



GPTN

GREAT PLAINS TRAILS NETWORK

FALL 2025

ISSUE 160

THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND DEBRIS REMOVAL

BY KERRY EGAN

On August 9, 2025, a severe storm rolled through Lincoln, leaving the trails covered with downed trees and broken branches from the 91 mph winds. Soon after the storm, however, much of the debris had already been cleared from the trails. As noted in a letter to the editor in the Lincoln Journal Star, a 76-year-old couple was able to enjoy their normal ride not long after the storm, noting that limbs and trees had already been moved off the trails.

Of course, the storm debris did not remove itself. Instead, there is a good chance it was cleared by Steve Meyer, Jim Crook and Jerry Luedtke, all long-time members of the Great Plains Trails Network.

Eleven years ago, Steve noticed that some of his favorite trails were becoming overgrown with brush and tree branches.

The overgrowth was not only unsightly but also created a hazard for trail users from potential attackers concealed in the vegetation. He decided to take it upon himself to clear some of the most dangerous spots. His good



Jim, Steve, and Jerry after a morning of trimming on the trails.

deed was rewarded by a visit from a police officer responding to a complaint from a nearby neighbor. Steve was told to leave the area, but he remained undeterred in his desire to keep our trails free from encroaching vegetation.

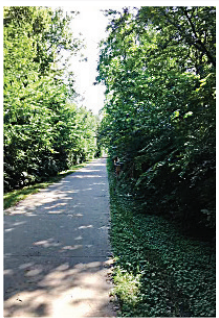
He called his friend Jim Crook, who at the time was serving on the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. Jim contacted Lynn Johnson, Director of the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department. Lynn was more than happy to issue letters to Steve and Jim authorizing them to act in a volunteer capacity for Parks and Recreation in the removal of overgrown

vegetation along trails. Jerry Luedtke joined the pair about four years ago. The current parks director, Maggie Stuckey-Ross, has also issued her own volunteer letters to Steve, Jim and Larry.

The amount of volunteer work performed by the trio is impressive. They trim approximately 125 miles of the Lincoln Trails System every two to three years. Their range includes: the Murdock Trail as far as Stevens Creek; to the end of the Billy Wolff Trail; the Jamaica North Trail past the Connector Bridge; the MoPac Trail as far as 84th St.; the Rock Island Trail; and as far as the Highlands Golf Course in northwest Lincoln.

Their volunteer services also include the removal of storm debris from the trails. They carry their own saws and limb cutters in a bike trailer designed by Jim. They clear the trails and place the debris in piles along the side, which are picked up later by Parks and Recreation employees.

So, if you see three guys clearing the trails, be sure to thank them for their service, and maybe offer to buy them their favorite beverage.



The MoPac area that started it all; before trimming.

The following are from August 2024 after the big blow. Billy Wolff, south side of Pioneers. What we started with, the cleared trail, and the debris pile. It was one of the hardest jobs we've done.



More typical trimming work pile.



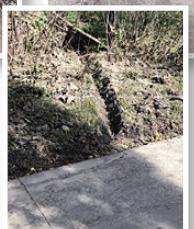
Before



After



Clearing trails of mud after heavy rain and making drainage channels to keep water off the trails.





President's Note

Hello GPTN Friends!

Cooler, crisp fall days are now upon us and I cannot help but reflect on all of the great spring and summertime events that brought us here as a trails community! We saw folks run events like the Lincoln Marathon and kids raced a cop with Marathon Kids, families of all sizes rode bikes with GPTN on Trail Trek, friends young and old walked loops with Cornhusker State Games, community members celebrated National Skate Day with The Bay, groups rode, walked, and drove to listen to the cool vibes of music at Hub & Soul throughout the season!

We cut a ribbon on another new bridge connecting the natural surface trails within Wilderness Park to the paved Rock Island Trail and the crushed limestone Jamaica Trail, enabling more people to experience the joys of being outside with access for all ages and abilities. To say Lincoln loves trails is an understatement, 185 miles and counting....

These trails do more than just connect us to places and experiences, but more importantly...to each other. This community is something special for so many reasons and under it all is a network of trails, the canvas on which we paint the seasons of our life story.

Adventure awaits!

Jamie Granquist
GPTN President



This year's **Give to Lincoln** event on May 29 was another successful day for trails in our community. The generosity

of local trail users, generated \$33,244.28 to build and enhance trails in Lincoln. Your donations are much appreciated by GPTN and will be used to enhance our trails system and the quality of life of our community. **Thank you**



Great Plains Trails Network

Since 1988

*dedicated to the goal of developing
a network of commuter and
recreational trails within
Lincoln and Lancaster County*

2025

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Mailing Address

GPTN
P.O. 82902
Lincoln, NE 68501-2902

www.GPTN.org

Newsletter comments, questions, corrections:
dalegptn@gmail.com

GREAT PLAINS TRAILS NETWORK TRAIL TREK

A BENEFIT BIKE RIDE FOR LINCOLN'S TRAILS

2025



BY DENA NOE

Wow, it was a great day at GPTN's Trail Trek 2025! Cyclists, young and old, rolled up to Lincoln East High School on June 22, ready to tackle those gnarly winds and hot temperatures like champs! Talk about grit and determination. Everyone pushed through the tough conditions and came together for an awesome lunch, courtesy of Hy-Vee and Pepsi, where they could cool off and chill in some AC after their hard work. This event really showcased the spirit of our community with sponsors helping make it all happen!

Participants enjoyed their treks across Lincoln, lunch and three lucky riders won bikes from Speedy Pete's, Cycle Works, and Trek of Lincoln. Drawing prizes were also provided by 10 Lincoln businesses. With the help of over 100 dedicated volunteers, riders and sponsorships Trail Trek will be contributing over \$20,000 towards the development of new trails in Lincoln.

The event couldn't have happened without the wonderful Trail Trek committee: Kent Henning, Lisa Henning, Jamie Granquist, Marynelle Green, Dale Arp, Dena Noe, Cathy Ebers, Joy Patten, Eli Frank, Jon Taylor, Mindy Diller, Maddie Wiseman and Joe Dauer that work all year long to plan Trail Trek.



A few of the volunteer safety riders.



Thank you 2025 Trail Trek Sponsors!

Title Sponsor



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DLA
Hub Café
Lincoln Public Schools
Lincoln Running Company
MW Climbing
Open Harvest
Sun Valley Lanes
Warm Cookie



THANK YOU



A group of employees at Lincoln Electric System recently held a fundraiser called a Spring Trail Clean Up to benefit Great Plains Trails Network (GPTN). GPTN appreciates the hard work these individuals put in to raising \$708.60 to help build more trails in Lincoln and Lancaster County. Your contribution helps make Lincoln a great place to live.

Support Lincoln Trails

By donating to



Great Plains Trails Network

Go to:
gptn.org

Donations are
tax-deductable





Seven Years and We Still Got Soul!

Again, as the 2025 nonprofit partner, the Great Plains Trails Network is enjoying the Hub & Soul concert series along with our fun loving Lincoln community. This year June brought some warm weather along with the *let's get happy* music of "Root Marm Chicken Farm Jug Band" and the *I feel a dance coming on* tunes of "Unbridled Soul and the Brass Saddle Horns". July followed up with some much needed rain, but it would have been nice a little later in the evening. The first band, "Hansen Airship" performed under a tent as the raindrops danced among the crowd. Unfortunately, the second band, "The Soul Review" got rained out. August weather only provided a slight rain delay before the show got hopping. First, "Emily Bass and The Near Miracle" stirred our souls and got the good vibrations moving. "Jarana" continued with a strum and a beat that made people move their feet. The dance party was on! From the free spirit of youth to the seasoned dancers, the floor was a jumpin'! There's still one concert remaining on September 26 featuring "Rascal Martinez" and "Church of Blues". We'll wrap up the Hub & Soul series and let you know how the weather treated us for that concert in our Winter newsletter.



June - Root Marm Chicken Farm Jug Band



July - Hansen Airship – singing in the rain.



August - Emily Bass and The Near Miracle



August - And the sax man plays!

Twist,
Shout and
shake it all
about!



August - Jarana



June - Unbridled Soul and The Brass Saddle Horns



June - Unbridled Soul hits the dance floor!



June - Unbridled Soul and The Brass Saddle Horns



August - Jarana brought the music and all the instruments.

Run 4 the Pines Weathers the Storm



BY ANN RINGLEIN

Right outside Lincoln in the northeast area, lies Prairie Pines Nature Preserve, a real gem that few people know about, UNLESS you participate in Run 4 the Pines.

The run took place this year the morning of "the storm"! An early morning severe storm with winds left many wondering "will it even happen" with downed branches all over, especially in northeast Lincoln!

And yes, it DID happen, very well, in fact!

As I drove into Prairie Pines that morning, I was looking for downed branches or trees and I saw none. The pre-race instruction was "watch out for the hedge apples that fell from the wind"! It seems these trees stood strong and protected each other in the storm as none were down!

The race actually took place! The one mile took off with Micah Kohles leading the way on his mountain bike and working hard to keep ahead of the pack of runners, young and old, two-legged and four-legged, as this year dogs were allowed out on the prairie!

As soon as the one mile was finished, the four milers lined up and it was obvious that several were there to race, and worrying Micah on the bike again! But he stayed ahead of them and got them around the prairie without a hitch.

Awards were given to the first dog as well as the first human. And a bonus given for the golden retrievers out there as they thought every hedge apple was a tennis ball!

This run raises awareness of Prairie Pines and helps add to a fund for building a connector trail from the Murdock Trail to Prairie Pines making it more accessible for all.

Right now, Prairie Pines is open Fridays and Saturdays 9am to 5pm and Sundays 1pm to 5pm. A completed trail from the Murdock Trail to Prairie Pines would extend the days and hours for the prairie

to be open. Everyone should get out there soon and see how wonderful this place is, right outside of Lincoln!



Getting pumped and ready for the run!

Photos by Ann Ringlein

On the Bike Path



Let's get this class rolling – line up and get ready to know your bike, enjoy the morning and have lots of fun!

BY ANN RINGLEIN

On June 11th the Lancaster County 4-H Clover College held a "hands-on" workshop that helps youth navigate their bikes and the road. Sponsored by Lancaster County Extension, the morning class was filled with biking fun, learning and bicycle safety. GPTN once again navigated the teaching of "all things bikes" to six young people who attended with their bicycles.

Dwight Brown taught the group

about bicycle parts, and while I still take my bike in to get it tuned, I still learned a lot. This is always a great session with everyone giving Dwight their full attention!

Then the kids took off for the parking lot on their bikes practicing precision biking and control, followed by figure eight's drawn



Dwight instructs and it's off to navigate the chalk bike lanes.



on the cement. Hand signals were practiced and it was successful as no one crashed!

Finally, we ended with a "race" where the winner is the last one to finish. So how slow can you go without

touching the ground? It's harder than you think! Of course, we let the kids bike all around the parking lot safely. We all know that's the fun part about riding a bike! Lots of sharing, lots of useful suggestions on bike sizes for these kids, and lots of excitement for a full morning of bicycle fun!

Photos by Ann Ringlein

Rails to Trails Landowner Rights Act

HR 4824



Panhandle Trail located in West Virginia and Pennsylvania | Photo by Milo Bateman

Information provided by Rails to Trails Conservancy

Last year, a bill was introduced by the U.S. House of Representatives that, if passed, would have seriously undermined the entire railbanking process—to the point that it would render the foundational law of the rail-trail movement effectively unusable.

Unfortunately, the bill is back. The so-called “Rails to Trails Landowner Rights Act” was reintroduced as H.R. 4924 on Aug. 8 and includes even more damaging provisions. The bill is an unconstitutional attack on railbanking, violating Fifth Amendment rights, while masquerading as a series of process improvements that are anything but.

This bill effectively destroys the viability of railbanking going forward, resulting in fragmented and lost corridors—and poses a threat to thousands of miles of existing rail-trails. This bill invites a federal agency to meddle in local decisions about corridor width and trail maintenance for existing rail-trails while putting unworkable responsibilities and expensive liabilities on local trail sponsors to prevent future rail-trails from being built.

If this bill passes, it puts thousands of miles of rail-trail in jeopardy.

Here are highlights of the exceedingly burdensome and unworkable changes to the railbanking legislation included in the bill:

- Trail sponsors must obtain within 30 days of signaling an intention to railbank a corridor signed written approval of every adjacent landowner as a condition of railbanking. Lack of affirmative consent from even a single landowner would preclude railbanking, leaving these corridors irreparably fragmented.
- Under this bill, financial liability shifts from the federal government to trail sponsors, most often local governments, to compensate adjacent landowners for unspecified “costs” presumed to be associated with trail use, regardless of whether the adjacent property owner has a property interest justifying compensation.
- Trail sponsors must assume lifetime responsibility for maintaining the corridor until it is reactivated, creating long-term liabilities even for short-term trail sponsors, discouraging anyone from stepping in to save a corridor pending identification of a permanent trail sponsor.
- The trail sponsor will be required to conduct and pay for unnecessary cost-benefit analysis addressing impacts on security, bio security, food security and other irrelevant topics. This and other new unnecessary administrative requirements could delay the railbanking process and add expense, discouraging trail sponsors like local governments from protecting rail corridors.
- Requires the Surface Transportation Board to consider requests to narrow the width of corridors to match future railroad needs, but such needs aren’t known at the time that a corridor is railbanked.

Further, the new bill requires the Surface Transportation Board to review existing railbanked corridors and recommend to Congress maintenance requirements of trail sponsors. A report to Congress is not concerning, but the focus on previously railbanked corridors could encourage future legislation further burdening trail sponsors for hundreds of existing trails. The previous version of the bill had only targeted future efforts to railbank.

RTC is fighting back and we’ll need widespread support to be successful. Right now, we’re meeting with critical decision makers in Washington and engaging directly with stakeholders we expect will have an influence in these conversations, including local leaders, business owners and railroads.

On September 25, 2025, we’re holding a webinar to discuss implications of the anti-rail-trail bill and your role in helping to stop its progress. You can check the railstotrails.org website for updated information and progress.

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and the Subcommittee on Federal Lands.

Your voice and your collaboration will be essential in protecting these corridors for their future use—for rail and as trail. Rail-trails are the spines of the country’s active transportation system, which is what’s needed to make it safer and easier for everyone to walk, bike and be active.



Great Plains Trails Network

Great Plains Trails Network supports Rails to Trails efforts to maintain and grow the nation’s trails system. We encourage you to support Rails to Trails in opposing the passing of HR 4924 in whatever way you can. You can go to their website, railstotrails.org, for updates and/or write to your federal representative to oppose this bill.

Event CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

26 Hub & Soul 6 - 9 pm



Check the LTC Website
for the 2025 Calendar and
other information.

lincolnrun.org

3 Wonderful Months

Just Waiting for You
to Complete Your
Trail-A-Thon
Challenge!



It's **never too late** to enjoy the trails
and complete those last few miles of
unconquered trails for the 2025 Lincoln
Trail-A-Thon challenge!

Ride, run, jog, or walk any of your remaining 92 miles of Lincoln's scenic
trails to finish off the year while enjoying the outdoors!.

Enjoy the endorphin rush of your accomplishment!

The trails are there for you all year round!!

TRAILS CLEAN UP SCHEDULE



Great Plains Trails Network

**JOIN GPTN MEMBERS EVERY
2ND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH***
7:30 - 9:00 am

Come meet Rachelle Hadley and other GPTN board
members and do good for the community along Lincoln's
Trails Network. Trash bags will be supplied to you, but
you may want to bring gloves. After we've walked the
trails picking up trash, you're welcome to join us at a
coffeehouse for drinks and friendship! If you would like to
participate in the trails clean-up, just show up and bring
friends/family.

***October 18** (3rd Saturday due to M2M): Jamaica North
Trail, meet at the Densmore Park (by playground) and end
at New Day Coffee, 7501 S. 15 St.

November 8: 70th St. Trail/Holmes Lake Trail/Old Cheney
Trail, meet and end at New Day Coffee, 4131 Pioneer
Woods Dr.

December 13: 84th Street Trail, meet at Cornhusker Bank
(north lot) and end at Rock-N-Joe Coffee, 5025 Lindberg St.



(L to R): Lee, Katie and Rachelle collect their bags.



Relaxing after the Billy Woff trail clean up.

Trail Towns Accelerator Program

BY CAIT DUMAS-HEIN -
Bike Walk Nebraska

Lancaster County boasts miles of fantastic trails, a point of pride for the community and trail organizations alike.

So, I'm sure I'm preaching to the choir when saying trails have the power to transform our Nebraska communities and neighborhoods.

With that belief in mind, Bike Walk Nebraska recently launched a Trail Towns Accelerator Program to support communities along The Cowboy Trail. The program helps assess, provide, and plan trailhead access and amenities alongside community-wide safety improvements.

The program isn't about building trails or a special tourism attraction. It's about harnessing the power of the trail for community growth, safety, and connectivity. The trail-side communities are the character, the attraction, and what makes The Cowboy Trail a one-of-a-kind, nationally sought-after experience, and we want it to be safe and accessible for all to engage.

With the Lancaster County trails systems, whether it's the Jamaica North Trail running alongside small, rural towns, or the MoPac Trail moving you through urban neighborhoods in Lincoln, you can apply the same methodologies of the program: connections and invitations.

An invitation is simply providing the right physical cues to intercept trail users and engage residents in moving comfortably



Views of the Cowboy Trail - Photos courtesy of Nebraska Game & Parks

between the trail and town/neighborhood.

Ways to extend an invitation can include:

- Signs pointing to key destinations and assets within trail-side communities/neighborhoods. •
- Trailhead signs with trail maps, interpretative information, or historical context.
- Providing and communicating the presence of amenities such as shade, water, bathrooms, and electricity.

The connectivity portion is focused on providing an identified and clearly communicated route from the trail to the town, making the invitation accessible and safe.

For example, would someone without local knowledge know about Paper Moon Pastries in Cortland? Or, that the Roca Tavern will fill your water bottles if they're open?

Providing an invitation will only enhance the already beautiful trails within Lancaster County by fostering community bonding. Additionally, what is beneficial for visitors and trail users is also beneficial for residents,

making it a win-win for both safety and health.

To apply these ideas, you don't necessarily need to make a big investment. In collaboration with communities and trail managers, you could explore temporary wayfinding signs,

or provide trail-side businesses with a bike rack. If you want to take it a step further, consider encouraging trail-themed menu items or beers, planting a pollinator garden, repurposing old bike parts into public art pieces along the way, or investing in gateway welcome signs to enhance the trail experience.

We invite you to adventure out to the Cowboy Trail as it marks its 30th anniversary, and come see the character of the trail-side communities and their efforts in making their spaces inviting and connected.

If you're interested in our Trail Towns Accelerator Program or neighborhood, reach out to me at: cait@bikewalknebraska.org.



Legislative UPDATE

You may have heard already that Nebraska is officially increasing its speeding fines. This was a part of Bike Walk Nebraska's Vulnerable Road User Bill, but it is not the only part, nor do we believe it is the most important.

The bill, now signed into law, also includes an expansion of the 3-foot passing law requiring drivers to change lanes when possible when passing a cyclist.

Additionally, there's a formal definition of a vulnerable road user in state statute and fortification of the citation "reckless driving" to help address gaps in our justice system for victims of crashes.



Bike Walk Nebraska cultivates and supports safe and accessible active transportation across our state by leading sound policy and advocating for best practices. We work across sectors in partnership with elected officials, municipalities, and organizations to ensure that biking and walking - whether for transportation or recreation - works for all Nebraskans.

Become a member at:
www.bikewalknebraska.org

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BICYCLING COLN™

BicycLincoln is a community group that supports and promotes bicycling in the city of Lincoln. Our mission is to provide information and a unified voice for bicycle advocacy in an effort to make cycling in Lincoln more friendly, safe, easy, accepted, and “so that more people bike and bike more often”.

Check them out at
bicyclincoln.org/



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Ride. Share.

That's what Great Plains Bike Club is all about.
We actively promote bicycling with rides for all levels of riders in and around Southeastern Nebraska.

Weekly rides with a leader | Show 'n go rides
Ice cream & coffee shop rides | Moon-lit rides
Hammering training rides | Trail rides

We sponsor the Spring Fling ride in April and Heatstroke 100 in August. We also promote bicycling safety through community-sponsored events. For more information and an on-line application to join the club, go to **greatplainsbikeclub.org**.

GREAT PLAINS
bicycling club

GPTN NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

June 1, 2025 - August 31, 2025

Standard \$10

Jason Bringenberg
Jessica Dean
Dave DeFruiter
Mindy Diller
Ned Greene
Norm Hamel
Ryan Meinke
Hillary Ostby
Gabriel Routzahn
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Teddi Meyer-Kluck
Bennie Shobe



Stay updated and help us grow our membership!



Over the years, we've noticed a decline in our membership numbers. A few years ago, in response to your feedback, we switched from mailing out membership reminders to sending them by email to save costs and go digital. We appreciate your input and want to continue communicating this way, but we need your help to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Here's what you can do:

Update Your Email: Please make sure your email address with GPTN is current. If you receive an email from us, it's important to read it as we don't send out a lot of information. Keeping up

with our emails will help you stay informed about when your membership dues are due.

Spread the Word: Talk to friends, family, and co-workers who use the trails about becoming a GPTN member. A larger membership base is crucial for us to maintain our voice with Parks & Recreation and other city departments. It also enhances our chances of securing grants, as funding organizations look for community support when reviewing applications.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Together, we can make a difference and ensure our trails and programs continue to thrive.



Scan QR code or go to: gptn.org click on "Update Your Information with Us" under "About Us" menu.



Great Plains Trails Network

P.O. Box 82902 • Lincoln, NE 68501-2902

Return Service Requested

The [GPTN Newsletter](#) is published quarterly and is distributed to GPTN members and other interested parties.

For more information:

www.gptn.org

*Dedicated to the goal of developing
a network of commuter and
recreational trails within
Lincoln and Lancaster County.*



Printed on recycled paper

We Need Your Support!

Prairie Corridor Trail

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch is a tallgrass prairie passage and trail that will build on our nationally recognized trails system, linking Pioneers Park Nature Center and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Please consider donating to this exciting project. The approximately 10-mile greenway is a once in a lifetime project.

Please consider donating. **Thanks!**

Mail donation to:

GPTN

P.O. 82902

Lincoln, NE 68501-2902

Make contributions payable to:

Great Plains Trails Network

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Designated Project: _____

