enter as many photos as they chose. We were very impressed with the quality we received, so much so, that we increased the prize pool from an overall top prize winner of a \$200 gift card from Cabela's to two more prizes of



\$50 cards as honourable mentions. The winner of the contest was Dean Kewaluk for his outstanding photo of the boardwalk at Nicolle Flats in Buffalo Provincial Park. Our honourable mentions went to Amanda Kiefer for her photo of the trails at Duck Mountain Provincial Park, and to Rick Dizy for his mountain bike photo. After the contest was over we encouraged people to continue to post their photos so we could promote trails on our social media accounts.

We promoted Saskatchewan Trails Day through social media and our blog where we encouraged the public to enjoy the trail network while at the same time adhering to provincial health standards. We recommended that if people were looking to find trails in isolated locations, to visit the STA's on-line trail directory. This also allowed us to bring attention to donating to the trails and the annual photo contest.

We continue to distribute important information on a monthly basis about members and key stakeholders in the community regarding trail updates, funding and promotional initiatives through our e-newsletter Tails from the Trails.



PRIORITY 3

To move into greater alignment with the National Recreation Framework and the priorities of the recreation section of the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund

Churchill River Water Trail Legacy Project

Developing quality recreational opportunities for people in northern and Indigenous communities is a key priority for the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust, which is our core funding agency. Last year we embarked upon the Churchill River

Water Trail Legacy Project with northern volunteers, private businesses and the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. This project is about improving the outdoor recreation experience along canoe routes in northern Saskatchewan.

The Churchill River system is a world class destination for thousands of canoeists, kayakers and anglers from across the world. It is also home to multiple First Nations communities whose people continue to use the land and waterways as they have for thousands of years. With all of this activity, one of the biggest challenges is dealing with human waste. Most, if not all, of the back country camp sites are experiencing serious issues with human waste and the existing pit toilets.

After researching into this challenge, project proponents determined that a Urine Diverting Vermicomposting Toilet (UDVT) could address this issue. During the previous fiscal year, the STA and its supporters were able to raise approximately \$15,000 total which we used to purchase a UDVT. The toilet was purchased from a Canadian distributor and has been placed in storage at the Ministry warehouse in Regina.

Our intention this year was to work with volunteer groups in northern Saskatchewan to install this toilet on Barker Island. We were also in discussions with the school at Grandmother's Bay to construct the building that would house the toilet. Unfortunately, school closures and health and travel restrictions prevented us from implementing this plan and the toilet remains in storage.

A pre-fabricated building is being now being considered and this building may have to be transported to Barker Island via helicopter if we can find a company willing to donate their time and equipment. The toilet site on Barker Island will also need to be on high ground to prevent water from entering the collection area. We will be reviewing our options to complete the installation this spring and summer.

Douglas TCT Accessible Trail Project

With funding support from the Trans Canada Trail, the STA partnered with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport to redevelop an existing trail in Douglas Provincial Park to become an accessible trail, which would enable people with disabilities to experience a scenic outdoor trail. The accessible portion of the trail is 2 metres wide and approximately 2,000 m in length. This project included 1,000 m of existing park trail that was upgraded and added to The Great Trail network.

The surface now consists of compacted crusher dust with built boardwalks over wetlands. Visitors to the park will be able to enjoy beautiful vistas of Lake Diefenbaker, visit a fen, view wildlife and appreciate native prairie. We believe that the trail has now opened the provincial park portion of The Great Trail to a whole new level, creating a Destination Trail for a more inclusive and broad range of users. We expect to have a grand opening late spring of 2021.



Youth Programming

The STA believes that the youth are the future leaders of our provincial trail movement due to their enthusiasm and love of the outdoors. We engage youth through our social media, photo contests and by inviting them to share their stories of their time on the trails. As part of our commitment to youth, the STA successfully received funding from the Student Employment Program with the Government of Canada to hire a summer student for eight weeks.

This year we hired Olivia Lawrence, a student at the University of Regina pursuing a bachelor's degree in Journalism, and a Cougar track and field athlete. She worked on our social media posts, website blogs, and newsletter.



PRIORITY 4

To effectively support and grow membership

There are several initiatives that we use to support and grow our membership. In addition to being a central resource and provide information sharing and promotion for our members, we provide direct funding support and assist members with their own funding initiatives.

STA Member Trail Grant

The STA Member Trail Grant program assists members in maintaining trails within their community or between communities. The focus of the grant is to fund new trail developments or maintenance activities such as updating maps, GPS trails, signage, purchasing maintenance tools etc. This year we allocated \$1,000 each to projects undertaken by the Foam Lake & District Leisure Services Board and the Qu'Appelle Valley Nordic Ski Club.

The Foam Lake project involves a group of dedicated volunteers called Team Nature Trails (TNT) to restore the nature trails in the Foam Lake Heritage Marsh area. This area is a designated international birding area, and sees many tourist "birders" each year during migration periods. Many locals like to explore this area over the summer months as well. Visitors utilize the trails that are accessible and can enjoy nature, birds, the history of the marsh, as told by signage around the area.

This area must be restored due to flooding in the past that destroyed signage, viewing platforms, and eroded shorelines where trails once were. Each year, volunteers plan to work on a specific area and have thus far repaired two areas that are now accessible for public access with beautiful, walkable trails, new platforms and historical signage to educate visitors about the area's flora, fauna and history. TNT worked with its neighbouring First Nations Community – Fishing Lake First Nations, to gain a deeper perspective into the history of this area, where many FLFN Elders were born and have many stories to tell. This project also included a bank of "story" signage along the Vatnabyggd Trail, outlining "Stories of the Marsh" – which to this point, have only been told in the European (Icelandic) point of view. TNT feels it is integral to tell the whole story and start with our First Nations.

Funding from the STA will be used to support Elders protocol (meetings, gifts of tobacco, honourariums), and the purchase and installation of twelve 11x17" signs with stories to be placed along the trails for visitors to gain a better understanding of the history of this area.

The Qu'Appelle Valley Nordic Ski Club mission is to operate a full-service Nordic facility that provides biathlon and cross country ski programming, including all-season training options, for recreational and competitive athletes from Saskatchewan and Western Canada. Its existing facility has been built from scratch over the last five years through the work of committed volunteers and partnerships with local organizations. The club has invested more than \$240,000 into the development of a biathlon range, clubhouse, targets, trails, grass mower and trail grooming equipment. The trail system now offers skiing for both classic and skate, for novice and experts, and for casual and competitive skiers for over 100 members and local residents. During the summer months, the trails provide opportunities for hiking, cycling, and running. Each year the club hosts a number of biathlon camps and trail runs.



Funding from the STA will be used to support maintenance including trail leveling, sign marking to aid skiers and hikers, tree planting for wind protection, snow accumulation and habitat, as well as additional snow fence installation.

The STA has allocated another \$2,000 in funding support for members for the 2021 fiscal year.

Klinger's Trail

Friends and family of Kleon Swahn (aka Klinger) have rallied together to incorporate a walking trail in his memory. Kleon was born and raised in Rose Valley and spent a lot of his childhood years at Marean Lake. He married Jamie Schweitzer from Archerwill and had two children, Braden and Kiana. He worked his dream job with SaskPower for 23 years until he was killed in a workplace accident on Dec. 20, 2014.

The Klinger's Trail Group has been creating an 8 km trail which will join the two communities of Marean Lake and Greenwater Lake. It will meander through dense bush mostly in Greenwater Park and have scenic views of the lake and shoreline. There are six smaller bridges planned as well as a large 40' bridge. The trail will consist of base gravel with crusher dust topping. There will be rest areas along the way with sponsor benches provided. This trail is greatly needed in the area to display the beautiful terrain but also to keep people safe who were walking on the grid roads which are dusty and dangerous.

The local trail group started construction in July 2020. This project is a labour of love and has been two years in the making. Through our Charitable Giving Program, we have been issuing charitable receipts on behalf of this project. We have also been promoting the project on our social media accounts and website.

Elbow Trail

Another member that is part of our Charitable Giving Program has been the Elbow Trail Group. We have been involved with the group since its inception and continue to issue charitable receipts on their behalf. Funds collected this year are being used to maintain the existing trail.

The trail head, which connects to the Trans Canada Trail, can be found at the local golf course. The trail starts with an easy walk through prairie land where you can get a great view of Diefenbaker Lake as well as the boats lined up in the Elbow Marina. The trail then takes you back to the golf course, where you are welcomed by chairs and a phenomenal view. The remainder of the trail is approximately 6 km and is covered by trees.

Canadian Trails Federation

The STA is a member of the Canadian Trails Federation (CTF), a coalition of provincial and territorial trail organizations in the country. We continue to represent our province at the national level and share best practices. The CTF is a member of the National Trails Coalition (NTC), which includes representatives from the snowmobile and ATV communities. The NTC has been advocating to the federal government for a three-year, \$60 million trail building fund. The STA has lent its support to these advocacy efforts and will continue to do so in the future.

The CTF has been conducting a strategic review of its operations and is updating its bylaws. A member survey was recently distributed to help develop strategic priorities for the upcoming year.



MEMBER TRIBUTE

Former TCT Board Member Bill Shurniak

The Saskatchewan trail community lost a dedicated friend when Bill Shurniak passed away in August. Bill was an exceptionally successful businessman, and the Great Trail organization was fortunate to have him as a board member for several years. The STA is incredibly grateful for the funds that Bill donated to us in the past. In 2016, he was one of the generous sponsors who made a financial contribution that allowed Saskatchewan's section to be connected to The Great Trail. Bill hosted STA board meetings at the Shurniak Art Gallery in Assiniboia and welcomed our board into his home near Limerick for a retreat. The work and contributions he did with The Great Trail and Saskatchewan trails is extremely appreciated and he will be very missed.



Former STA President Cathy Watts

Cathy Watts was a long-time cycling enthusiast and trail advocate in our province. When the concept of the Trans Canada Trail was proposed, Cathy formed the Parkland TCT Group to assist with the development of the trail in the Saskatoon area.

Cathy was asked to be part of the TCT advisory committee that the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association established to coordinate the development of Saskatchewan's portion of the trail. This committee evolved into the Saskatchewan Trails Association. Cathy was a long-time board member of our association and served as President from 2010-14.

One of her highlights as President was reaching an agreement with the TCT for the STA to serve as the project manager for the TCT in this province. For years, she wrote articles on the benefits of trails in the SPRA newsletter and hosted board meetings

in her living room. Everyone enjoyed her delicious cooking and break time snacks. Cathy later served on the Saskatchewan TCT Committee and became chair of Saskatoon Cycles. She continued to remain involved in the STA and recently organized a fundraising event at Outter Limits to support the Churchill River Water Trail Legacy Project, and helped organize a raffle to support this project.

Short after Cathy's passing this fall, we renamed our Volunteer Award in her honour to recognize her outstanding contributions






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