



**Friends of SMARTrails
Board Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2026
Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Club
6:00 PM**

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

Board Members Absent: Claire Richard

Guests: None

I. Call to Order Meeting called to order by Rob Carson at 6:05 PM.

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

1. June 8, 2026 Board Minutes:

Motioned by Zach, supported by Bonnie to accept the minutes from the June 8, 2026 meeting. AIF. Motion Carried.

2. Treasurers Report and Payment of Bills:

Jacque furnished the Treasurers report. MCCF account shows total balance of \$4,532.36, Filer Credit Union Account shows \$4,247.53 and FCU share account balance is \$24.60. Total balance is \$8,804.49. The hosting charge automatically comes out monthly for \$20.00. Motioned by Linda, supported by Bonnie to accept the Treasurers report. AIF. Motion carried.

III. New Business :

1. Gate Design for Closure of Trails to Vehicle Traffic

Mark presented some gate designs to look over for the Thompsonville to Copemish trail to keep motorized vehicles off the trail. Rob is going to check on someone he knows that may be able to build them. We will probably need 8 of the gates for the trail. We will check with Colfax and the Village of Thompsonville if they are okay with their end of it. This could be applied for at the fall grant program from Manistee County Community Foundation.

2. Chief Grade Parking

Mark shared the Chief Road Parking Area Proposal from the past and suggested SMART to look over and possibly get it finished. The labor cost on this is zero dollars and Northern Natural has offered their parking lot for a staging area.

3. Mock up signs with SMARTrails showing distance

Discussion on the signs. Zach will update the logo for the sign, Mark will get the dimensions (maybe 12x18), plus we may be able to put on a QR code. Signs could be put up from Copemish to Thompsonville and Kaleva to Chief. We have money left in the MCCF to use for this project.

IV. Old Business

1. **Ribbon Cutting to trail, trailhead and bridge over Bear Creek:**

The Ribbon Cutting for the trail is scheduled for August 15, 2026 at 11:00 AM. Discussion on using the new Cleon Township Hall or possibly put up our new tent in the Copemish Village park. Still need to work out a few details. We could have some refreshments (maybe cookies, water).

2. **Invitations and list of proposed invitees:**

Claire was working on the list. Not sure how she is doing with it as she is absent tonight. We need to get this out and put on social media, on our website and invite the newspaper. At our next meeting, we can get pictures printed of the trail and bridge over Bear Creek to show what we have accomplished. Linda will help if Claire would like it.

3. **Letter supporting the County Recreation Commission Resolution to close the T'Ville to Kaleva rail corridor to vehicle traffic.**

Rob wrote a letter (see attached) and sent it on to Scott Slavin. Linda will ask for a letter of support from Cleon Township, and possibly Springdale Township.

4. **Trail Counters**

Claire and Mark were working on this and nothing finalized yet.

5. **Trail Development Proposal**

Mark is still working on this and possibly will have something by next months meeting.

6. **Reports from Other Trail Entities**

Mark reported that the Snowbirds are done for the summer. He also attended the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail and Benzie Trail Management Council meetings July 7, 2026. He also stated that there is funding for the bridge over the Manistee River by Mesick, which will take some time to finish. Zach stated that Mason, Newago and Oceana County have formed a group are working on getting a trail mapped out.

7. **Tribal Discussion**

On hold at this time.

8. **Flip Chart**

Tabled, but not forgotten.

V. Other Business

1. **Recreation Commission Update**

No meeting

2. **Thompsonville Summerfest**

Linda attended Thompsonville Summerfest on Monday, June 15, 2026 setting up the SMART booth. Lots of comments and questions about trails. Talked to people already using the trail from Copemish to Thompsonville. Some say they have ridden the trail from Kaleva to Chief, and even rode the back way to Iron Fish Distillery.

VI. Board Members Comments/Correspondence

1. Dave asked about the down trees on the Chief Grade. Mark, Dave and Rob will meet Sunday morning in Chief to take care of this.
2. Mark asked to get reimbursed for \$65.69 (?) for the some of the maps for the flip chart. AIF to reimburse Mark.
3. Mark spoke about possible meeting with the DNR about a trail from Henry to Big Four Road to make a future trail to Bear Lake.

VII. Adjourn. Motioned and supported to adjourn at 7:20 PM.

Next meeting on Monday, August 10, 2026 in Kaleva at the Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Club at 14121 Industrial Drive, Kaleva.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by:
Linda Cudney, Secretary