Friends of SMARTrails
Board Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2026
Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Club
6:00 PM

Board Members Present: Rob Carson, Chair; Zachary Pawlowski, Vice Chair; Linda Cudney, Secretary; Dave Myers, Bonnie Brown, Mark Coe.

Board Members Absent: Claire Richard, Jacque Erdman

Guests: Sara Herberger, MCCF; Cindy Pons.

I. **Call to Order** Meeting called to order by Rob Carson at 6:03 PM.

II. **Consent Agenda** It was motioned and supported to accept the consent agenda. AIF. Motion carried.

1. **August 10, 2026 Board Minutes:**
   Motioned by Zach, seconded by Bonnie to accept the minutes from the August 10, 2026 meeting. AIF. Motion Carried.
2. **Treasurers Report and Payment of Bills:**
   No Treasurers report as Jacque is absent.

III. **New Business :**

1. **Synopsis of Ribbon Cutting**
   All agreed it was great day for a ribbon cutting. Had representatives from the DNR, Manistee News Advocate, TARP, MCCF, AJ's Excavating, Manistee County Recreation Commission, Township of Cleon, Village of Copemish, Springdale Township, Manistee County Commissioner, Locals and people moving to the area, along with SMART members. Rob, from SMART, Scott Slavin, from the DNR and Sara from MCCF spoke.
2. **New Map Printed**
   We should get an updated map printed now that the trail is done from Thompsonville to Copemish and the bridge over Bear Creek is in. We will need to look at the Trail Segment Description to see what changes are needed. We will review next month. Katie at County Planning thinks the map is on the County computer and we have money left in that account for this.

IV. Old Business

1. **Trail Development Proposal**
   Mark went over what he has done on this but is not ready to send it on yet, as it needs some added information. Approximately 6 months after submitting, EGLE does a site review. Mark stated there is a new EGLE representative in

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the area.

2. **Tribal Discussion**
   On hold at this time. We may want to check into "Everycares rewards" a Little River Casino promotion where they round off cents in kiosks and apply to a group. Mark will look into this for us.
3. **Trail Flip Chart**
   Tabled, but not forgotten.
4. **Gate Design for Closing of Trails to Vehicle Traffic**
   The person Rob contacted does not do this anymore. Zach will get ahold of someone at West Shore College about this. We will need 7 sets of gates for the Copemish to Thompsonville Trail.
5. **Chief Grade Parking**
   This was never done and set aside. This will be a mini trailhead with a minimal amount of cost to do. Mark will get ahold of Scott Slavin at the DNR and see if we can proceed with this.
6. **Trail Counters and Rack Cards**
   These should be already located on the Copemish to Thompsonville trail, as a lot of people are using the trail. We will need to decide which ones and apply for a grant from Manistee County Community Foundation.
   New Rack Cards should be done by the October meeting.
7. **Mock up signs**
   The size of the signs was an issue. More next month.
8. **Reports from Other Trail Entities**
   Snowbirds: Beginning meetings. Working on mowing and trail work and working on the Crystal Mountain Spur.
   Dirtbirds: Winding down their season. Last ride of the season is coming up, with pizza being delivered on the trail. The annual ORV blessing will be at Twisted Trails in Copemish in 2027.
   Shoreline Cycling: Work is being done on the non-motorized trail M-55 off Franklin Road. Trimming done and gates painted.

V. Other Business

1. **Recreation Commission Update:**
   County Planning has finished the first complete copy of the County Recreation Plan and are sending it out to all the Townships to Review. Then will schedule public hearings at 4-5 Townships for comments. The Village of Kaleva Trailhead Facility have discussed with Fleis and Vanderbrink for possible modular buildings built off site and brought in. Cost for these modular buildings are approximately $530,000.00-$640,000.00, depending on the size.
2. **The Chief Grade:**
   Bonnie and Cindy rode the Chief grade and stated there is a lot of growth (mostly weeds) growing. Is this something we can take care of either by spraying or grading. Dave and Mark will connect to help take care of this after we are given the go ahead to do something.
3. **Face Book Page:**
   Bonnie volunteered to keep our Face Book page updated with pictures and articles. Thank you Bonnie!
4. **Attending a Friends of Betsie Valley and Management Council meeting as Friends of SMARTrails.**
   Mark suggested that we attend the Friends of Betsie Valley Trail meeting and the Management Council meetings sometime in the future, which is held at the Courthouse in Beulah. They both meet the 1st Tuesday of the month.

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Management Council meets at 9:30 and the Friends meet at 3:30. Mark will confirm this and get back to us.

5. **Request from MCCF**
   Sara Herberger asked if SMART would be comfortable if the MCCF could include an article about the ribbon cutting in the monthly newsletter with a synopsis and a photo. Zach had photos. The SMART group was fine with the publicity.
6. **Name of the Trail from Thompsonville to Copemish**. Can we find out from Scott Slavin if we can name this trail. (Originally Scott said that it was part of the Betsie Valley Trail all the way to Viaduct Road).

VI. **Board Members Comments/Correspondence**

VII. Adjourn. Motioned and supported to adjourn at 7:43 PM.

After the meeting, Mark Coe gave all a tour of the Snowbirds Club and Equipment the Snowbirds use. Thank you Mark!

Next meeting on Monday, October 26, 2026 (The 4th Monday) in Kaleva at the Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Club at 14121 Industrial Drive, Kaleva.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by**:**
Linda Cudney, Secretary

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