



Trail Maintenance Pilot Project

**May to
September 2012**

Report

Crow Wing Trail Association

Box 268 St-Pierre-Jolys Manitoba R0A 1V0 www.trailsmanitoba.ca/crow-wing





The Crow Wing Trail Association (CWTA)
wishes to thank Wayne Arseny,
Board Member and Reeve of Emerson,
for having the passion and commitment
to undertake this important project.
Wayne has gone beyond expectations
as this report clearly attests.

How fitting it was that, mid-way through this project,
he received a Queen's Jubilee Medal.
"I am honored and humbled to be bestowed this award,"
Wayne told me. He surely deserves it.

This project is pivotal to the future
success of the Crow Wing Trail,
the longest section of
Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba.

We hope that it can be of use
to other Trail Associations,
with similar maintenance challenges.

Murielle Bugera
Project Manager
CWTA President

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1. Executive summary

This project has brought so much more than was expected!

Having one person walking and driving every inch (centimetre?) of the 191 kms has been very enlightening. We now have facts on which we can act.

In the short period of time that the maintenance project has been in operation, it has provided considerable positive publicity.



It has taken the pressure off volunteers to maintain a national infrastructure, not to mention an important connection between the province's capital and our neighbours to the south.

The purpose of this project was one of fact-finding. There was and is no intention to find fault with any individual or group.

The bottom line is that it costs about \$50/km to maintain the Crow Wing Trail to a standard of which we can ALL be proud. This means that Trails Manitoba's (formerly Manitoba Recreational Trails Association) annual maintenance grant of \$13/km needs to be leveraged about four times!

There is no question that a funded trail maintenance program is the way to go. The board of the Crow Wing Trail Association has made it its priority to obtain the necessary funds for trail maintenance every year.

The Crow Wing Trail can now be marketed and promoted with confidence, and trail users are happy...

"Big thanks to the Crow Wing Trail Association for adding more blue arrow signs over the last year." Ian Hall, Actif Epica Winter Bike Race.

"I am renewing my membership with the Crow Wing Trail Association based on the work that Wayne Arseny has accomplished. I will be cycling on this well maintained trail in 2013. With this renewed commitment to maintenance, I am sure to come back more often," Winnipeg cyclist.

Thanks are extended to all those who provided volunteer help; made in-kind contributions; and gave support through memberships. Our municipal and first nation partners must also be recognized for their ongoing financial, in-kind and advisory contributions – the rural municipalities of Franklin, De Salaberry, Ritchot, the towns of Niverville and Emerson, the village of St-Pierre-Jolys, and the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation¹.

A big thank you to Dawn Harris, ex-CWTA board member, for the numerous hours she gave in preparing this report. The value in the compiled information is in how it is presented, and Dawn did a great job!

We would especially like to thank Trails Manitoba for helping us to make this happen!

Now let's keep the momentum going!

¹ Roseau Rapids is part of the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation (RRAFNF) and is located on the escarpment 20 miles east of the main reserve. The RRAFNF representatives to the board of the Crow Wing Trail Association come from Roseau Rapids. The Crow Wing Trail passes through Roseau Rapids land.

2. Project summary

The Crow Wing Trail Association (CWTA) has been relying on volunteers and landowners to maintain the Crow Wing Trail, the section of the Trans Canada Trail from Winnipeg to Emerson.

Neither the available volunteer labor nor the minimal funding had allowed the association to keep pace with the maintenance needs of the trail prior to 2012.

This fact was further emphasized by the recent trail audit completed by a University of Manitoba student in 2010 that underscored the need for maintenance.

Knowing that the trail has maintenance issues, the CWTA has been hesitant to promote the trail.

This project was undertaken to address this dilemma once and for all.

“Since the trail officially opened in 2006, we have depended on volunteers to maintain the trail,” explains Murielle Bugera, president of the CWTA. “The problem is that, even with best intentions, it sometimes does not get done, or volunteers do not have the necessary equipment. This is a national infrastructure. We want people, from near and far, to have a great experience on the trail!”

2.1 Objective and goals

2.1.1 Objective

To learn what it takes to properly maintain the Crow Wing Trail, 191 kilometres of diverse terrain, from spring to fall by hiring a trail boss who will keep the trail in a condition equal to that found in provincial parks and to share the information gathered with other trail organizations.

2.1.1 Goals

- Assess needs.
- Analyze costs.
- Contact and inform landowners.
- Secure resources.
- Complete initial maintenance pass over trail.
- Undertake public awareness.
- Survey trail users.
- Complete subsequent passes as needed.

2.2 Project team: role, responsibility, authority, skills

2.2.1 Project sponsor

Crow Wing Trail Association – responsible for contract with Manitoba Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (METT) and appropriate use of Trails Manitoba funds. (METT funded the initial project development plan as part of a project management initiative that was provided to the Crow Wing Trail Association.) The treasurer will keep track of project expenses separate from current CWTA budget items. Board members will assist trail boss with needs assessment and relationships with local governments. CWTA has undertaken many successful projects.

2.2.2 Project coordinator

Murielle Bugera – president of CWTA and board member representing St-Pierre-Jolys, responsible for planning, monitoring and closing of project and written communication with landowners and public. Has led many successful projects. Has been involved with CWTA since its inception. Recently completed a Project Management Fundamentals course with Red River

College and is managing this project as part of a work experience program with Manitoba Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade.

2.2.3 Trail boss

Wayne Arseny – CWTA board member representing Emerson and mayor of Emerson. Responsible for contract trail maintenance for 2012 within budget provided. Has undertaken many innovative and successful local projects. Has been involved with CWTA since beginning. In addition to his reputation for “getting the job done,” his many connections resulting from his position as an elected municipal representative will help facilitate cooperation with municipalities/first nation.

2.2.4 Project partner

Trails Manitoba – works to build, support, and promote Manitoba’s non-motorized trail network; provides maintenance funds and is the governing body of the Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba.

2.3 Project budget

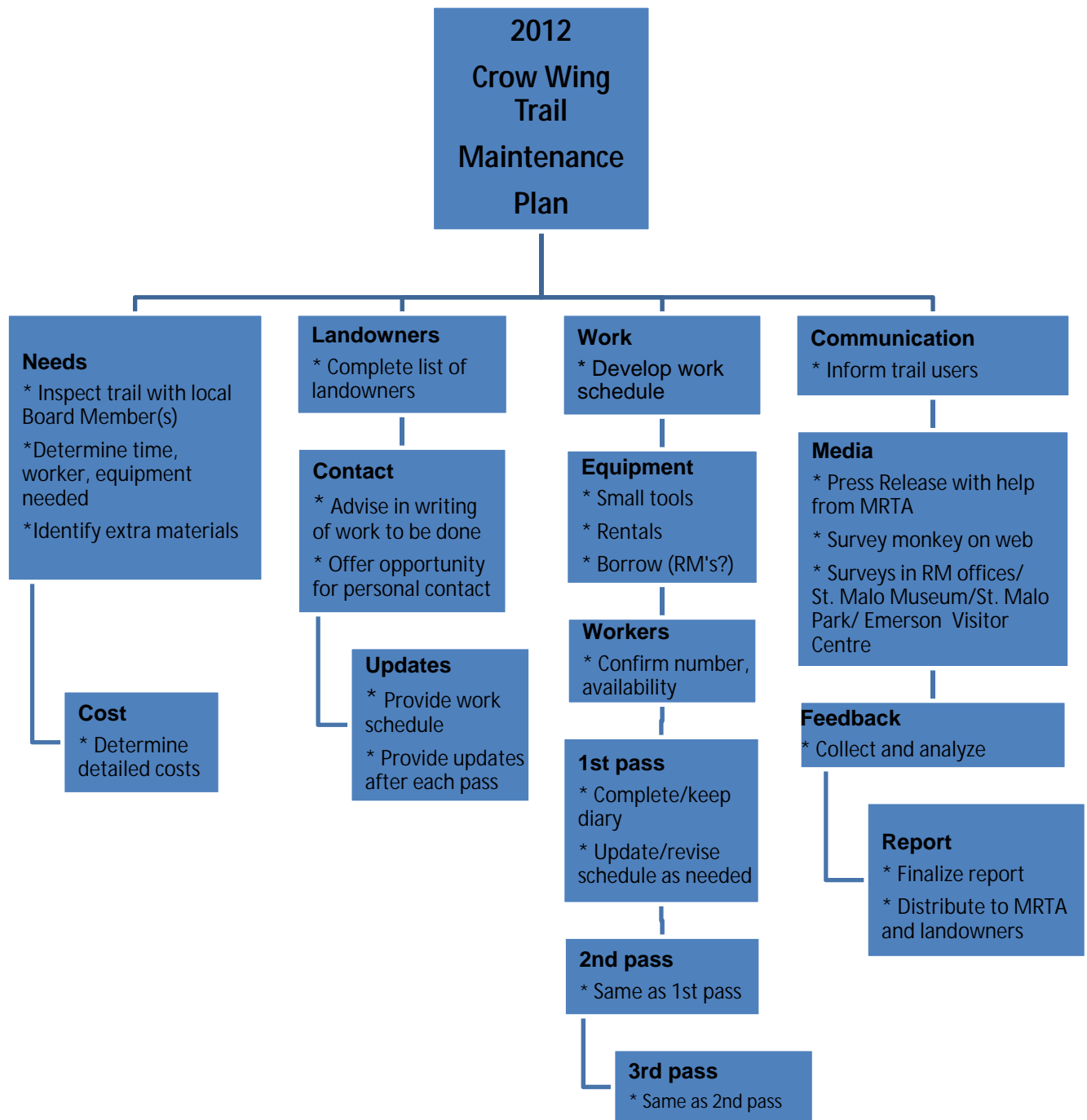
2.3.1 Estimated cash costs

A budget of \$10,000 was established.

2.3.2 Contributions

The CWTA set aside \$1,800 from membership fees and \$500 from its operating budget for its contribution to the project.

Trails Manitoba contributed an annual maintenance grant of \$2,500 for 2011 and 2012. In 2011, only \$400 was spent, allowing \$2,100 to be forwarded to 2012 to launch a comprehensive pilot maintenance project. A special grant of \$2,100 was also provided for the project.



3. Introduction

The project had two phases: planning and undertaking the work.

The planning portion involved much more than sitting down and identifying what was needed to do the work and when to do it. It was important for the trail boss to familiarize himself not only with the route of the trail, but also any peculiarities along it. Seeing the trail through others' eyes was also important.

On April 29, 2012, Wayne made his first of many scouting visits along the trail. He travelled the RM of Ritchot portion of the trail with outgoing RM of Ritchot board member Linda Morin and incoming member Dawn Harris. The following day he walked the Emerson portion of the CWT with Dana Meise, who was starting his fifth season of walking the Trans Canada Trail from coast to coast.

"We drove and walked from the south border of the RM of Ritchot to the floodway. All I can say is 'What an eye opener! I need to do this with the other sections! The mile by mile tour sure showed me a lot of things. Wow!'"

"There is nothing like seeing with your own eyes, but looking through someone else's eyes is also enlightening. I had the great opportunity to walk the Emerson section of the CWT with Dana Meise. He resumed his walk from Winnipeg south onto the CWT. He likes the CWT and says we are right up there as a preferred section.

We are still years away from creating what we want to be, but we should be proud of what we have already done.

"My head is full of new ideas, from what I have just seen in the RM of Ritchot and after walking with Dana. I am proud of my trail maintenance crew vest and will wear it everywhere I go.

"I know this is not going to be an easy task. I want this project to be high profile for several reasons. I want people to see that we are doing something to make this trail nicer.

"As the first trail maintenance boss, I can say that the challenges are significant. I have pretty well driven the entire route from end to end with a few short sections in the RM of De Salaberry and the RM of Franklin that my 4x4 truck could not get into, and walking was not possible that day. I like what I see. There is definite diversity in our prairie landscape, even on the roadways, but even more when you get off road. There are many issues that go far beyond mowing which was the primary intended focus. My team will attempt to address all of them and will be preparing recommendations.

"Trails sell themselves. I look at my crew member who has never walked one. He has now been in new areas he has never had the opportunity to walk on. He has seen wild flowers, and wild hazelnuts and Saskatoons forming on the trees by Ridgeville. As locals, many people in rural Manitoba take all this for granted, just a bush or a cow pasture."



Trail boss Wayne Arseny proudly displays his trail maintenance crew vest.

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

4. Planning the work

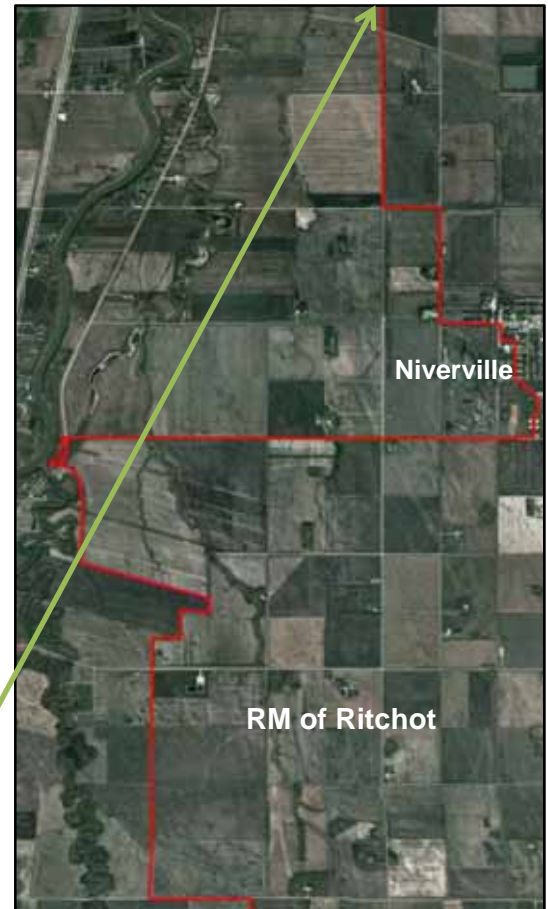
4.1 Confirming the route

4.1.1 Familiarization tours

In order to become familiar with the entire route of the Crow Wing Trail, the trail boss walked the CWT with at least one board member from each trail section. The tours took place between the end of April and the end of May 2012. Notes were made regarding where adjustments were needed or where there would be challenges. The notes provided a description of the state of the trail.

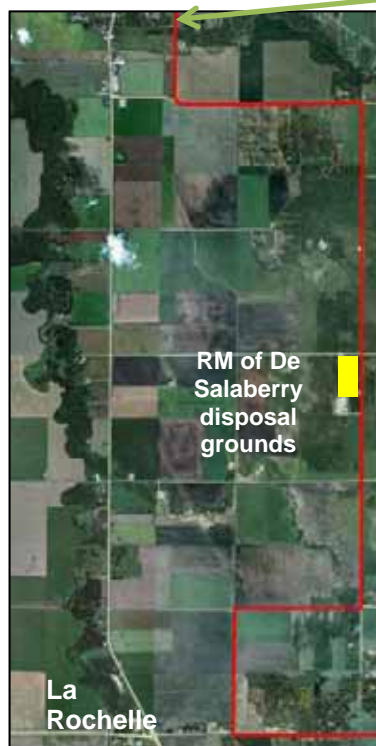
4.1.1.1 RM of Ritchot

- introductory section to the CWT from Winnipeg at the floodway needs high visibility
- recommended route over the lip of the floodway entrance should possibly be reconsidered
- most of the roads north of St. Adolphe are dirt roads
- the most visible section of the trail, which runs in the ditch under the hydro wires north of St. Adolphe along St. Mary's Rd. has not been cut nor marked – the signs that were initially installed have disappeared – it will be important to know who has taken them down and for what reason
- 9-foot high, 4x4 posts have been used in the RM of Ritchot with the blue arrow sign on top
- only about five posts are still up in the rural municipality and a few more in the town of St. Adolphe
- it was unclear whether the trail officially goes through the old park or not
- ran out of time – did not see the Mennonite Landing.



4.1.1.2 RM of De Salaberry

- Moose Creek Road mile was the worst, even now in its almost dry state – holes are in some places almost three feet deep – the big boulders sticking out could make it very hard for even a bulldozer to level
- intermunicipal road between RM of Franklin and RM of De Salaberry is better and can be levelled – since board member Peter Friesen was last on it, it looks like the north ditch has been deepened – fill was dumped right on the middle of the road, mostly on the RM of Franklin's half – it's lumpy and grown over with willows – passage is narrow and fair size willows were scratching both sides of truck
- board members Marc Hamonic and Murielle Bugera joined tour in St. Malo
- north of St. Malo, the mile south of the disposal grounds didn't look very good – there were very deep ruts that will need levelling before any mowing can be done
- rest of the trail was good



4.1.1.3 RM of Franklin

- Hamilton's section wasn't very good either, narrow with lots of downed trees
 - new land owners there too
- there is a gate entrance by the Greenridge mailboxes, used as an access point
- could not navigate the section past Mr. X's as both entrances were blocked – could be cut open but looked awfully narrow and would require considerable cutting to widen for even the tractor



4.1.1.4 Roseau River First Nation (RRFN) – Roseau Rapids

- did not want to drive through without Charlie Nelson's presence – trail seemed quite good through there as it is close to an unmaintained road.

4.1.1.5 Town of Emerson

- bulldozer work is needed on Emerson trail
- normally the trail is under 30 feet of water as this would be flood season
- never been able to walk the lower river bottom forest so early, with no vegetation, usually by the time it dries up, weeds are five feet high
- now it was bare and clear to see where to go and improve the routing
- trail was absolutely perfect for bikers, winding around trees, up and down, and jumps
- just needs the ruts levelled out and some of the downed trees cleared away
- the Trans Canada Trail kiosk was in bad shape, touch-up paint is needed
- the Bronfman plaques were white and faded out completely



4.1.1.6 Town of Niverville – Village of St-Pierre-Jolys

- town staff take care of these sections of trail
- they will need to be inspected for signage issues

4.1.2 Access challenges

In addition to becoming familiar with the route, the trail boss identified places that would be difficult to access or cause detours.

4.1.2.1 Access to Senkiw Bridge

There was evidence that the south side of the bridge had been mowed, but the north side is further from the road, and so it takes more effort to get down there. A boardwalk over a low area has rotten boards that are weeded over, and the pathway is eroded. There has to be more vigilance with the maintenance of this section, as this bridge is the pride of the Rural Municipality of Franklin and a draw to the CWT.



Above: Senkiw Swinging Bridge; middle: south side path to bridge; bottom: rotten boardwalk boards.

4.1.2.2 North entrance to RM of Franklin

The trail past Mr. X's property is entirely on municipal roadway and is mostly bush. Someone has put up wooden posts at each end with chains and locks, apparently to discourage ATVs. This is a crucial piece of the trail, as it is the entrance into the RM of Franklin from the RM of De Salaberry, by way of the intermunicipal/meridian road. This sort of barrier is not welcoming to walkers or bikers. It says STAY OUT more than NO ATVS. This is entirely RM of Franklin road allowance, so it is really up to the municipality as to what is done. To mow would require moving the posts and then putting them back up again.



Private barrier erected to discourage ATVs.

4.1.2.3 RM of Franklin/RM of De Salaberry intermunicipal/meridian road and Moose Creek Road

These two roads connect the RMs of De Salaberry and Franklin. Moose Creek Road has been damaged by ATVs; the Inter-municipal/meridian road is in slightly better condition.



Above: Moose Creek Road damaged by ATVs; below: intermunicipal/meridian road.

Moose Creek is almost impassable with a 4x4 truck, even when dry due to holes and rocks. What would be

needed is a six-foot-wide, crowned, hard-packed, straight path on one side that will shed rain and stay hard and dry, so ATVs can drive on it, and people can walk it. The holes and puddles could be left along the side for the adventuresome to use.

4.1.2.4 Bridge over Coulée des Naults

The bridge is solid, but tilted on one side and side rails need fixing.



4.1.2.5 South of RM of De Salaberry disposal grounds

There are very deep ruts that will need levelling before any mowing can be done.



South of RM of De Salaberry disposal grounds.



Bridge over Coulée des Naults.



4.1.2.6 Twin Creek Road

The road has been washed out here following flooding. There is a long standing detour for vehicles. Pedestrians could cross the washout, but footing is not secure. The RM of Ritchot is waiting for the province to fix it.

4.1.3 Route changes

Route changes are a fact of life, particularly where the trail crosses private land. From time to time, land changes hands, and new owners may not want to grant access to the land for a variety of reasons: change of use from crops to livestock; concern over crop damage; concern about trespassing onto adjacent land; or concern about garbage.

At other times, municipal governments change routes for reasons such as easier or less costly maintenance; new land development; or community changes.

Maintenance crews need to be aware of route changes and change of land ownership in order to maintain good relations with land owners. Some of the route changes, existing and proposed, in 2012 were as follows.

4.1.3.1 Stephens' Trail

This trail goes cross country, but the new land owner has indicated he will be fencing it for cattle and will no longer be allowing access. The new route on the road around to the east adds an extra three miles. There may be room to negotiate putting the trail back cross country.

4.1.3.2 Greenridge mailboxes off PR 218

There had been a spur trail from the parking lot where the Greenridge mailboxes are located; however, new owners intend to plow the east-west quarter-section boundary and the only trail will be behind Hamilton's. With no access spur to the Crow Wing Trail off PR 218, the question remains whether the parking lot at the mailboxes should still remain an access point to the trail for parking. It is a nice visible location and signs could be put up to show people where to go along the paved highway to access trail, avoiding private property. It will be up to the RM of Franklin to decide what to do.

4.1.3.3 RM of De Salaberry

In discussing trail maintenance on the south end of the municipality (Moose Creek Rd) with the RM of De Salaberry, municipal council agreed to use the undeveloped road straight north of the blocked portion of the trail in Franklin instead of going west on the meridian road and then north on Moose Creek. As a result, the trail will come



Twin Creek Road washout, one-mile north of St. Adolphe, just east of PR 200.



Twin Creek Road just west of wash out.



Greenridge CWT gate.

up to Hwy 59 further south from St. Malo. ATVs are currently using the ditch. The ditch is in good condition, and it could be used to meet up with the original trail. The other option is to cross Hwy 59 and go north-east a ways, before coming back west towards Hwy 59, and crossing it to link with the original trail.

4.1.3.4 Village of St-Pierre-Jolys

The trail in the Parc Carillon has been rerouted to make room for a new soccer field. A footbridge over a frog pond has been added. When it is complete, the new route will be marked.

4.1.3.5 Town of Niverville

The mayor has indicated that the town eventually wants the trail to go past the community's recreation centre.

4.1.3.6 Mennonite Landing

There is a quarter mile along St. Mary's Rd (PR 200) where the trail goes along the highway to go to and from the Mennonite Landing west of PR 200. There is a more scenic route that would pass between a small woods and cropland east of PR 200. While the farmer supports the concept of the Crow Wing Trail, he will not allow access. He had allowed people access to the property, but has experienced disrespect, damage to the land, and trespassing, so he has decided there will no longer be public access to his property.

4.2 Labor

There is always discussion as to who is the best choice for a maintenance crew – professional contractor, municipal crews, or local people with an interest in the trail. It will depend on the circumstances of each trail.

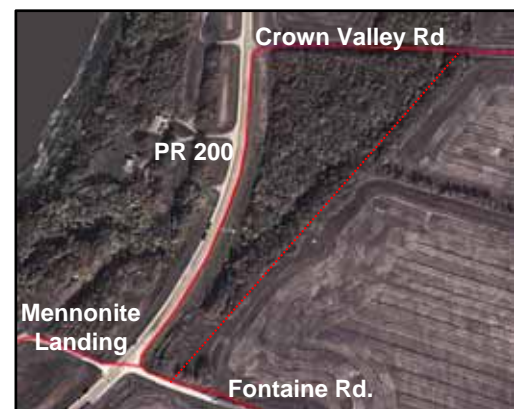
In the case of this project, the Crow Wing Trail Association was fortunate enough to have a board member who is passionate about the trail and had the time to work on the trail when it was needed. The CWTA contracted with Wayne Arseny to manage and undertake the project as he saw fit. He contracted hired help as necessary. Having one person in charge of maintenance for the whole trail provided continuity and ensured that the entire length of the trail would be maintained to the same standard.

4.3 Signage

Signage is a key part of maintenance, but it appears it will almost be a project in itself. Every section needs more signs: along roadways; off roadways; where there's a turn; and a few in



Alternate routes to Moose Creek Rd at the south of the RM of De Salaberry.



Mennonite Landing loop, south-west of Niverville.

“I have to walk many miles, especially in those sections which are off road. When I do, my loppers are snipping constantly, picking up dead trees and shoving them out of the way, spotting rocks or stumps and pointing them out to the tractor driver. Stopping to write and make notes isn't possible because he is moving. And you have to walk fast to stay ahead. So I get the notes in whenever we stop.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

between when there is a long straight stretch of several miles. Anyone without a GPS can easily and quickly get disorientated, not knowing where to turn or whether they have gone far enough. It's not a problem when you are driving but when you are walking or biking, going a mile too far and then back-tracking looking for the right turn can be most discouraging. Signage not only provides direction for walkers and bikers, but also visibility for the public to become familiar with the CWT trail.

There are a number of places where signage has obviously been removed or ignored. In the RM of Franklin, several "missing" signs had actually been driven over. In one case, someone swathing the ditch for hay simply drove over the sign rather than going around it.

4.3.1 Signs

Two signs are needed on a corner where the trail turns, but are two signs needed on a straight-away? In the RM of Franklin, they are all pointing northward, meaning people travelling towards the border travel against the arrows. There are no arrows in both directions. Trails Manitoba confirmed that signs need to be in both directions, so more signs are needed. Some signs have to be pre-drilled as the signs are only drilled in one direction for pointing up or down, but not sideways.

Within (larger) communities, such as Niverville, Otterburne, St-Pierre-Jolys and St. Malo, there is usually municipal staff or some sort of maintenance plan for signs. The first goal is to get signs up in the rural connections; then the trail boss could meet with community staff, if they want, and provide suggestions for signage.

4.3.2 Posts

There are several options for posts: wooden fence posts; 10 ft. high, 4 in. x 4 in. metal posts; 4 ft. high, 4 in. x 4 in. metal posts. Each has its advantages and drawbacks. Metal posts are easy to put in the ground but require screws and/or brackets to attach the signs. The wooden posts are easier to mount signs on; more aesthetically suitable; and harder for passersby to remove but they are more work to set up, requiring a post-hole auger and tamping. They are also bulkier and heavier to transport.

The CWT board authorized the purchase of wooden posts, through Trails Manitoba, and advised the rural municipalities that there would be no cost to them. These posts will be used along longer stretches of the trail.

Any posts along the river in the flood zone may have to be installed differently. When the Rivers West/Forgotten Forest spur was put in the river bottom forest near Emerson, using 4 in. x 4 in. posts, the posts were augered and then c-base gravel was packed in tightly. In the flood, all the posts popped out and floated away. Using a smaller auger bit, the intent is to pound the posts into a smaller hole and hope they snug up so they won't come out.

4.3.3 Location

It was observed that many of the signs in rural areas were positioned almost timidly too far back and out of the way.

“With good signage not only locals, but visitors too, driving through the area will say ‘Hey! That trail runs here too!’”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss



Two signs are needed on a corner where the trail turns.



Loading wooden fence posts onto the trailer.

RMs were asked to provide any concerns they might have about installing posts along their roadways. RM of Ritchot responded right away and indicated that the only concern would be that the signage be positioned far enough off the road so as not to be in the way of municipal maintenance equipment.

4.4 Equipment

The trail boss purchased his own trailer to haul the tractor and mower, fuel and tools. He rented a tractor with a 6-foot brush mower from The Tractor People, Dominion City. The company was very accommodating making a new tractor and new mower available when required.

The equipment was taken for a dry run close to Emerson to work out the bugs. The mower cut well and broke up dead branches easily. Trail Boss Arseny walked in front of the tractor, lopping low hanging branches and sawing larger dead ones out of the way.

The practice run came to a halt when one of the bolts on the mower loosened. The lack of a large enough crescent wrench meant over a mile walk for home. The mower blades needed to be sharpened as a few stumps and hidden rocks were hit.

It is the intention to rent a gas-powered, post-hole auger that does not have to be attached to a tractor for installing sign posts to avoid having to rent the tractor again.

Each cutting day started with loading the tractor and mower and filling it with fuel. A 10-gallon can of fuel was taken along to prevent running short. All the equipment was checked, the mower blades sharpened, and the tie down chains re-cinched. Before returning the tractor and mower, they were always washed.



Tractor and bush mower rented from The Tractor People.



A gas-powered, post-hole auger was rented to save an extra tractor rental.

4.5 Scheduling Work

The intention was to start with the mowing on May 24, allowing the grass to get a good start and just be entering into the heading stage. Once mowed, it shouldn't want to push in as much and may slow down in growth.

The start date was pushed back to June 11, and then delayed a few days due to rain. The gumbo made many of the roads impassable even with a tractor, and it was too wet to mow.

The first cut would provide information for the timing of the second cut and whether, in subsequent mowings, certain sections would require more focus than others.

Putting in posts was scheduled for after Canada Day, starting at Emerson

A second mow was scheduled for late July, mainly to keep some of the large nuisance weeds in check. The final mow was scheduled for late September to prepare the trail for winter.

5. Doing the work

5.1 Bulldozer work Town of Emerson

With no spring flooding this year, work started on the trails along the Red River earlier than usual – May 26. Work is usually delayed until mid-June or later. A big wind the week before meant many large, dead trees were down. Some were too big to cut with chain saws.

Clearing both sides of the Emerson trail at this time allowed mowing of the grass sections before the weeds got too high (i.e. eight-foot high burdock thistles). Because there was no flooding, the season was advanced and the riverside much greener than usual.

Trails on both sides of the river were cleared in preparation for mowing. The scenery along the river is diverse with tall green undergrowth, a well-treed canopy and a wide seven-foot swath. The treeless sections are tall grass.



Clearing the river trail at Emerson.

5.2 First mowing – June 14 to 19

5.2.1 Town of Emerson

June 14

- started at 6:30 am
- filled up with diesel and started a new log book for times and locations
- started mowing on the extreme west part of Emerson by the log buildings
- cut a path in between the shelter belt of trees, making a nice canopy for people to walk under and through
- cut a half mile – the six-foot swath was a good width
- less than a mile out one of the three-point hitch arms bent and ended work for the day

June 15

- grass on the boundary road was thick brome mostly, about three feet high
- no evidence of any traffic on this route – vehicles coming to the border from the north to check on crops, but no one else on it
- no signage until towards the eastern end of the border trail where the trail turns northward
- surface is quite rough with gopher holes and lots of dirt mounds
- averaging 40 minutes to cut a mile
- surprisingly there were no border patrol helicopters
- for a half mile were probably cutting in the US
- a farmer moved the ditch to get more land to seed, forcing the maintenance crew to hug the right side of the road along the American farmer's field



Mowing along the US-Canada border.

5.2.2 RM of Franklin – June 18

5.2.2.1 South of Ridgeville

- first time on north/south trail between the 3 and 4 mile roads, as it couldn't be travelled with the 4x4 on the familiarization tour
- fencing on both sides with fairly well-established willows up to two inches in diameter on the trail – an ATV would barely get through
- mower handled the willows well – a full swath was cut, doubling back for a half cut
- towards the 4 mile road, the trail went into heavy poplars with lots of dead ones down across the trail – took quite a bit of cutting to move these out of the way – by far the most labor-intensive section with at least 50 downed trees
- crew snaked their way through the trees with only inches to spare and had to back up several times to wiggle through
- signs that the local farmer had been ATVing it to check his cattle – did not move any downed trees
- a nice section once mowed

“Just a bit further on a ridge of high ground, we found plenty of Saskatoons and evidence of a bear being in the area. Local farmer stopped us to find out what we were doing and said he lost a calf to this bear.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

5.2.2.2 North of Ridgeville

- mowed in the east ditch right next to the hydro poles – first time it's been mowed to show people where the route is
- north on the 5 mile, the trail widened and there were signs of some vehicle traffic on it – had to cross a coulee with water in it, but there was a good solid base – no chance of getting stuck
- crossed Hwy 201 and proceeded on to the south approach to Hamilton's section – the blue sign on the road is clearly pointing northward – the farmer has a crop in so crew had to hug the bush line to mow the trail
- second most labor intensive section with many dead poplars having fallen on to the field – farmer simply seeded around them – cut, pushed, and cleared the trail; lopped hundreds of hanging branches with finished trail looking great
- further into the centre of the quarter section, there were crops on both sides with a downed fence down the middle – familiarization tour indicated crew should take the west side of the fence
- very rough with large, old pocket gopher mounds, some over two feet high – edge of fields very rough – in one area it seemed the fields had been bulldozed years back, leaving deep craters where the tree stumps were pulled out
- on the last section of Hamilton's towards the narrow culvert, the field was seeded right to the bush line – cut a few feet of grain, mostly weeds



South side of Hamilton's trail

“We straddled the deep craters. The trail winds, so looks nice but still was a challenge. Had I not been walking in front, the tractor would have fallen into one of these holes.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

5.2.2.3 East of Greenridge mailboxes

- at the southern part of Hamilton's property (north-west

quarter of section 34), things got confusing – too many signs virtually pointing in three directions

- Hamilton's area has fences in several directions – following one set of arrows, virtually ended in a dead-end, as there was no room along the fence
- finally took the most easterly trail, headed north and came to an open field that was the correct trail
- further up, there were two sets of signs that made it unclear as to what was the correct side of the fence
- took the left trail and hugged the field all the way to the road north of Hamilton's – there the culvert was only four feet wide, which required inching across to mow over it – the approach is now clearly visible as being a trail

5.2.2.3 Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation (Roseau Rapids) – June 18

- there was no signage indicating any trail along the river off the municipal road, so nothing was cut on the RRFN property.

5.2.2.4 North of Roseau Rapids to Senkiw Bridge – June 18

- many stray poplars growing well into the pathway were cut
- pulling the trailer through some of the sharp turns was challenging
- more signs are needed on this long stretch
- there are many side trails coming in and leading off the main trail
- made it to the Senkiw Swinging Bridge before dark

“The last section of off-road trail nearing the swinging bridge is beautiful. It is right along the Roseau River, with high banks and often two rivers or a loop showing the river winding. This is an awesome section. The trail is much narrower and in some sections, the hazelnuts are thick with just enough room for the tractor.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

5.2.2.5 North of Senkiw Swinging Bridge to intermunicipal road – June 19

- started on the north side of the swinging bridge
- at the north entrance gate of the swinging bridge trail, the first section was impassable – wind storm had knocked over two large green poplars, at least 12-14 inches in diameter, plus numerous dead ones
- vegetation growth is high – poison ivy and new growth had pushed in on the trail
- the crew chain sawed their way through the downed trees – trail boss Arseny also stood in the tractor bucket and sawed off hanging dry oak branches
- mowed all the way south through the grassy meadow, with two plowed fields now on each side, down to the river bank
- the road allowance at the north end of the trail in Franklin is well fortified against any motorized traffic, with chains, dug in posts and boulders, making access impossible for the maintenance crew
- talked to the landowner and was informed that they are mowing the entire section – a narrow 36-inch mower pass was visible from the entrance

5.2.3 RM of De Salaberry – June 19

5.2.3.1 South of St. Malo

- had go around by Hwy 218 and come back from the north due to the path being chained off
- Moose Creek Rd could not be mowed due to quad holes and ruts filled with water
- turned around and went one mile to the east, then north towards St. Malo, where the road allowance hits Hwy 59

- started mowing in west ditch and got hung up twice – too many ruts from the water in the bottom of the ditch, right up to almost the upper shoulder – this ditch needs to be leveled – proceeded through town and headed north on Hwy 59.

5.2.3.2 North of St Malo

- did not go through St. Malo Park – headed east on Hwy 403 past Debonair Campground
- had been twice as much rain north of St. Malo, more towards St-Pierre-Jolys and towards Winnipeg
- trail boss still able to lead the way in the 4x4 truck without making ruts and passed through wet spots with minimal difficulty
- tractor was able to cross the steel bridge at Coulée des Naults but truck had to go around by La Rochelle
- only section that was a problem was a short stretch south of the RM of De Salaberry disposal grounds – ruts filled with water and nowhere to go from one side to the other – rough and even with the mower up and the 4x4 on, the tractor got stuck – at the north end, the bucket had to be used to pull the tractor out of a hole.

5.2.3.3 North of St-Pierre-Jolys

- no mowing in Otterburne as what needs mowing is done by Providence College
- final two miles in the RM of De Salaberry, north on the dirt road past the Crystal Springs Hutterite Colony, were really soft, even though the road looked dry on the surface
- could no longer travel with the truck, even with 4x4 on, sank deeply – could no longer travel on any dirt roads

5.2.4 Town of St-Pierre-Jolys

- nothing to mow in St-Pierre-Jolys

5.2.5 Town of Niverville

- nothing to mow in Niverville

5.2.6 RM of Ritchot – June 19

5.2.6.1 St. Adolphe

- started on top of the dike just south of bridge over the Red River on Hwy 210
- mowed under the bridge – found two trails going around what is now a drained beaver pond – trails full of dead drowned trees and ruts
- new-growth willows at least 10 feet high, north of the pond – tall willows leaning required cutting two, six-foot swaths to make the trail wide enough

“I have talked with my helper lots over the last few days. He has never maintained a trail, has never ridden on one, by bike or ATV, nor has he really walked on trails in his life before. So this experience was new. He says by far the prettiest section is along the Roseau River with the deep banks, as you approach the Senkiw Swinging Bridge from the east. His idea of trail is more the lower river-bottom forest sections in Emerson, or the well-treed sections south of Ridgeville. He likes to see all sorts of different species of trees, wild flowers like Old Man’s Beard, Lady Slippers or Seneca Root. He found the boundary road quite unusual. For six miles, he mowed a path as straight as an arrow, nothing in all directions, just prairie and blue sky and tall grass. He says it gives you the feeling of the expanse of flatland, only drawback being those nasty pocket gopher mounds where he had to hang on to the steering wheel for fear of being bumped right off the tractor.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss



Cutting up downed maples north of St. Adolphe.

- chain-sawed at least four large maples that had fallen right across the trail and mowed through
- cut the south loop around the pond as well
- cut the west ditch along Hwy 200, which was marked with signs – no evidence of being used or mowed before as there was water in the ditch, now higher on the shoulder's grassy side to where the trail crosses Hwy 200 and heads eastward on Twin Creek Rd.

5.2.7.2 North of St. Adolphe

- headed north on Shapansky Rd to the Red River floodway's south side entrance.
- Shapansky is only partially graveled – the gumbo was too wet to continue north
- intended to do the final section from the floodway, starting at Duff Roblin Park, and mowing back to Shapansky Rd but decided it was too wet

5.3 First signage

5.3.1 Town of Emerson

5.3.1.1 Metal posts – June 28

- pounded in 25 steel posts and put up some much needed directional signs in the Emerson swinging bridge area
- used a snow-fence post-pounder from the town, in four whacks the post was two inches in the ground, even in the hard pack gravel next to the bridge
- screws were self-tapping, meaning no drilling

5.3.1.2 Wooden posts – July 7

- finally got the post-hole auger rented – most places rent eight-inch bits, which would mean a lot of tamping for the small posts being used – Winkler had a four-inch bit – booked it for July 5 – drove there, but it was gone by mistake, so

wasted trip

- put on the little Trans Canada Trail signs and Crow Wing stickers periodically on the directional signs
- started at the tourist bureau, south parking lot and wound back to the log buildings, headed north around Lake Louise
- put up extra signs at Fort Dufferin and around Hwy 75 bridge, with larger Trans Canada Trail signs where visibility is highest
- put some on Hwy 200, by the golf course and one by the post office

“At this point, I would say we are done mowing. I don't see us going back just to do the floodway. When I toured that section last time, there is no set path in place. The trail is just kind of south from the floodway, over the ice berm and heading east, under Hwy 200 bridge, and then aim for the dirt road running north from Shapansky Rd. There is a deep ditch at the end of that dirt road, which we barely got through in the spring and that was with no rain. It would surely now be impassable. And with a farmer's field sowed all along the south side, there is no way to get across. Until we can get a culvert there which Linda suggested, it would be useless to cut a trail on the floodway leading to nowhere. When we put the signs up, we will assess this culvert situation.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

“The auger is perfect and we found many things below the surface. No two holes are the same. Some holes have rocks, and soil goes from wet to super dry, and we had to use our hands to get the powdery sand out. We pound, we tamp, we put in signs.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

“Putting these posts in is not as easy as most things, for those who think it is. I should bring the auger to a meeting and have them drill a hole in the tall grass of a ditch. Hit a stone and the auger spins, and you get the handle in the guts. Drill in sandy dry soil, pull the auger out, and you look down and all the dirt fell back in the hole. And you start over!”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

“We used all the posts we took with us today and still lots on my trailer. It's getting to be a science of how many to take and not run out, with pre-drilled signs, as I have to lug everything along in my truck and drive every inch of the trail, bumps, rocks, tree branches and so hot!”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

- grass and weeds are growing even faster – the Emerson section will need mowing soon

5.3.2 RM of Franklin

5.3.2.1 South of Senkiw Bridge - July 8

- an absolutely gruelling day – much harder than mowing even when there is chain sawing involved
- got all the way to the south side of the Senkiw Swinging Bridge
- put in a lot of new posts, replaced the missing ones and those chewed up by farmers running over them with the gang mowers
- clarified the route at Hamilton's – it's a nice section
- drove into the Reserve and saw people mowing further by the wigwam pole enclosure – maintenance crew introduced themselves and explained that they were with the Crow Wing Trail and were putting up more signs
- trail boss Arseny explained that they would be back in a week or so to mow and apologized that the reserve had been missed the first time due to a sign missing on the road
- on busier roads, more TCT signs were put up
- Ridgeville got more through town, as there weren't any there



Wayne Arseny signs Ridgeville.

5.3.2.2 North of Senkiw bridge to intermunicipal road – July 9

- no directional signs were present at the north entrance to the swinging bridge – a new post and two signs were put up clearly showing the turn now coming out and heading west
- put new signs on the hydro pole in front of the Senkiw Hall – it is a good visible location when the hall is being used
- existing steel sign on the corner turning north off Senkiw Road needs straightening or a new post, as it is leaning badly – leaning posts do not give a good impression
- new sign was installed on long stretch mid-way to blocked section of trail
- the crew walked a fair stretch of the blocked trail from the south side – it had been recently cut with a brush mower, five feet wide – mowing started about a 100 yards in from a gate connecting to the farmyard – the first 100 yards from the south entrance still needs cutting – there was taller grass with some young trees leaning in – the trail was bumpier than expected – the trail hugs the west fence line with thicker bush covering the rest of the municipal roadway – the terrain is quite rocky so the adjacent property owner was in the process of removing some of the larger stones that were affecting his mowing – holes from stone removal had not yet been filled
- Moose Creek Road was impassable as was the intermunicipal/meridian road, so signage could not be updated



Load of damaged signs.

“And when we drilled out holes at each mile, we found such different textures. Emerson's soil coming out of the hole fine and near La Rochelle, it's lumpy. Near the floodway, it's totally like plaster, and it almost circles as it clings to the auger and spins off in these shapes. The best greenhouse type sandy loam is on the RRFN. Too many stones north of St. Malo, we couldn't drill a hole without being spun around when the auger hit a rock no matter how many new holes we tried digging in an eight-foot area?”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

5.3.3 RM of De Salaberry – July 9

- started out on the north side of Moose Creek Road

- put up some new signs on Moose Creek Road closer to town – used the hydro poles on the east side – there are many homes on both sides of the road – no previous signage except at mile roads
- new signage installed in St. Malo – there could be more added in between the longer street sections as there are only signs at a turn but that will have to be discussed with the LUD (local urban district)
- drove around to the far end of the St. Malo Park – signage was good coming out of the park
- new sign put on the curve one mile west of Chartier Road plus new signs on this north/south road at the transition from new road to undeveloped road allowance that is a grass trail
- replaced the missing turn sign coming onto the gravel road heading west (just north of the two interpretative signs, three kilometres east of La Rochelle)
- new sign was installed on Hamonic Road on hydro pole heading west as it is a long stretch with no signs
- a new north turn sign was installed onto dirt trail heading north along grain field – there is a plastic culvert on this northward turn, partially exposed due to someone not adequately covering it during installation or farmer has scraped too much off the top – culvert has caved in, probably needs replacement – not big enough for a tire to fall in but a foot could
- when this dirt trail was first mowed, there were ruts and a big water hole near where the trail curves – someone has leveled the dirt trail nicely as well as the big mud hole
- over the steel bridge on Coulée des Nault to Gagné Road – south part of disposal grounds section very rutted by ATVs – needs leveling badly – remainder of road going north was fine – put a new sign on north side of east-west road (Berard) that intersects disposal ground road
- north of St-Pierre-Jolys five new signs were placed on hydro poles north of the hospital along Rat River Road
- north of Otterburne, where Poirier Rd heads west – just before house marker 16106 – trail sign currently mounted on steel post with a CURVE sign – post is badly bent – tried to straighten with a chain to the bumper – post was too loose and just swung around – needs replacement – added a new sign on the hydro pole where Poirier Rd changes to dirt from gravel



Interpretive signs east of La Rochelle.

“I just sense the sign placers were timid about where to place them, and you almost have to look for them or would miss them. We put a lot of forethought into each placement, which hydro pole to use, spacing, and a pole that stood out without cattails in front. Each post drilled and put at an intersecting road. We would walk back and forth, checking what the contour of the ditch was in the deep grass, thinking of farmers with equipment making the turns, and of those cutting grass along the side.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

“There are sure to be complaints coming, and I will deal with them. I already got a call this morning from an Emerson farmer. Soon as he saw new signs along the gravel road on the way home, he was out on his ATV, checking where we put them along his fields. We intentionally put one post two feet from the edge of his grain field as he has pushed our trail over eight feet in the last few years, well into the town roadway to get a few more acres. I moved that post to appease his concern that he would hook it with his equipment. It was also a chance to get things straightened out with him. He is now happy.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

5.3.4 Village of St-Pierre-Jolys – July 9

- installed a new sign on hydro pole on Parenteau Rd just south of the wooden bridge over Joubert Creek south-east of St-Pierre-Jolys
- at La Fourche Road, when turning left, current trail

sign was hidden by hanging branches from a boulevard tree – maintenance crew trimmed it, even though it looked like it was privately owned

- did not enter Carillon Park, but at the entrance there could be another sign – not obvious which way trail goes on entering the park – might need for more signs in park to show clear way in and out – steel sign post at entrance/exit next to village office is twisted
- good signage through St-Pierre-Jolys but the TCT sign in front of the museum is faded badly and needs replacement

5.3.5 RM of Ritchot – July 9

- many missing signs – RM of Ritchot is now fully signed

5.3.6 General

- signage took more time and effort than mowing
- it required driving every mile of trail – when it came to mowing, whole sections were left out because there was no grass to mow
- not a simple matter of having a box of signs on the seat and just tacking them up – the auger had to be lugged along as well as a small load of fence posts
- there were more slightly bent signs than expected
- wooden posts work well because signs can be drilled in from any angle and as many as needed – in some places a steel post works better as it is taller, sturdier and tougher to pull out (can be cemented in place) – rural municipalities of Franklin and De Salaberry use steel road sign posts – RM of Ritchot uses 9 foot high, 4 inch x 4 inch posts that look a little too big for the small blue CWT directional sign
- some board members are concerned about posts being covered in snow and snowplows hitting them
- when steel posts are being driven over by farmers mowing the ditch because they don't look up until they are on top of them, it shows no matter where you put things, someone is going to hit them
- even with forethought that doesn't mean the signs always stay put – northwest of Niverville the trail turns on a well-used gravel road that comes out just south of St Adolphe on Hwy 200 – the corner is obvious with a new culvert and lots of new crushed limestone with no grass on the corner – that's where the sign was put, still it has disappeared a few times



CWT directional sign atop a steel post in the RM of Ritchot.



Type of steel post used in the rural municipalities of Franklin and De Salaberry

5.4 Second mowing and weed-whacking – July 20 to 22

5.4.1 Town of Emerson – July 20

- started on the west side
- grass has definitely grown since last mow – weeds have grown more – willow shelter belt trail section very nice with the overhead tree canopy – some willow branches had to be picked up in front of the mower as these trees drop branches with any strong wind

- new signage has put the traffic onto the trail now instead of a short-cut as before
- as there are gravel and dirt roads around Lake Louise, started mowing next at Fort Dufferin
- Post Road Heritage Group mowing their interpretive trails, so started down by the river at Fishermen Park – three vehicles were parked, so fishing is happening
- trail for the first hundred yards has high weeds, shorter on the path where mowed a month ago – tracked a foot to one side to take down the taller ones, which lean into the trail
- the two kilometres from Fort Dufferin to the swinging bridge is well packed by ATVs and in many sections there is no grass at all – tree canopy doesn't promote grass
- stinging nettles plentiful and actually quite pretty – up to four feet high in places – nettles form a rolling carpet-looking effect between the trees and the winding trail, something you would think of seeing in a provincial park and not Emerson
- about every 100 yards there is thick grass and the six-foot-wide mower worked beautifully to uniformly cut a swath through
- there were no fallen trees – hanging branches were trimmed back on last mow
- travel with the tractor was a few mphs quicker than last time
- periodic mud puddles on the trail in the low spots – ruts are not too deep – as they dry, the ATVs may adjust their passing and squash down these ridges – walkers have plenty of room to go around.
- at the train bridge can only back up and mow a portion of the way up walkway, so weed-whacking will be required from the top
- made two swaths to the west approach of the swinging bridge – weedwhacking is required on both sides of the swinging bridge approaches
- mowed from the Red River bridge back to the south side of the swinging bridge
- made a new path to Catfish Point boat ramp area – the town has made new pad and parking lot – could see a foot path, so there are people fishing and taking the short walk to the swinging bridge.
- overall the west trail was in excellent condition and seeing significant use
- less traffic on the spur Forbidden Forest trail to the KOA lookout platform – found a geo-cache hidden under the look-out platform and by the entries



Emerson trail user

“As it is the second mow, there is no need to walk in front of the tractor to assure no debris, so I made the extra effort to weed-whack each sign post. I just want everyone to see that we have been out on the trail, and there is no better way to do that on a well-graveled road than to see each post nicely weed-whacked.”

When I was mowing around the sign post on the south side of the Ridgeville hall, Mr. Wilkinson was cutting the grass by the hall, so he was quite impressed that I weed-whacked both driveways into the hall parking lot. I also weed-whacked around a hydro pole on a yard half-way to the hall. No other hydro pole on the street was weed-whacked. Some of the locals are making small talk about the trail so it's all positive, from what I can tell, short of the one farmer taking our sign down.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

5.4.2 RM of Franklin

5.4.2.1 Border to Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation – July 21

- started on the west side of the RM of Franklin on the Zero Mile (border road)
- mowing began three miles east where the gravel ends and the border road turns to grass

- surprising how much the grass has grown over the last month – at least 12 inches with milkweed and sweet clover much taller
- entire border road should be bladed – just solid grass covered pocket gopher mounds – not really any of the stretch was smooth – very hard to mow – tractor can only go at half speed – even when walking, can't move at a good clip
- Dana Meise (the Trans Canada Trail walker earlier this year) also mentioned the condition of this road
- border road is interesting considering what it was originally and what it is now after farmers seem to have altered it – between Mile 2 and 3 of the border road heading east, trail goes from being right in the middle to the north side with the ditch being in the middle – between Mile 3 and 4, trail goes to south side of this centre ditch because the farmer on the north side has tilled beyond his property line and right to the centre ditch – Mile 4 to 5 is back to being in middle of road
- heading east on the 1 mile road, put up four more directional signs as several people from Emerson indicated they got lost heading eastward – put up the first one on the north side of the road, on a big dead tree just past the former Stephens' trail – the second one on a fence post on the north side about three-quarters of a mile along – third one on a hydro pole about a mile east, almost opposite a well pump house of some sort – fourth sign 1¾ mile down, on the north side on a fence post.
- at the end of the 1 mile road, where the trail turns north on Chubaty Road, new wooden post on corner that had two directional signs on it was MISSING – had been intentionally broken off, with either a bumper of a vehicle or tractor bucket – the sign had been placed well off the roadway – definitely intentional as the sign was completely gone – clearly on municipal roadway, so nothing short of vandalism – recommend putting up standard steel post and two corner signs as in most areas along the the RM of Franklin section of CWT trail – for time being, put up two signs on hydro pole on the opposite side of road, on the NW corner of the intersection facing east
- had placed a metal sign, pulled out from the abandoned south side of Stephens' trail, on the corner of the 2 mile road where (the rerouted CWT) turns west – no vandalism to it, even though it was new
- at the end of the north running bush trail, ending at the 4 mile corner by Seward's yard, put up two new directional signs to show the westward turn – must have missed it last time – this one should also be a steel municipal style post, placed on the NW corner – new sign heading west on the 4 mile road was put on a big cottonwood tree on the north side of the road half-way to the Ridgeville Rd, (#218) close to the driveway of the old Lindsay yard
- weed-whacked every sign post in RM of Franklin – normally posts (being only five feet out of the ground) would only be trimmed if tall grass reduced their visibility
- at the 5 to 6 mile road heading north, just into the bush section, would be great if municipality could level about 200 yards of ruts and fill one mud hole before creek
- creek has solid bottom with lots of stones and gravel, so doesn't need a culvert
- appeared to be a lot of traffic on this unmaintained road – even more traffic north of the creek, with farmers checking their cattle regularly on both sides

“On the well-treed section between the 4 mile and 3 mile roads, south of Ridgeville, the local farmer must be happy with us clearing the trail and removing the downed trees, as we found an overhead sign, 12 feet up over the trail which read ‘Careful! Live electric fence wire running overhead’. He took power from one side of the trail to the other side, to power his other fence and didn't call us to say he wanted the trail closed because his cow pasture is being affected.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

- between 7 and 8 mile roads, the roadway is clay with fist-sized stones – again appears to be quite a bit of traffic – road could use a blading at least once a year
- Hamilton's trail section, starts north from 11 mile road, running along the bush line with Mueller field on the east side – used the same trail as mowed the first time, following the fence line – is very rough due to new owners having used a breaking cultivator to loosen the sod – enough room was left to mow along the centre fenceline – heading north, a new trail was mowed right into the thick bush, continuing to hug same fence line
- with Hamilton's permission, removed three post-widths of electric fencing wire to get into the fenced area and continued northward – lots of downed trees that were cleared – pictures show a very nice well canopied groomed trail – definitely an appealing part of the RM of Franklin trail system – mowed thru this thick bush for a good quarter mile – the end of the bush, Hamilton again allowed three strands of barbwire to be remove – a jog in the trail was made.

5.4.2.2 Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation to Senkiw Swinging Bridge

- cut the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nations trail this time
- headed eastward from where the gravel road ends and the grass trail starts – lots of young poplar trees starting to grow in thick – ongoing mowing is necessary otherwise trail will grow in totally within a year – small trees on both sides of the trail are at least one to two inches in size – after making a double back loop, trail goes into heavy hazelnuts and other small trees thru the winding bush for about a mile – hazelnuts and other trees were really growing inward – mower makes a six foot swath along the ground but bush along sides are pushing inward
- continuing eastward along the river, there is a small campsite with the stage-like structure – past that is the last split in the trail before heading up a big hill to get out of the river bottom trail
- had put up two directional signs on a railway tie fence post on the south side of the trail to avoid confusion where the trail splits – both signs had been REMOVED and taken.
- at top of the hill we reversed the signs on the RM of Franklin metal post as they were backwards and facing away from the trail
- at the end of the trail where the roads to the cottages start, ran into Mr. Marion – indicated he lives on one of the first lots – very pleasant welcome with indication he had read about the maintenance project in the paper and was glad to see us out mowing



Mowing trail north of Senkiw Swinging Bridge.



The poplar trees growing on either side of the trail are uncommonly large for this area. The width of this trunk, three feet up, measured 18 inches. A sign should be made pointing out its width, to make this tree an attraction and point out its rarity.

5.4.2.3 North of Senkiw bridge to RM of De Salaberry – July 21

- started third day of mowing at the north side of the swinging bridge – mowed all the way back to the river – weed whacked at the entrance and cleaned up there – weed whacked around the Senkiw School cairn, all around the gate entrance and walked through the posts right up tight to the bush. – no visual signs of much usage in this location
- a few passes were mowed right to the road – more obvious now to anyone driving by that it's a used trail
- the poplar trees growing on either side of the trail are uncommonly large for this area – cleared the shrubbery from

around the biggest one right on the edge of the trail, about 25 yards in on the west side of the path – now there is a nice small clearing around the tree that makes it stand out as having some significance

- put two directional signs in front of the Senkiw Hall and are very visible driving by – the RM of Franklin steel sign a mile up where the trail heads north needs a new post as it is crooked.

5.4.3 RM of De Salaberry – July 22

- started on the south side of the RM of De Salaberry – still weren't able to gain access at the intermunicipal/ Moose Creek roads – simply too rutted and full of holes with large stones protruding, making it too risky to sustain damage to rented mower
- possible alternate route is an undeveloped road that heads straight north from the RM of Franklin trail – it is a full mile and only built a few years ago – there is duck habitat on the east side – roadway is fairly rough, but nothing like Moose Creek Road – at the end of the mile, there are several houses on each side – from there it is pretty with a tunnel-like passageway of trees canopied overhead
- there is a well-used ATV trail running along the west side of Hwy 59 from there to where Moose Creek Road intersects Hwy 59 – ATV trail is smooth with no holes – lots of tall grass that had never been mowed – mowed this two mile section as a gesture to the users and a step to opening dialogue with the ATVers whom CWTA will have to liaise for future shared use of trails in the RM of De Salaberry
- mowed along Hwy 59 to the south side of St. Malo and weed-whacked every directional sign
- on Hamonic Road where the trail turns north about three-quarters of a mile east of La Rochelle the directional sign was found pulled out and laying in the ditch next to the hole – obviously someone didn't like it there – at least it wasn't taken
- along the Rat River Road north of St-Pierre-Jolys, weed-whacked most of the hydro poles where signs were mounted last time
- westward past Otterburne there was still one RM curve sign with a directional sign on it a mile or so west that had not been replaced – a new post is needed as it is bent half way over



North end of alternate route for Moose Creek Rd.



Evidence of ATV use in west ditch of Hwy 59 south of St. Malo.

5.4.4 RM of Ritchot to Niverville – July 22

- Crystal Springs Road north of PR 305 was gumbo.
- mile road, running east and west, between Fontaine and Clear Spring roads along a river lot boundary had been leveled and mowed with a 12-foot mower
- between Fontaine Rd (that leads to the Mennonite Landing) and Crown Valley Rd, the trail follows the east side ditch along Hwy 200 for a quarter mile – the trail was not mowed



For a quarter mile, the CWT follows a curving PR 200, bordered by a steep ditch.

because it is very steep with water at the bottom – there were no ATV tracks or evidence of anyone using this section.

5.4.5 Town of Niverville – July 22

- along Crown Valley Rd, the directional signs had not been moved from the south side of the road to the north side where gravel pathway starts along the south side of the future golf course – it is not clear that the gravel path can be taken all the way to the Hespeler Park entrance
- at Heritage Trail and Main Street by Chicken Chef, where the trail turns westward, there was only one directional sign on the street corner pointing southward, the westward sign was missing

5.4.6 RM of Ritchot – north of Niverville – July 22

- weed whacked signs along Carrière Road into St. Adolphe from the south – trimmed trees covering directional sign just south of the dike
- followed the dike and mowed into the old park, but got lost and backtracked out – need to meet with St. Adolphe rep to see where to put up more signs in this old park as it was not clear where the trail goes
- mowed under the Red River bridge
- mowed along Hwy 200 north of St Adolphe – all the hydro poles were weed whacked to Twin Creek Road
- no more mowing after this point – did not proceed to the end of the trail to mow that quarter mile at the end where it hits the floodway – need direction from the Manitoba Floodway Authority on where to mow and sign



Mowing along St. Mary's Rd. (PR 200) north of St. Adolphe

5.5 Signage follow-up – August 12

- on the entire 191 km from Emerson to St. Adolphe, only four signs were missing: two in RM of Franklin, one in RM of De Salaberry and one in RM of Ritchot

5.5.1 RM of Ritchot sign

- sign was intentionally removed – what is strange is that it wasn't in the way – someone pulled it out and took it – sign was put up in late June
- located on north-west corner of Sood and Gauthier roads – directs people to turn west towards St. Mary's Road – post was set pretty far back from the corner, so as not to interfere with any larger equipment making that turn
- this is a key turn on RM of Ritchot's trail – a fairly busy gravel road with no houses in sight – important to know why it was taken down – RM foreman helped replace the post
- not as many signs put up in the RM of Ritchot

“ I got a call from XX XXXX's son. He says he pulled out all the signs on that road from Hamilton's to the Reserve turn-off. Would be two signs I am guessing – one at the corner indicating a turn north to the reserve and one mid-point between Hamilton's and the corner sign. In both cases, I looked at this and placed them right up against the driveways so when anyone is cutting, they are already swinging around to avoid the culvert.

He said the signs were in the way of his swathing. He said he pulled out the signs and left them lying on the ground. He wants to meet with me to discuss where they can go, so he can mow, and they are not in the way – more reasonable approach than just mowing over again. I will meet with him on this, but will assume already he wants them much deeper into the ditch – that will mean the bottom of the ditch, so a big steel sign will be needed, maybe an extra few feet in length”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

as the RM of Franklin – replaced ones missing where the trail turned and added signs at every mile on longer runs

5.5.2 RM of Franklin signs

- checked the sign on the 1 mile where it had been deliberately plowed over – metal post was intact – further west on the 1 mile, on the turn to the border, that new sign was flat again
- farmers hauling grain and hay have long trailers that their tail end and wheels miss the culvert, drop off the side road, and knock over CWT signs
- will have to go back and use a pounder to put it back up further off the road
- a crucially important sign as anyone coming off the boundary road will get lost without it

5.5.3 RM of De Salaberry sign

- sign that had been pulled out earlier is still intact

5.5.4 Niverville Signs

- important that the signs direct people to use the curving trail Niverville built on the north side of Crown Valley Road
- added blue signs on the railway crossing posts on Crown Valley Road and a new directional turn sign into Hespeler Park



Niverville trail north side of Crown Valley Road.

5.5.5 Knowing where signs go

- discovered there were different opinions as to where the trail should go at the Senkiw Swinging Bridge – first drive-through with municipal councillor indicated that the last section went up a steep bank – on second mow was told by someone familiar with trail that route did not go up steep bank – maintenance crew had taken down signs and switched direction on previous trip – now it appeared that original signs may have been correct
- in RM of Ritchot, the park dike section is not properly marked

5.6 Third mow – mowing backwards - September 19 to 21

- with two mows in the same direction, the taller grasses, weeds and sapling trees were often bent or leaning in one direction from being pushed over by the mower – going the opposite direction produced a clean cut as the mower actually chopped off the vegetation versus bending it over
- going the other direction also provided a different perspective on signs – often it was hard to see them because something was in the way that wasn't from the other direction
- this mow only took two days and fewer hours, so overall cost will be lower

5.6.1 St. Adolphe to Emerson

- started on south side of the Senkiw Swinging Bridge September 19 – worked back to Emerson, doing east side of Red River
- September 20 started on the west side of the river and continued up old Hwy 14, straight to St. Adolphe – saved mileage and time – planned the routes better – was able to do the entire trail in two full days
- was sunny and calm leaving Emerson – at St. Adolphe raining hard with gale force winds and hail – when rain was almost over started at Twin Creek Road – mowed the ditch along west side of PR 200 heading south
- a lot of areas, where the crew had mowed the trail, had now been mowed with municipal mowers or highway contractors – trail was not as obvious as it had been during the summer
- accessed the old St Adolphe Park, using the main street and over the dike – found no previous signage on where the trail went – one blue directional sign at the top of the dike

pointed south, but there is no trail on top of the dike going south – there are barriers on the dike to prevent anyone from even walking

- followed old road through park – it ended in the middle in the trees – quads have made several well-used paths in numerous directions – obviously a well-travelled area for locals, but not a sign to direct anyone anywhere
- mowed south and out of the trees – there is a wide open space now, with a quad trail to the toe of the dike
- there was no path up the dike to the gravel road on top that is supposed to be the CWT, which the crew came in on twice before when coming from the opposite direction
- municipal office staff maintain that the park is abandoned because it floods – as far as town is concerned, there is no value to having a trail going through it
- followed every mile of trail from St. Adolphe back to Niverville – only one sign was missing as before, on Gauthier Rd.
- travelling in reverse direction showed a few more signs were needed
- at the west end of Niverville, at Main Street and Heritage Trail a new sign had been put up but was pointing east instead of west – reversed the sign to point in the correct direction
- at south end of Hespeler Park there is a sign leaving the park and one on the railway crossing – nothing pointing to the graveled trail on the north side of the Crown Valley Road and nothing pointing to St Mary's (PR 200)
- full mile of grass road allowance past Crystal Springs Colony was rough – has not been leveled or graded for a while.
- trail going into Providence College from the west is visible – nothing showing it coming out and crossing the river bridge
- signs all the way into St-Pierre-Jolys were fine, but sign at far southeast corner overgrown with tree branches and too far back – people would miss it
- all other signage in RM of De Salaberry was intact except for one missing sign that will be replaced

5.6.2 St. Malo to Emerson

- more downed trees to cut up and remove than in the other two mows – one was a brute that took a half hour of cutting to block up

6. Financial

6.1 Revenue

Trails Manitoba maintenance grant 2011 - unspent	\$2,053.75
Trails Manitoba maintenance grant 2012	2,500.00
CWTA membership fees 2012	1,800.00
CWTA contribution	500.00
Trails Manitoba special contribution	2,100.00
Total revenues	\$8,953.75

6.2 Expenses

Labor	\$4,117.50
Mileage	1,537.20
Equipment rental	1,953.14
Miscellaneous tools	500.00
Diesel fuel	208.62
Safety vests & logos for signs	500.00
Total expenses	\$8,816.46

6.3 Budgeting

The original budget for the project was set at \$10,000. Actual costs were \$46.31 per kilometre. Caution should be exercised, though, in extrapolating this per kilometre cost to other trails or using it as a standard cost of maintenance. Each trail is different and must be assessed on its individual situation. Cost will depend on such things as the amount of infrastructure, density of population, ease of access for equipment, and amount of use.

Cost will also depend on the labor arrangements. In the case of the CWT, the board was fortunate in having available a trail boss who has a passion for the trail and consequently contributed many additional volunteer hours to the project. It is expected that commercial rates would have been significantly higher.

Significant efforts were made to do things as economically as possible, not quite but almost begging and borrowing, to make the project work in order to demonstrate the importance of trail maintenance. The question that has to be asked – is that approach sustainable over the longer term?

7. Observations

7.1 Planning

Planning is key to running a successful, cost efficient maintenance project. Travel the trail; identify potential problem areas; think about work-arounds in challenging areas; determine what equipment will be needed in what areas of the trail; establish logical timelines for the needed maintenance activities; identify key contact people for each trail section.

7.2 Trail use

7.2.1 Evidence of use

Some sections are being used, others are not. Some are used by walkers and bikers, others only by ATVs. In Emerson, while doing bulldozer work prior to mowing, heavy use by ATVs was visible, as was evidence of horses. On the U.S. border road, while doing first mowing, there was no evidence of any traffic. Vehicles were coming to the border from the north to check on crops, but no one else was on the border road. In RM of Franklin, while doing first mowing, there were signs that the local farmer had been ATVing to check his cattle. Turning north on the 5 mile road, the trail gets a bit wider and there were signs of some vehicle traffic on it. There was evidence of hiker use at the Senkiw Bridge. In RM of Ritchot, after the first mowing, there were ATV tracks in the west ditch along St. Mary's Rd.

After the second mowing and signing, there are definitely more users in some sections. People were now going where they had not when the trail was unmowed. The weed whacking improved the visibility of the trail both for those walking on it and those going by.

7.2.2 Divergent expectations

Expectations of how a trail will and should be used differ according to each person's vision for a trail. That can lead to challenges not only for developing a trail but also for maintaining it. CWTA board members, municipal councillors, landowners, users, and even Trails Manitoba and the

“I realize now that if I did not go on every inch when we did the original tour with the local board members, I may now not be on the right route to mow. We couldn't go on the blocked trail at the north end of the RM of Franklin or on the intermunicipal/meridian road with the truck back then, so now I am not sure. This is the case north of the blocked trail; behind Hamilton's; the river trail near the Senkiw swinging bridge; Mennonite Landing; and St. Adolphe Park.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

“I have for years been caught up in this way of thinking: walkers, walkers, walkers... because it's what I have seen the most, i.e. Prairie Path Finders. This is what most people do in Winnipeg. After walking 26 km with Dana Meise in Emerson alone and seeing how challenging that is, I now look to cyclists as a much bigger focus. Only they are capable of travelling the distances we have.

We can never have a cute serene trail like you see in Assiniboine Park, or the new trails around Birds Hill Park and the floodway. Big cities have more resources yet there are still maintenance issues. Last night, I had a chance to walk along a river trail off Osborne. They have benches, garbage cans and planted new trees along the pathway. Nice as it was, you could see the lack of a maintenance plan. Garbage cans were overflowing and, as I neared the Winnipeg Canoe Club, the sweet clover was seven feet high on both sides and leaning inward. The trail just disappeared and only brave walkers or cyclists made the single pass through the middle of this growth.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

Trans Canada Trail organizations have differing views on trail use. The greatest divergence of opinion is between motorized and non-motorized use of trails.

For example, the Rural Municipality of De Salaberry allows ATVs on all municipal road allowances and undeveloped roads; the Rural Municipality of Franklin does not allow ATVs where the CWT uses a road allowance or undeveloped road. The CWT uses municipal road allowances and undeveloped roads in both municipalities. Shared use creates maintenance problems if ATV users don't take appropriate care when riding, particularly in wet conditions. Who is then responsible for keeping the trail in a condition that can be used by cyclists and pedestrians? Trails are not top of mind for many municipal councils, and volunteer trail groups don't have the funds to repair damaged trails.

Shared use can also make trail continuity an issue. If one area allows ATVs unrestricted access while another does not, where do ATVers go when they reach the end of the trail in an unrestricted municipality? What do cyclists or pedestrians do when moving to an unrestricted municipality where a trail has been damaged by ATVs?

The divergence in expectations is due to the fact that some people want a trail that is quiet with minimal human disturbance so that they can experience nature close at hand. Others prefer the excitement and ease of travel that a motorized vehicle provides.

7.3 Financial

There is more to the job of trail maintenance than clearing the trail of debris, mowing and putting up signs. Trail maintenance involves more than manual labor. The role of the trail boss includes that of good-will ambassador for the trail by virtue of the fact that he or she is seen regularly in communities and out on the trail. Consequently that extra time should be factored into the budget.

The trail boss may find him/herself responding to farmers about relocating signs; landowners about access and preferred routing; and users about problems on the trail. Replacing removed or vandalized signs also consumes time. Consequently, there has to be money in the budget to cover these events.

There may be an expectation that the cost of trail maintenance would go down as a trail organization becomes familiar with the needs of its trail. However this is unlikely to be the case for several reasons. With better maintenance, come more use and more users, leading to requirements for increased maintenance. Weather impacts how much trail maintenance is required each year. A wet year means more and faster vegetation growth and potential damage

“ I was coming home for lunch today and as I drove over the Red River bridge, I passed eight ATVs. They were not locals. After lunch, I saw them loading two trailers with four ATVs each. It was nice to see visitors who just came to ride today. They made it across the river, with no map, just following the blue signs.

I talked to two customs guys who spent the weekend near the swinging bridge, as one of them has a cabin there. They went ATVing on Saturday. They both said they are disappointed that there are sections of the CWT which are barricaded off or posted as non-motorized. Their thought is if it's a municipal roadway, then everyone should be able to use it. They had to detour several sections on their way to St. Malo.

Other people from Emerson have also told me that they want to use their ATV all the way to the floodway and have their wives pick them up there.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

to paths. With basic maintenance in hand, there is more time to focus on adding or improving amenities, and that will increase maintenance needs.

In hiring labor for maintenance, the trail organization must be aware, in particular, of the Canada Revenue Agency's definition of contractor and employee in order to ensure source deductions are being handled appropriately. Other government agencies also have rules regarding hiring practices. For small organizations, without other employees, the reporting requirements may be challenging and at least create more paperwork for a volunteer board.

7.4 Labor

Ideally the lead person on a trail maintenance crew should be someone committed to the trail because they are motivated to go the "extra mile" and build relationships with people along the route. The job is part public relations – at least in the early years, while the maintenance routine is being established.

The project works best if the trail boss is allowed the latitude to use his/her own judgement as to what has to be done and when, as long as final product meets the expectations of the trail organization.

A large crew is not necessary as shown by this pilot project; however, one person alone would not be suitable for reasons of safety and the varied maintenance needs along a trail.

“When we do this again, I would request a sign to put on the back of the tractor as we are mowing or in transport mode saying Crow Wing Trail Maintenance Crew. We get a lot of stares as we drive along. People stop to watch us going by and in Niverville, as we were parked at the gas station getting a drink, one guy stopped to ask ‘What are you guys mowing???’”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

Suggestions have been made that summer students would be suitable for trail maintenance. This may be the case for crew but not for the trail boss position. The job requires planning, organizational, and communication skills that are gained through experience – experience that students usually do not have. The other limitation in hiring students is that the work is not full-time nor does it follow a regular schedule making it less attractive to students who prefer full-time summer work.

7.5 Infrastructure

7.5.1 Municipal responsibility

Municipal councils are always challenged with stretching tax dollars, so activities that seem to have a visible and immediate benefit, like graveling roads, buying equipment, and improving drainage, too often take precedence over things like trails and economic development that have a longer payback. This project has shown, though, that people will increase their use of trails if the trails are maintained and visible. In turn, taxpayers take notice and become more supportive of councils' investments in trails. Well maintained trails, over the long term, increase economic activity as more people travel within and between communities where trails are located.

Unfortunately, the "in-between" period – between building/locating a trail and having it regularly travelled – is a challenge for trail organizations. The "build and they will come" philosophy, in the case of trails does not work. **The philosophy needs to be "maintain it and they will come."**

It is important for municipal councils to realize that they need to do more than allow trail organizations to use municipal infrastructure; they need to assist with maintaining it when the

work is beyond the scope of a trail organization. This includes bridges, culverts, damaged trail, and road allowances.

7.5.2 Bridges and culverts

Culverts need to be wide enough to allow a small tractor and brush mower to pass over. Bridges also need to be wide enough to allow a mower and tractor to pass unless there is a road in close proximity that doesn't require the maintenance crew to make a long detour. Bridges add points of interest along a trail and do not have to be complicated affairs. In some cases, from a visitor experience perspective, bridges may be preferred over culverts.

In most instances, municipalities need to be involved in culvert and bridge repair and maintenance because they are beyond the financial and equipment capabilities of most trail organizations.

7.5.3 Damaged and washed out trail

Trails, particularly along road allowances, that are damaged by multi-use need to be levelled or graded soon after the damage is done to prevent further damage. This is something that cannot be done by trail maintenance crews.

In some cases, more than levelling by the municipal grader may be required. While appearing costly at the outset, it may be cheaper in the long run to contract someone familiar with road/trail construction to fix those parts of a trail that are consistently being damaged or are in a significant state of disrepair.

In the case of Moose Creek Rd., the intermunicipal road and the RM of De Salaberry disposal ground trail, a local contractor was contacted to provide quotes and recommendations to improve these three problem areas. Recommendations included excavating material from existing ditches; blading excavated material to create a six-foot "platform" for the trail; sloping sides of trail and ditch to 4/1 to eliminate steep edges; and compacting the trail. Estimated cost was \$10,000 in total.

The recommendations and costs were presented to the RM of De Salaberry council. Council chose to reroute the trail straight north from RM of Franklin and one mile east of Moose Creek Rd. along a road allowance and then along Highway 59 to St. Malo and proposed that municipal workers fix the disposal ground road as council intended to rent a caterpillar to do work at the disposal grounds. Estimated in-kind contribution would be about \$3,000 when the work is undertaken.

Washed out roads, such as Twin Creek Road north of St. Adolphe, that require substantial rebuilding pose challenges for the continuity of the trail and safety of travellers.

“... trail bridges need to be NICE, pretty and, if at all possible, unique. A bridge is always a spot people stop at, look in the water, and take a break. Often local people have a piece of history or decorative gate posts from some old building or property. Incorporating these into a bridge makes it unique and something people take a picture of.

Regarding the bridge between St. Malo and St-Pierre-Jolys, Coulée des Naults ... there should be some sort of small information sign on where it came from, what era. Give the bridge a name, make it a destination. It is a very interesting steel bridge. The bridge could be all black, just the decking being wood. I would even remove those new looking cables along the side and have a mobile welder weld a solid metal handrail. It doesn't have to be heavy handrail, even a half inch rod or just an angle iron would do. Making the hand rail fire engine red would be good contrast and would stand out from the road, inviting your eyes inward wanting to cross over it. This bridge has to stand out and not look run down and forgotten like it is now.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

7.5.4 Signage

There are several options for sign posts and several things need to be taken into account in the choice of post and placement. Wood posts are more in keeping with natural areas, but they are more difficult to transport and install.

Metal posts are easier for affixing signs, lighter to transport and require less work to install.

Terrain, soil type, and location all impact what type of post that makes the most sense for each location.

The key is to put signs where travellers can see them, without being in the way of municipal or farm equipment.

Vandalism is difficult to prevent, but “keeping an ear to the ground” or being familiar with local residents could help reduce such incidents.

Directional signs should point in both directions, not just one direction, so that people know where to head regardless of what direction they are approaching from. It

is also useful for those positioning directional signs to travel in both directions on a trail because appropriate sign location may change, depending on the direction of travel.

While directional signs are important to allow people to know where they are, interpretive signs add interest to the route. Interpretive signs can be about so many things: local history; crops, livestock and farming methods; ecology (common birds, insects, plants), points of interest.

“I will use steel posts for the posts that keep disappearing. Steel will be much stronger and harder to pull out. They will be longer so I can put them deeper into the ditch and out of the way. I am going to drive a rod into the ground just below ground level, on an angle and out of site. The rod will go thru one of the holes in the steel post.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

7.6 Road allowances – whose rights-of-way are they?

In several places, farmers or landowners have “taken over” municipal road allowances and, by extension, the Crow Wing Trail. On the border road east of Emerson, for example, one farmer has encroached so much onto the road allowance that the trail has a jog in it to go around the cultivated field. Landowners have barricaded sections in order to discourage ATVs.

The question becomes who has “ownership” of the road allowance – is it a public, semi-private or private thoroughfare? If trails are built on road allowances, there needs to be some assurance that access will not be restricted by private landowners.

7.7 Rerouting and location of trails

There is a high price associated with rerouting trail segments – the actual cost to physically prepare a new trail; the frustration and confusion on the part of users who can’t find the new route or have to detour long distances; the time to receive Trails Manitoba and Trans Canada Trails approval; and the time and cost to alter route maps and re-educate people about the relocated trail.

For these reasons, it is important to carefully consider initial trail routing – can the trail be built to withstand heavy rains/flooding; can motorized use be accommodated without damage to the trail where the trail uses public rights of way; can trespassing on private adjacent property be discouraged; can the likelihood of loss of permission to cross private land be reduced; in the event of the need to reroute are there suitable alternate locations nearby?

7.8 Communication

There are two stakeholder groups that need to be aware of the Crow Wing Trail:

- individuals, i.e. the general public and trail users; and
- organizations/agencies i.e. six municipal governments; one First Nation; Providence College; provincial government departments – Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation; Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship (St. Malo Provincial Park); the Manitoba Floodway Authority; Trails Manitoba and Trans Canada Trail.

Individuals are perhaps the easier of the two groups with which to communicate. It's a case of making people aware of the trail – what it is, where it is; and how it can be used. The fact that there was a maintenance crew on the trail at least five times during the summer made people aware of the trail and that there was something going on with it. It made them curious. Ongoing maintenance will make them more comfortable using and exploring the trail. Of course, coverage in the local media and availability of trail maps on the Trails Manitoba website with links to the Trans Canada Trail are also key in communicating with the general public.

Communicating with the second group of stakeholders is more complex because it is not enough to make them aware of the trail. Organizations and agencies need to be aware of their role and relationship with the trail. Equally important, if not more so, board members of the Crow Wing Trail Association need to understand the relationship that each of these organizations thinks it has, should have, and needs to have with the trail. The relationships may be different for each organization; overlap with other organizations; or be partnerships.

The relationships can be as varied as providing permits, undertaking maintenance, allowing access, providing funding or assisting development, but they all come to one end – ensuring the success of the Crow Wing Trail.

7.9 Maintenance opens doors

When a trail is properly maintained it becomes attractive and people want to use it. Economic opportunities present themselves when a trail is seen as a destination.

When maintenance is being addressed, it is possible to take a broader look at what can become part of the trail experience. Tours of sections of the trail could be developed by communities or

“People are happy to see that we are being responsible and maintaining the Trans Canada Trail. I have gone all over the communities, proudly wearing my vest. People stop and ask what is being maintained. People go check what was done and start feeling confident enough to go out and follow the signs themselves.

I ran into people from Dufresne who were camping in Emerson and following the signs. They had made it up to the Emerson Swinging Bridge. I also met a gentleman from Halbstadt, who visited Fort Dufferin. He saw the fresh mow and heard the tractor, so he headed back into town and waited to talk to us. He doesn't walk but says he promotes the trail a lot. He told us he had read the media release that there was a trail maintenance crew out this year, and he was happy to see that being done. He was wondering why no one is mowing the Emerson to Altona section of the Trans Canada Trail. We found a geo-cache on the trail, on the Forgotten Forest Trail near Fort Dufferin. By the entries, there are many people from out of the area geo-caching now.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

private entrepreneurs. Communities could co-operate to hold annual trail-related events. Recreation directors could promote the trail as part of an active lifestyle.

The ideas are limitless. All that is needed is some imagination and a well maintained trail.

7.10 Board involvement

In the case of the Crow Wing Trail Association, the board is very much a working board. This means board members must be aware of and understand that they are expected to assist with maintaining the section of the trail that they represent. They must be willing to commit not only to regular board meetings but also to become familiar with their section of the trail and monitor it regularly. This is important in order to ensure that the trail maintenance crew can accomplish its job efficiently.

7.11 Funding

Local trail associations provide the eyes and ears on the ground to ensure that trails are located in logical places, are integrated into communities, and reflect the flavor of the region through which they pass. They administer small amounts of funds that assist in keeping a trail open. These groups are volunteer and generally have no money to hire anyone to assist with all the administration related to a trail. Consequently local trail association volunteers are always at risk of burn-out

Municipal governments provide routes for trails on public land, assist with infrastructure maintenance where possible, and provide funds to trail associations through membership. Neither local trail associations or rural municipal governments can fund proper trail maintenance on their own. This is particularly the case in rural areas where population is sparse, and there are long distances between centres of population. Rural trail associations have limited sources of funding while rural municipal councils have many demands of a limited tax base.

If a national or provincial trail network is to be successful, there must be a strategy to provide funding to trail associations for trail maintenance through both corporate sponsorships and federal/provincial government funding that can be spearheaded by national and provincial trail umbrella organizations, such as Trails Manitoba.

“Once we have our maintenance taken care of, we need to promote the trail to as many people as possible, as even locals would have a lot to learn. It’s like the Tall Grass Prairie in Tolstoi when I couldn’t get my dad to go, as he says he grew up in this swamp and farm land. He lived here and farmed it, so what more can there be to see? After doing several tours there, I learned more in 10 minutes than my dad taught me in a lifetime. To him, there is only goldenrod. I learned we have three kinds growing here, and I saw that within only 100 yards!

After drilling all these holes to install posts, and seeing that the soil differs so much from mile to mile, I think we should take core samples of soil, three feet down and display in a clear plastic tube. People could then see just how different the soil is along the Crow Wing Trail. This explains why trees in certain areas are so short and stumpy. There are only a few inches of dirt on top, and the rest is sand, gravel or rock. In Emerson, you can go three feet down and get black dirt which will grow anything.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

8.0 Recommendations

1. Continue trail maintenance with a trail boss

Make trail maintenance with a trail boss who is compensated for the work a permanent activity of the Crow Wing Trail Association. Proper trail maintenance cannot be done by volunteers alone. Volunteers could assist with maintenance under the direction of the trail boss.

2. Secure increased funding for trail maintenance

In order to maintain the Crow Wing Trail to a standard equal to that found in provincial parks, funding on more than an ad hoc basis needs to be secured.

If governments, federally and provincially value trails as a component of active transportation, economic development and tourism, then they must contribute funds to maintain trails, just as they did to build them.

In particular, given that active transportation has been provincially mandated, the provincial government must become proactive in developing a plan to contribute to the funding of trail maintenance.

3. Enhance communications between the CWTA board and municipal councils.

The Trans Canada Trail, of which the Crow Wing Trail is a part, is a national program while active transportation is provincially mandated. Consequently, it is important that the CWTA and municipal councils work together to take advantage of opportunities for positive community profile resulting from trail-related activities. It is recommended that:

- a. executive of the CWT meet on an annual basis with each council to report on the state of affairs and progress of the CWT in each of the municipalities – be an agenda item, not just a report from that council's representative to the CWT board; it can be useful for each CWT municipal representative to have additional support at a council meeting;
- b. CWT chair/trail boss establish a working relationship with each councillor responsible for operations and the municipal foreperson and from time to time each year have the CWT board member for each municipality facilitate meetings of these individuals; and
- c. the CWTA and each council develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding the expectations and commitments of each party.

4. Develop partnership with municipalities to address infrastructure needs

A collaborative approach among the CWTA and municipal councils will help reduce the rate of volunteer burn-out and, as a result, lessen what has been a concern of councils – having to take responsibility for the CWT. Working collaboratively, the CWT's maintenance team can identify where preventative maintenance is needed for infrastructure before it becomes an expensive repair job. Similarly, councils can identify where maintenance is needed that is within the

“ A two-foot wide culvert like what has been put in some places reflects the fear that someone other than a pedestrian may use it. Maintenance crossings have to be included in all plans. Behind Hamilton's, the trail has to cross a ditch with water. A little narrow dirt covered culvert was installed. It's too narrow for a tractor, so I will have to drive a ways to get around the ditch and back to the main road.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

scope of the CWTA. Taking a collaborative approach will lead to a partnership between the CWTA and municipal councils. The following initial steps should be taken:

- a. clarify with municipal councils how the maintenance and repair of culverts, bridges and undeveloped road allowances over which the CWT travels is to occur – CWTA does not have funds for major infrastructure repair and maintenance;
- b. identify and prioritize areas of trail that need repair and develop with municipalities annual schedule for repair so that care of trail can be planned for and integrated into a municipality's maintenance schedule – there have been instances where municipalities have agreed to CWT infrastructure maintenance but CWT maintenance has not been a priority relative to municipal work and consequently has not been undertaken; and
- c. develop and discuss with municipalities appropriate construction methods to ensure long-term durability of trail and ease of maintenance, ex. paths over culverts should be six feet in width; proper crowning, compaction of trail bed, and sloping of ditch sides of the portions of roadbeds over which a trail passes.

5. Clarify process for hiring labor

For trail labor that is not contract labor as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency discussions should be undertaken with a municipality or Trails Manitoba to administer the payroll for that labor and any related employment requirements such as Workers' Compensation. CWTA would provide the required funds to cover the employees' wages and related employer deductions. This arrangement would be for the purposes of payroll only; the employee(s) would continue to report to and take direction from the CWTA.

Another alternative that could be explored would be to have summer students hired by a municipality seconded to CWT maintenance for a few days each month.

6. Develop a relationship with the Manitoba Floodway Authority

The CWTA needs to:

- a. determine where and how the CWT can link to the trail through St. Norbert;
- b. establish a location for the Crow Wing Trail trailhead sign;
- c. clarify whether the CWT maintenance crew can mow a trail on the Red River Foodway; and
- d. determine when during the year trail users do not have access to the floodway trail.

7. Develop a plan to secure long-term access to land for the CWT

- a. Investigate how other groups maintain access to private lands or convert private lands to public use, so that when property changes hands, trail access remains – consider a variety of legal structures: easements or caveats; tax forgiveness on private land used for trails; long-term leases (25-30 years); donations; purchase – Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and the Nature Conservancy are two organizations that have developed a variety of ways to deal with land conservation.
- b. Work with municipal councils to have them recognize the importance of road allowances/undeveloped roads for trail use and develop policies that will facilitate trail use on these rights-of-way by:
 - addressing the issue of adjacent landowners farming public rights of way or preventing access by barricading entry points; and
 - ensuring that, when councils allow private landowners to block motorized vehicles from using public rights of way used by the Crow Wing Trail, landowners must maintain the CWT within the blocked portion to the standards established by the CWT.

8. Consider changes to existing trail routing carefully

- a. Prior to any changes, discuss proposed routing with people familiar with the area (ex. landowners, farmers, councillors, business owners) to ensure as much as possible that the proposal is logical and understood by those who may be affected.
- b. When rerouting trail sections, keep in mind long-term viability of the location i.e. one routing may be easier to access and maintain in the short-term; another may require more work to establish, but less likely to be disrupted by change of ownership or municipal decisions to alter use.
- c. Clarify with Trails Manitoba and Trans Canada Trail the process for rerouting portions of the trail so that it can be as streamlined as possible – routing changes are a reality both with respect to the sale of private land and changes in land use adjacent to public rights of way.
- d. Use the trail for a while before maps are redone to make sure the rerouting makes sense to users – if the new routing is well signed and maintained, people should naturally follow the proposed new route – detour signs could also be used.

9. Improve trail amenities

Amenities are those little extras that add interest to a trail, making it interesting and comfortable to travel.

- a. Develop a list of possible amenities and possible locations and a schedule for their installation:
 - rest stops with seating;
 - interpretive signage, particularly of ecological features;
 - outhouses or directional signs to public washrooms in population centres;
 - location signage indicating trail and rest stop distances;
 - garbage cans; and
 - highlight entrances/exits to the seven municipalities/first nation – welcome signs, decorative gates, sign-in ledgers.
- b. Develop a maintenance plan for future amenities and determine who (municipality or CWT) will do maintenance and how. Do not develop new amenities until a maintenance plan for them is in place.

“Consideration should be given to using ‘natural’ trail features where possible – tree trunks for bridges rather than steel culverts as long as they are wide enough to allow a tractor and mower to pass; locally crafted benches or even tree stumps at rest places. ”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

10. Develop a local ATV strategy

- a. Develop contacts with local ATV users and groups to work towards self-regulation on the trail, i.e. to develop respect for the trail and avoid damage.
- b. Clarify with municipalities their ATV policies and strategies to prevent damage to the trail. For example: could an alternate space be developed for users who want challenging areas to ride?
- c. Discuss with municipalities alternative routes for ATVs if a portion of the trail on public rights of way is closed to ATV use.
- d. Work with municipal councils to establish protocols/codes of conduct for motorized vehicles where trail sections are multi-use.

11. Develop a local trail maintenance reporting system

- a. Take a trail inventory, including:
 - location and types of signs;
 - existing infrastructure;

- existing interpretive signs; and
 - problem trail areas.
- b. Identify what needs repair and determine who is to repair.
- c. Develop a method for people to report trail issues: downed trees, downed signs, damaged or dangerous parts of the trail. Signs along the trail and in municipal offices could indicate who to contact. Reports could be done through the website or directly by email. The benefit to reporting through the website is that email addresses would not have to be changed if a different CWTA representative is given the responsibility of administering the trail reports.

12. Develop a board manual

Because the CWTA board is a working board, a manual is crucial so that directors can understand what is expected of them and to provide continuity as board members change.

In addition to the standard manual contents such as minutes, policies, and budget material, a CWTA board manual should include:

- details of the entire trail as well as the specifics of each board member's section of trail;
- key contact people, phone numbers and email addresses – councillors who have wards where the trail goes; municipal foremen; CAOs; municipal offices; provincial government contacts; St. Malo Park contacts; Providence College contact etc. – each board rep would be responsible for providing contact information for their area;
- names and locations of adjacent landowners for each section of trail;
- government regulations related to trails; and
- role of Trails Manitoba and Trans Canada Trail.

“I am glad Dave Graupner went out on the trail south of St. Malo and provided me with comments on the signs. He was involved in the original routing of the trail, so he knows where it goes. At this point, there are not too many board members who know the exact route of the trail. We will need to create a good detailed map to make sure that this knowledge is not lost.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

13. Develop detailed trail map

A multi-level map should be developed, using Google Earth or GIS software, that can be used for trail development, familiarizing board members, maintenance planning, and archival reference. It could include:

- location of directional signs;
- location and inventory of interpretive signs;
- locations that require regular preventative maintenance;
- names of landowners adjacent to trails; and
- public and private land used by the trail.

“The Crow Wing Trail is so many things that one can only appreciate on having travelled it entirely as we did over the last three days. We covered every inch this time, and drove in at the Mennonite Landing and right to the river. Aside from the trail, we truly appreciated the diversity of a small section of Manitoba, from Emerson to the floodway. How the type of crops changed, with much more oats being seeded north of Niverville and no soybeans at all. The height of the corn in the north is only three feet while in Emerson it's nearly eight feet.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

9.0 Moving ahead

Once the board of the Crow Wing Trail Association approves this report the next step will be to develop an action plan based on the report's recommendations. The board will determine how best to proceed to develop the action plan – establish a committee or a working group; identify key people to help develop the action plan.

The action plan should include, but is not limited to:

- prioritizing the report's recommendations;
- identifying which recommendations can be undertaken by the board of the CWTA; which should be undertaken through partnerships; and which should be presented to other bodies to pursue;
- identifying key people and groups who have the skills to undertake or proceed with each of the recommendations;
- establishing a timeline to achieve the recommendations; and
- establishing a communications process to keep the CWTA board and Trails Manitoba informed of the progress of the action plan.

“We are at a very important cross-road. Now that we know what it really takes to maintain a trail like ours, we need to tell those who care about having well-maintained trails. How can any one of us, Crow Wing Trail Association, Trails Manitoba, Trans Canada Trail, Eastman Tourism, Travel Manitoba, etc., promote our trails if we are not confident about their condition? We cannot present ‘shabbiness’ to visitors. This dilemma has to be resolved before the Trans Canada Trail officially opens in 2017 or all the work we have been doing since 1997 will be for naught.”

– Wayne Arseny, trail boss

Appendices

A. Communications



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2012

MOWING FOR MILES

The Crow Wing Trail is 191 km long, short in comparison to the length of the Trans Canada Trail. “However, maintaining a trail that stretches from Emerson to the Winnipeg Floodway has always been looked at as a horrendous challenge”, says Emerson Mayor and Crow Wing Trail Board Member Wayne Arseny. “While towns do a great job keeping their short sections mowed and maintained, the longer remote sections through pristine grassland, prairie, aspen forests and wetlands, soon grow over.”

In a first time endeavor, probably in Canada, Arseny and a helper were hired by the Crow Wing Trail Association – with assistance from the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association - to maintain the entire 191 km this summer. With a rented tractor and a 6’ brush mower, Arseny indicates it took them only three long days to mow the grass sections on the entire route. Hundreds of downed trees were removed to allow mowing in the forested areas, low hanging branches were cut back and miles of tall prairie grass and weeds were mowed, leaving a nice trail that’s easy to follow.

Most of the route is well signed, but their next phase will be to erect 300 more directional signs to help users stick to the trails, respect the private landowners’ adjacent properties and avoid farmers’ seeded fields. The last phase will deal with issues such as water holes and rougher sections. “While the majority of the trail is designated for non-motorized traffic” says Arseny “jurisdictions like Emerson and De Salaberry do not stop quads from going on municipal road allowances. This puts additional pressures on maintenance when these road allowances are part of the trail.”

“Active transportation is also a very fast growing aspect of today’s society” says Arseny, “and our towns and municipalities are recognizing this. We are all working together to encourage the public, including Winnipeggers, to look to our route as an extension of their well-used paved paths. With the statement “Build it and they will come”, we are saying “Mow it and we hope you will come use our trail”.”

The Crow Wing Trail goes through the communities of Emerson, Ridgeville, St. Malo, St-Pierre-Jolys, Otterburne, Niverville and St. Adolphe, as well as the municipalities of Franklin, De Salaberry and Ritchot and the Roseau River First Nations. Maps of the Crow Wing Trail can be viewed at www.mrta.mb.ca/Trails/CrowWing/home.htm .

Contact Information:

Murielle Bugera
President
Phone 433-7495/Cell 746-5962
mbugera@fermelarielle.ca

Wayne Arseny
Trail Boss
Cell 324-4492
warseny@mymts.net

Crow Wing Hires Groomer to Maintain Trail

By Maria

The Crow Wing Trail has become the first across Canada to hire a company specifically to maintain their portion of the trail.

The Crow Wing Trail, long, short in comparison to the length of the Trans Canada Trail.

"However, maintaining stretches from Emerson to Winnipeg Floodway has been looked at as a huge challenge," says Emerson and Crow Wing Trail Member, Wayne Arseny. "We do a great job keeping short sections mowed and maintained, the longer sections through prairie grasslands, prairie, aspen forest and wetlands soon grow over."

In its first time endeavour, probably in Canada, the Crow Wing Trail Association, with assistance to maintain the entire 191 km this year.

With a rented tractor and a 6' brush cutter, they were able to remove to allow mowing in the miles of tall prairie grass and weeds.

The next phase will be to erect 300 1' x 1' signs to respect the private landowners' adjacent property.

"While the majority of the trail is in the private landowners' jurisdiction, the majority of the trail is in the public domain. This puts additional pressure on the trail."

The Crow Wing Trail goes through the Crow Wing, Pierre-Jolys, Otterville, Niverville and St. Amand, De Salaberry and Ritchot and the Roseau.

Crow Wing Grooming Project Complete for Year

By Marianne Curtis

This summer the Crow Wing Trail Association became the first organization across Canada to hire a company specifically to maintain their portion of the trail.

The Crow Wing Trail is 191 km long, short in comparison to the length of the Trans Canada Trail.

Hundreds of downed trees were removed to allow moving in the forested areas. Hanging branches and weeds were cut back to allow a clear path.

"I can honestly say this project has been much more challenging than I ever thought. I did have the best help from The Tractor People. The work we have done is ground breaking as no other trail group has attempted to tackle 191 kms. We learned from our work and by the third mow, we had even cut time from our route. My goal was to bring uniformity to the entire length of our trail with all the same signage and the trail is cut. We wore our yellow vests with pride and talked with as many people as possible along the way. I can say that we have a wonderful trail, very diverse in geography. I have seen every inch and will make the effort to travel it all too. From the wide open spaces south of Niverville, to the stunted oaks on the rocky ridge south of St-Pierre-Jolys. You get close enough to crops to touch them, as they change from oats to corn and then to muskmelons near Otterburne. There's the Provincial Park in St. Malo and Fort Dufferin in Emerson. There are two swinging bridges and where else in Canada can you go right on the 49th parallel with the Americans on one side and Canada on the other. To appreciate one section you have to see the rest.

Wayne Arseny, Trail

EMERSON TRAILS- Both Distinguished Awards and Complaints

Emerson has a well established trail system of approx. 25km running on both sides of the river. Emerson Mayor Wayne Arseny has been involved in its development from day one. Emerson's trail

of the 25km Trans Canada Trail running from coast to coast. In recent years there have been complaints from all over Manitoba, mostly from the south, about the trail.

The Emerson lower river bottom trail was recently given an award of distinction.



Lance Yoho, Ex. Director of Red River Basin Commission presenting the plaque

is part of the 191 km section which runs all the way to the floodway in Winnipeg. Part

Red River that one can easily get down into this pristine nature valley with all the tangled debris from the dead elms. We clean the trail with a bulldozer after each spring flood which creates the opportunity to actually be able to see the devastating effects the lack of trees has on the river banks. At the river banks, the province struggles with trying to resolve bank erosion. Our trail has been recognized as a trail providing an educational aspect for the public to see how the things are first hand. As one walks this section it's a warning along the river with bird's foot often 12' high and not even elsewhere.

With every good story and even this award says Arseny, come concerns and complaints. On the east river side of the trail we pass through a private landowner's property. In designated property in designated Conservation Habitat with the Province allowing access for mowing on the trail. That means the land must remain in its natural state, but its natural timbered or thinned by off-road



Have you used the Crow Wing Trail this year? Help us out by completing this simple survey. Tell us how we did with the maintenance. English: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LRPK99F> French: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q6WJMMF>

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

OCTOBER 2012

Pilot Project Complete



My Final Words...
I can honestly say that this project has been much more challenging than I ever thought. I did have the best help from The Tractor People. The work we have done is ground breaking as no other trail group has attempted to tackle 191 kms. We learned from our work and by the third mow, we had even cut time from our route. My goal was to bring uniformity to the entire length of our trail with all the same signage and the trail is cut. We wore our yellow vests with pride and talked with as many people as possible along the way. I can say that we have a wonderful trail, very diverse in geography. I have seen every inch and will make the effort to travel it all too. From the wide open spaces south of Niverville, to the stunted oaks on the rocky ridge south of St-Pierre-Jolys. You get close enough to crops to touch them, as they change from oats to corn and then to muskmelons near Otterburne. There's the Provincial Park in St. Malo and Fort Dufferin in Emerson. There are two swinging bridges and where else in Canada can you go right on the 49th parallel with the Americans on one side and Canada on the other. To appreciate one section you have to see the rest.

Wayne Arseny, Trail



If you use the Crow Wing Trail ... Please give us your comments, by completing this simple survey. Tell us how we do with maintenance, signage, ... English: www.surveymonkey.com/s/LRPK99F French: www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q6WJMMF

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2013

Actif Epica Winter Ride Planning for Maintenance in 2013

The 2nd Annual is Almost here... Saturday, February 10th

Imagine...

In 2012, Trail Boss and Board Member Wayne Arseny (Emerson Mayor) maintained the Crow Wing Trail from Emerson to Winnipeg, along with his crew member Jake. With the beautiful dry weather, they managed to mow three times and go up and down a few more times to install and fix directional blue signs. This Pilot Project was

funded by the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association and a special grant matching membership fees we receive from our municipal partners. The final report will be released shortly, but Crow Wing Trail Board Members have overwhelmingly agreed to raise funds to repeat this initiative on an annual basis.

This means that \$8,000 needs to be raised through membership fees, donations, sponsorships, grants, etc. The Board sees that a well-maintained trail, under the direction of a Trail Boss, is what's needed to confidently promote the use of the trail. So use the Crow Wing Trail and give us your feedback! Merci! Thank You!

...enjoy talking about this special winter activity. Good luck to all!

www.actifepica.ca