



2024

ANNUAL

NEWSLETTER



UNDER THE PRESIDENT'S HELMET

by Don Helsel

I want to start out by thanking each of you for your continued support of trail recreation in the Western UP. To be successful we all must work together. Our recreation has continued to grow over the last few years and with your support this will continue. For those of you that are new to MI-TRALE, I thought I should explain who we are. We are a recreation club that supports all recreation activities in the Western UP of Michigan. MI-TRALE maintains and manages 310 miles of DNR multi-use trails. If they were stretched into a straight line, they would reach East to West across the entire UP. We also manage another 200 miles of club sponsored trails. MI-TRALE manages, as well, 24 miles of equestrian trails with a connected campground. We are working closely with Federal, State and local government agencies. MI-TRALE is partners with other recreational clubs and organizations, both nationally and locally.

You will see articles submitted by other board members detailing what has happened in 2023 within their areas. Our most ambitious area has to be in the trail projects that MI-TRALE is responsible for managing. The level of funding that the DNR has granted us indicates their faith that MI-TRALE delivers. In 2023, that equaled over \$330,000 and for 2024 that is over \$390,000. These grants require a lot of work to request, manage and report the work done; both from a project management and financial perspective. These funds are from your license and permit fees being put directly back on the ground.

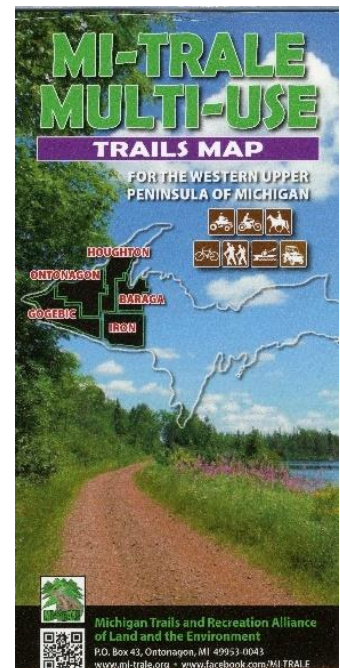
2023 was a very good year for MI-TRALE. We managed multiple trail projects, led several club sponsored rides and participated in local parades. You are always welcomed and encouraged to join us in all of our events and activities.

MI-TRALE's State certified safety instructor trained about 100 6th graders from multiple school districts on the "safety best" practices and ORV laws in Michigan. I cannot stress enough how important this is for our future riders and public acceptance of our sport.

MI-TRALE has added Zoom capability to our meetings, along with teleconference, to provide you with additional ways to attend. The contact information is sent out to our membership a week before the meeting for your convenience.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new and current board members to 2024. This is looking like another fun year on the trails in the Western UP. We hope to see you riding on our trails or join us in May or August for our annual trail maintenance.

Please check out the web site (www.mi-trale.org) for the latest news and download our free map app "Michigan UP Trails". If you're more comfortable with a paper map, you can also purchase our MI-TRALE folding trails map from the website. Have a great year of riding.





ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTIONS

MI-TRALE held its Annual Meeting and Elections this January 8th where the nominations of candidates for five positions on the Board of Directors were acted upon. The following are the results: Previous Director Jon Fourez was elected to the position of Vice-President, while previous Directors Jim Fooce and Tim Peacy were each re-elected as Directors and Dave Bishop was re-elected to the position of Treasurer. Chris Palmer was welcomed as a new Director to the Board. We look forward to working with Chris in the future!



CHRIS PALMER

We'd like to take a moment to introduce you to your new Director:

Chris along with his wife Heather, moved to the Ewen, MI area from Belvidere, IL in July of 2023. Being avid snowmobilers for years, they started exploring the western UP by SxSs during the off snow season. Having been heavily involved in snowmobile clubs at the local, regional and state levels, they wanted to get involved with clubs that keep our SxS trails accessible and in good riding condition. Chris believes, "There is a lot more pressure to close trails and restrict access to public lands than the average person riding the trails is aware of. If we don't get involved, educate the current and next generation of riders, and support organizations like MI-TRALE, we won't have anywhere to ride." He concludes with, "No matter how you use the trails, it takes people getting involved and working together to keep them open and maintained." After attending monthly meetings and showing interest in getting more involved, Chris was asked to fill a board position being vacated in 2024. He looks forward to helping with trail maintenance and with whatever else is needed to support MI-TRALE.

As for the rest of our Board of Directors, they remain in their current positions until 2025: Don Helsel is our hard-working President. Linda Schulz is our important record-keeping Secretary. She is also Co-Trail Manager along with her husband, Mike Schulz. Director Cathy Wainio is the busy Chair of both our Equine Committee and Membership Committee. Director Steve Slater is Chair of our Geocache Committee and the one who (thankfully!) takes care of all of our technical hook-up/connection tasks. We are extremely grateful for all of these committed people without whose dedicated efforts MI-TRALE would not be able to accomplish nearly the amount of work that it does.

Many thanks are extended to **Janet Miesbauer** for her wonderful work as our Vice President over the past few years. We certainly appreciate all you have done, Janet, thank you.



Janet Miesbauer – former Vice-President

Hello everyone!

I just want to take this time to thank you for making my time as the MI-TRALE Vice-President so rewarding. It is hard to believe our rural area has such an amazing group of volunteers that are so dedicated to the development & maintenance of multi-use trails. There really is strength in numbers and having a large vocal membership really gives MI-TRALE a strong voice to get things accomplished both locally and in our state capital.

I have been so impressed by our members, and our board, who go the extra mile to pitch in and help keep our trails in shape. Just removing a downed branch on the trail or reporting a washout (or ANOTHER new Beaver pond!) really helps keep the trails in shape for everyone. MI-TRALE receives trail sticker dollars for maintenance, which we use for grading, removing those pesky beaver dams and sometimes cleaning up trees when we have had a bad storm. We were able to purchase a Super Magnet to run over our rail trails, which has resulted in thousands of pounds of railroad spikes and metal being removed (and hopefully saving some of our members the frustration of a flat tire) from our trails!

I have seen our events blossom with volunteers coming out to help! Our Annual Senior Fall Color Ride just keeps growing with folks volunteering to bring their ORV and take a senior for the Ride. The feedback from both the drivers and the seniors is so rewarding. We hope to bring back our popular monthly rides, so we can all get together, visit and enjoy our sport.

The Courtney Lake Campground is now open to horses, which has long been a dream. Our partnership with the Ottawa National Forest (ONF) has made that dream come true, much to the delight of many equestrians. The river crossing is in place and access to the full trail network is in place. There are still more plans in the works for the future.

Jon Fourez is now the Vice-President and is very active in riding trails and maintaining them. If you see him out on the trails, be sure to stop and chat with him! Thank you all!

Janet Miesbauer – Former Vice-President

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW VICE-PRESIDENT



Hi, I'm Jon Fourez, your new Vice-President. I find it very humbling to be able to serve in this position after only being on the Board one year. My goal for this new position is to continue promoting outdoor sports as much as possible.

There is so much to see here in the UP. Safety while doing it is also a concern of mine. Such as wearing a helmet, or simply buckling up, no matter if you're riding a machine or a horse.

My passion, that I've developed from being out on the trails, is also proper signage on the trails. This is so that your riding experience is stress-free.

Another subject I need to address is protecting the trails that we currently have. There are some groups that want to close some of our trails for other purposes. I want to help educate our members (and non-members!) on what we can do to address this situation.

One thing you *can* do, is join a club like MI-TRALE, so our voices can be heard.

Thank you for making me your new Vice-President.



Sincerely,

Jon Fourez



KEEPING TRACK OF OUR MONEY

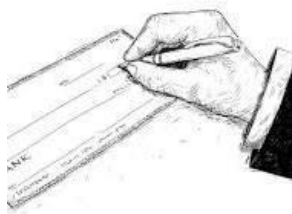
Dave Bishop – Treasurer



I was asked as Treasurer to tell you about how I see 2024. Well, I think this year will most likely be busier than 2023. This year the DNR has granted MI-TRALE more of your sticker money than they did last year and we have some grant funds left over from last year. But, as Treasurer, I see myself as someone that deals with real-time things and some history. I leave the visionary plans to President Don Helsel and the Co-Trails Manager/Secretary, Linda Schulz.



So, last year was quite a busy year. MI-TRALE managed over \$330,000 in grant funds awarded by the DNR. These funds were granted in October of 2022, based on the grant request made by MI-TRALE in May of 2022. The grant included 14 different line items, all focused on the maintenance of our trail system in 2023. The Treasurer also must track membership fees, map sales, equipment repair costs, purchases, contractor payments, grant reimbursements, and all project related costs.



The Treasurer's responsibility is to track all of the funds (revenue and expenditures) managed by MI-TRALE. MI-TRALE uses Quicken for the software to help keep our money straight. Let me just say, in my opinion, Accountants think differently than most of the rest of us. Quicken tracks and reports on every financial transaction that occurs during the year.

Here are some facts for you:



We made 82 deposits totaling \$303,251.09.

- We received from memberships \$4,678.10.
- We sold \$2,921.71 worth of maps.
- We used PayPal more this year, our deposits were \$1,316.70. (That was 24 memberships and 101 map orders.)
- Our total expenses were \$318,174.69.
- Our DNR payouts were \$249,793.72.
- We issued 29 payments to contractors using Bank Cashier's Checks.

Yes, we did spend \$15,258.75 more than we had income.

We spent :

- \$1,395.00 on postage this year.
- Due to timing, we spent \$8,582.00 on insurance this year.
- \$5,198.73 on repairing equipment.
- We acquired two used trucks this year: 2013-Ford F350 black for \$19,000.00 and a 2015-Ford F150 red for \$24,500.00.

All of this activity kept your Treasurer and Co-Trails Manager/Secretary very busy!

MI-TRALE also was awarded \$10,000 in March of 2022 from MISORVA (Michigan State Off Road Vehicle Association) as part of the Miracle Million funding program. This was used for the purchase of trail maintenance equipment. Due to equipment shortages in 2022, we could not complete the purchases until July of 2023. The board decided to go "green" and purchase all electric equipment. MI-TRALE purchased 30 new pieces of battery-powered trail equipment. Included were: chainsaws, trimmers, post hole augers and spare batteries.

These have been just some of the highlights of the past year. I think we will be *even busier* this coming year, as we have been granted a total of \$392,000 by the DNR for 2024!



MI-TRALE IS SAFETY PROACTIVE

We like to encourage safe travel habits on our trails from the start of a youngster's riding experience. One of the ways we do that is to promote Youth ORV Safety Training Classes. We are very proud that our Board Member, Jim Fooce, is a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Certified Recreational Safety Instructor. Our goal is to make sure that our youth is properly trained in the rules and responsibilities of riding an ORV in Michigan. This classroom training ensures that the youth of our state have the opportunity to earn the legally required ORV Safety Certificate.

In March, at Ewen-Trout Creek School, students attended the first Youth Safety Class held last year. A second class was held in April at Lake Linden School up in Keweenaw County. Approximately 50 6th graders attended each class. Assisting Jim with teaching the classes, was Nora Fourez, (the daughter of our new Vice President and an officer on the Lac Vieux Desert Tribal Police Force), and MDNR Conservation Officer Hanson. As a testament to the instructor's skill, almost all of the 100 students attending both the training sessions passed their test and received a youth operator's license.



In April 2023, after the classroom instruction, MI-TRALE holds "hands-on" training, with functioning ORVs at Ottawa National Forest Camp Nesbit in Sidnaw, Michigan, for the newly permitted 6th graders.

All of this increases the population of safety-minded and considerate riders on our trails. Something we can all appreciate!

In the Spring of 2024, MI-TRALE will provide this same state required classroom safety training to over 80 young riders by our State of Michigan Certified Instructor. If you have any questions about these safety training classes, please contact us at: mitrale.trainer@gmail.com, we will be happy to assist you. Firm dates will be noted on our website.

SIGNALING AND LIGHTS ON FOR SAFETY



RIDING RIGHT ON THE TRAILS



!THE SUPER MAG!

8,500 pounds and counting of railroad spikes & metal removed from our trails by the Super Magnet



With over 500 miles of trails to maintain, metal removal is very important. We are always looking for help to keep them in the best condition possible. May through August are THE crucial months for trail maintenance. We welcome all assistance, so the extended ORV community can have the safest and best *ever* riding experience while on our trails.

WHO MAINTAINS THE ORV TRAILS???

I am one of the Trail Managers and my husband, Mike Schulz, is the other. I am also the Secretary and a trail project coordinator, a social media person, a website person, a map and app coordinator and programmer, too. The whole Board wears many hats, like I do, to keep this club going. Caring for over 500 miles of ORV trails in 4 counties is a BIG JOB and I bet you didn't know your board and their families along with a few other members are the ones who do it all. We are a hard-working bunch that eat, sleep and dream MI-TRALE every day! The countless hours the Board puts in making sure the trails are safe, well-maintained, and open, are unbelievable! Then add in the hours of building good relationships with federal, state, counties, townships, and villages to make sure to provide the right to ride for all. MI-TRALEs Board also works endlessly to provide a connected, mapped and advertised trail system to bring tourism to our area from all over the United States, which supports our local economy.



by Linda Schulz



So please, as you read the details of all of these trail maintenance projects, remember 12 people are doing nearly the entirety of this work *and* everything else! PLEASE think about giving us a hand sometime, anytime, because the work never ends!

Our ORV Trails

We are the Trail Sponsor for 310 miles of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) ORV/Multi-Use trails and over 200 miles of club trails that we keep signed, maintained and repaired. As a MDNR Trail Sponsor, funding is available to maintain and sign their trails. Each year we can submit grant requests for monies to do routine maintenance and special maintenance projects. Club Trails, which are mainly county, township, village and National Forest roads, are maintained and signed by memberships, donations, grants and map advertisers.

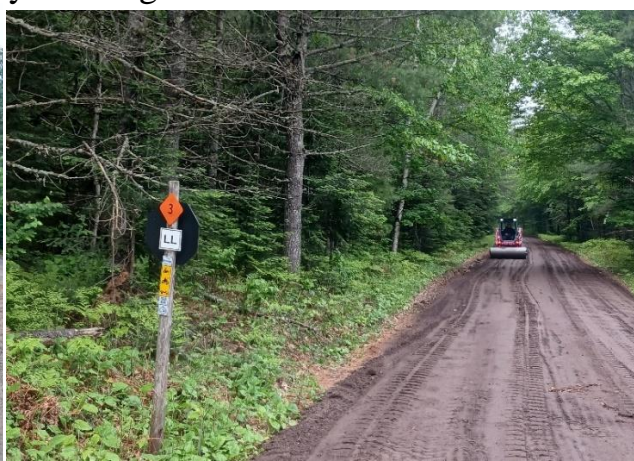
MI-TRALE received from the MDNR \$330,630 for 2023 and \$392,000 for 2024. (See page #15 for details.) The following is a recap of last year's projects & what we have projected for 2024:

MDNR Sponsored Trails

BN (Bill Nicholls) Route: Spring culvert washouts started the season for the BN and MDNR trail closures followed. The trail had closures up by Twin Lakes all season as the MDNR worked on permitting for the repairs. Lots of other work was done by the MDNR in 2023: culverts that failed in 2022 were replaced, along with grading, re-ditching and tree brushing. The triple trestle bridges deck boards warped and presented a safety issue, so MI-TRALE spent 2 full days screwing the boards back down. In 2024 MI-TRALE will be grading 46 miles of the BN in Spring and adding over 1000 yards of gravel to some of the washboard areas. The MDNR will be replacing up to 10 culverts that failed in 2023 or are ready to fail.



LL (Land O'Lakes) Route: Was graded twice in 2023-10miles in May & 8miles in August due to high traffic. A 6 bridges site survey engineering project was conducted costing \$86,000. The site survey must be done in preparation to replace 6 deteriorating bridges between Watersmeet and the Wisconsin border. Trail managers put up and took down a temporary detour route for the LL during the site survey due to large equipment blocking the trail and for the rider's safety. For 2024 we were granted money for the 6 bridges design and replacement engineering, which is the next step towards the bridge replacement. We will also be grading the trail twice, again, and adding about 1000 yards of gravel.



OC (Ottawa East Connector) Route: Repaired, spot-filled and brushed sections in Sidnaw and in the McKeever area by Mass City.



OR (Ontonagon/Rockland) Route: Graded 14miles and added 50yards of gravel in the Ontonagon Village section; the MDNR installed 2 culverts and did temporary work on a 3rd culvert. Also, our Super Magnet was run over the trail by member Matt Wiesen, after it was graded, picking up metal debris and railroad spikes and plates. Thank you, Matt! In 2024 the MDNR will be replacing a culvert.

P (Pioneer) Trail: 2 spring culvert washouts were repaired; a bridge approach washout was repaired; several yards of gravel were put in and grading was done from the Bergland Trailhead north to the VC intersection. In 2024 the P Trail will be graded from Victoria to Bergland.



SB (Sidnaw-Bergland) Route: In May a large culvert washout was found just east of Kenton and the MDNR closed the trail section from Kenton east to the M28 crossing until October when the MDNR finally allowed a repair. We found another washout in August by the Jumbo River Bridge that was also repaired in October. In June, 2 days were spent preparing a bid for grading 46 miles, the first contractor could not honor the contract, a 2nd contractor was hired, but unable to start until October. After 1 week of work the weather turned bad. Grading will continue in Spring of 2024, along with adding 600 yards of gravel. The Super Magnet was run

over several sections of the trail picking up metal debris and railroad spikes and plates by member Chris Kooyers. Thank you Chris!



SL (Iron River-Marenisco) Route: MI-TRALE Trail Managers spent 2 days out on the trail gathering info to prepare the bid forms; 67 miles were graded; all bridges were swept; ditches were brushed. Trail Managers spent an additional 4 days on the trail inspecting the grading work. In 2024, we will be working on stabilizing washboard areas by adding gravel fill and doing heavy compaction work.

CLUB SPONSORED TRAILS

CCE & CCW (Cisco Chain East & West) had speed limit signs installed by Member Bob McGuffin, who helped develop the trails, and then volunteered to maintain the route. Thank you Bob! In 2024, “Leaving Michigan” signs and “Welcome to Michigan” signs will be installed at the border with Wisconsin.

Also in 2024, we plan to replace faded signs on all Club Trails.



There are many ways you can help MI-TRALE.

Just call Linda at (906) 827-3208

OR Email her: mitrale.secretary@yahoo.com



**OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAIL IMPROVEMENT FUND
GRANT AGREEMENT
ATTACHMENT 1**

ORV Trail Improvement Fund Grant Number: **24-013**
MI-TRALE

| Scope of Work: | Maintenance | Amount |
|----------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | Bill Nicholls Route - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - BN 39 miles | \$2,145 |
| 2 | Bergland to Sidnaw Route - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - SB 49 miles | \$2,695 |
| 3 | Iron River-Marenisco - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - SL 67 miles | \$3,685 |
| 4 | Pioneer Trail - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - P 24 miles | \$1,320 |
| 5 | Ottawa East Connector Route - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - OC 79 miles | \$4,345 |
| 6 | Land O Lakes/Bond Falls - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - LL 35 miles | \$1,925 |
| 7 | Ontonagon to Rockland - Annual Spring and Summer Route Maintenance - OR 13 miles | \$715 |
| 8 | Liability Insurance | \$3,200 |
| 9 | Contingency - Unforeseen trail damage | \$1,000 |
| 10 | Beaver Control - On state designated ORV routes | \$1,000 |
| 11 | Maintenance route grading and gravel - Multiple designated route locations per DNR guidelines and prior permission from local staff | \$250,000 |
| 12 | LL Bridge #6 - Engineering and specs for bridge ON route LL Ottawa National Forest, | \$40,000 |
| 13 | Gravel - Gravel for spot filling of routes and bridge approaches | \$15,000 |
| 14 | Dead tree removal - Contracted removal and chipping of dead trees either from hazardous trees of former storm damage. Must work with Rec Spec to comply with Bat HCP | \$15,000 |
| 15 | Trail resurfacing - trail armoring with 4-6 Inches of 23A gravel. | \$50,000 |
| | TOTAL: | \$392,030 |

For a last little SAFETY item, here is a “Riding Reminder List” you might want to scan

Here are a few simple steps that you can take to ensure that everyone has a great time out on the trails and both humans and vehicles return home in safe working order:

#SLOW DOWN – *Speed and rider inexperience are THE primary contributing factors for ORV accidents, serious injuries or, sadly, even death of riders.*

#RIDE SOBER & ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET – when required by law.

#RIDE AT A SPEED SAFE FOR THE MOST NOVICE RIDER IN THE GROUP

#RIDE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE TRAIL & STAY ON THE TRAIL

#KEEP YOUR LIGHTS ON WHEN RIDING NO MATTER THE CONDITIONS

#OPERATE YOUR ORV WITHIN ITS LIMITS AND YOUR OWN

#BE PREPARED TO ADJUST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

#ONLY CARRY A PASSENGER IF YOUR ORV HAS BEEN MADE TO DO SO

#CREATE A RIDE PLAN & SHARE IT WITH A HOME CONTACT – *Times for beginning & ending the ride, trails you intend to take, stops you plan to make & check-in points to advise your home contact of your progress & any plan changes.*

#PLEASE REMOVE ANY ENCOUNTERED OBSTACLE TO THE TRAIL SIDE

#INTERACT RESPECTFULLY ON MIXED-USE TRAILS

#HAVE PROPER STICKERS AND KNOW THE AREA’S RULES & REG’S

Come the 2024 riding season, MI-TRALE wishes everyone many more safe and fun-filled rides! If you see us out on the trails, be sure to stop and say, “Hi!” We look forward to meeting you!





SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year we award four \$250.00 Scholarships for higher learning. These are made possible by the Marvin Westerdahl Memorial Scholarship Fund. Marvin had served as Vice President on our Board of Directors and he, and his wife Jane, were great trail-riding enthusiasts. His family created this fund in his memory, to honor his service with MI-TRALE, and to support the youth of our local communities. Every year they are granted to two deserving students each from Ewen-Trout Creek High School and Ontonagon High School.

In applying for the scholarships, some of the information the students submit detail their courses of study, grade point averages, activities participated in at school, hours volunteered in what types of community service and their plans for the future. The scholarship applications are thoroughly reviewed by MI-TRALE and granted based upon all of the information the students provide and who has the greatest need of the funds.

Makennah Uotila



Lilly McIntyre



MI-TRALE President, Don Helsel, presented the scholarship certificates on Monday, May 15, 2023 to Lilly McIntyre and Makennah Uotila at Ontonagon High School.

Scholarship Coordinator and Senior Class Advisor, Mary Nordine, presented the scholarship certificates on Thursday, May 18, 2023 at Ewen-Trout Creek High School to Joey Dershna and Kiegan Pietila.



KIEGAN PIETILA & JOEY DERSHNA WITH THEIR SCHOLARSHIP CERTIFICATES

MI-TRALE distributes the scholarship funds to the students upon receiving the submission of their first semesters' records from their respective institutes of higher learning. We are pleased to encourage academic excellence and community service among the youth of our communities. Lilly McIntyre, Makannah Uotila, Joey Dershna and Kiegan Pietila are four fine examples of this and we wish all of them well in the furtherance of their academic careers and volunteer service efforts.



June 10th of 2023 brings us to the Annual S.P.O.R.T. Ride

On two separate weekends during the Summer, the state of Michigan provides a free ORV riding weekend. That means no licenses or permits are required!

The first of these two weekends is always the second weekend in June, so the 10th and 11th of 2023. MI-TRALE helps celebrate and support this first free riding opportunity by holding their Annual **Sta**te Par**k Off Road Trek**, aka **The S.P.O.R.T. Ride!** The Ride originates from Twin Lakes State Park, with some coffee and cookies to help get us started, and runs between 70-90 miles. The routes taken and the lunch plans differ each year.****

(The second free weekend is in August. 2023s dates being the 19th and 20th of the month *~~and~~* if the formula holds true for 2024, the August weekend will be the 17th and 18th, but check out the CLUB STUFF tab, Calendar option on the website for firm dates.)



Left to Right & Top to Bottom: Riding the OR Route, Ready to start the Ride from Twin Lakes State Park, Taking a snack break at Red Ridge Dam, Taking a ride break.

TWIN LAKES INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE



July 4th saw MI-TRALE participating in the Annual Twin Lakes State Park Independence Day Parade. It was a bright and sunny day as they followed kids in costume and decorated entries that were marching along the route. This year had quite a few decorated SxS (side by side) machines along with MI-TRALE joining the fun.

Treasurer Dave Bishop was leading MI-TRALE in our white truck (that usually pulled the Super Magnet on our trails to collect and remove hazardous metal from them.) Following Dave was his wife Pat and son Kevin in their black SxS. President Don Helsel and his wife Sue were next riding in their blue SxS. After Don and Sue, were Director Jon Fourez and his mother Shirley in their red SxS. They were all handing candy treats to the campers and park guests along the parade route.

“It was wonderful to see so many families out celebrating the birth of our nation. We were very proud to be able to take part in such a great patriotic activity and support one of our local State Parks,” declared Dave.



COPPERFEST HISTORIC RIDE

Over the weekend of July 22nd -23rd, 2023, the Ontonagon County Chamber of Commerce held their Annual Copperfest celebration and on Saturday, July 22nd, MI-TRALE, sponsored conducting an ORV ride to various historic sites of the remains of copper mining operations in the Rockland area.



The Ontonagon Starting Point of The MI-TRALE Sponsored 2023 Copperfest Historic Ride

The members of our ride comprised approximately 45 people in about 25 side-by-side ORVs. After departing from Ontonagon, the ride's first stop, located on the hill west of the Old Victoria Village, were the ruins of the Victoria (Copper) Mine and the adjoining Hoist House. The ride then progressed down the hill for a pause to have lunch near the Lake Victoria dam. One group even brought a grill for a cook-out lunch!



Hoist House Ruins at Victoria



Copperfest Ride Lunch Stop at Lake Victoria Dam

After lunch we went through Rockland to go up to the model of an old church, situated on the hill behind the town. There we split into two groups: One remained at the church and the other went to an overlook of the “C” shaft of the Victoria Mine. At this time it started to rain. The group decided to brave the elements and go down to the bottom of the bluff to see the “C” shaft rock house. It was now raining so hard the group chose to end the ride & go back to Ontonagon. Of course, just 1 mile north of Rockland, the downpour stopped and the sun came out!

And the rains came.....



Despite the rain interruption, everyone seemed to have had a good time and thoroughly enjoy the different sites that they visited. Many participants said they would be back for next year's guided ride. MI-TRALE is pleased to sponsor this ride for the Ontonagon County Chamber of Commerce every year during Copperfest Days. We are proud to support the appreciation of the history of the founding of our local communities. Look for 2024s ride date postings on our website: www.mi-trale.org on the Calendar menu selection under the CLUB STUFF tab.

EQUESTRIAN NEWS

Located in Mass City, MI is the Courtney Lake Recreational Area. The trails are mapped, marked and maintained by the volunteers of MI-TRALE under a partnership agreement with the Ottawa National Forest. We invite you to ride & enjoy these serene trails and campsites. Many improvements and opportunities have been added over the past couple of years-and more was done in 2023!

THANK YOU TO OUR MI-TRALE VOLUNTEERS

There are always ongoing needs out on the trails. We are on it! Throughout 2023, 16 volunteers met throughout the year to work together on The Courtney Multi-use Trails & Campsites. Needs were met for clearing the trails, posting maps & confidence markers: Many hours of work, tools in hand. As an example, 2 volunteers put in 6 hours each to clear fallen trees from on the river crossing, and there was much more. Thank you very much. Anyone can join us. It is fun and rewarding to keep the trails ready for people to ride. And, they have been enjoying these beautiful trails and campground. Many visitors have been sharing their thoughts and thanks with us for all we do.



GREAT NEWS FOR EQUESTRIANS / IMPROVEMENTS BY VOLUNTEERS!

As you might know, The ONF & MI-TRALE have signed a cost share agreement to work together on the Courtney Campground Equestrian Conversion. This

agreement includes the trails also and suggested improvements up until May of 2026. With many tasks behind us, the ONF and MI-TRALE signed a modification agreement early in October of 2023. It obligates funds and supports more improvements for 2023 and 2024. MI-TRALE volunteers have already begun. We laid more gravel on the corral pads, where there was wear from horse's hooves. We moved a hitching post nearer to the new latrine that was installed this Spring. And we have begun covering sharp mine rock on the trails. Four small dump truck loads of soft gravel are in place, with six more to go. Horses will thank us! We have also installed a couple more signs to help people navigate the trails. Thank you Jim Fooce, Jon Fourez and Dick Wainio!



Next Spring, we will contract to widen the corral pads which will offer a more stable and safer place for our horses. Currently only three of six campsites have corrals. Next year we will be installing corrals at the remaining three sites.

CAMPGROUND INFORMATION

The campground is open during the Summer months and is managed by Calderwood Services. Contact Fred Sliger for reservations at: (906) 852-3232. The day use area is managed by the ONF. The day use area has ample parking for equestrians who come to visit and ride the trails. For more information, please contact the Ontonagon Ranger District Office at: (906) 884-2085.

ENJOY THE TRAILS AND YOUR FELLOW TRAIL RIDERS

Only a small portion of the trails are open to motorized riders, who also experience a rather slow, quiet ride. Many of the Courtney Trails are actually Forest Service roads where you might interact with and share the roads with motorized vehicles. The trails are mostly sandy and will take you over a few small hills and rises. They give you stunning views of peaceful lakes, ponds and a ravine near the Firesteel River. You will travel among beautiful varieties of forest vegetation and mature trees. Equestrian riders can go through a non-motorized river crossing that adds enjoyable tracks to their ride. During the Winter months, some of the trails are available for cross-country skiers and snow-shoers. You can camp, kayak, fish, ride horses, hike and bicycle over 18 miles of a very pleasant trail system. The Courtney Recreation Area offers a great get-away. You will want to come back again and again!

Winter riding is a bit more challenging for equestrians, but we do it. The Summer riding season is just not long enough for some of us. We love all the seasonal changes here as they have a beauty all their own. Remember part of the trail system is enjoyed by cross-country skiers. Once groomers have set the tracks for skiers, we must respect their passion and efforts and stay off the groomed tracks. Let's have fun out there as we meet up with other trail users.

FUTURE PROJECTS BEING CONSIDERED

- A new trailhead location will identify all trail users and offer needed information
- Campground reservation by QR code option for visitors
- Possible manure bunker
- Removal of Berns (though we can get around them, improvements are on the table)
- Possible new trails to connect and create loops within the trail system
- An updated Trail Map will be ready for the 2024 riding season

Visit the "Horse Trails" tab on our website for updates. You will find helpful information including other horse trails in the Western Upper Peninsula.



Courtney Lake on the Equestrian Trail



On the Courtney Equestrian Trails



More Riders Enjoying the Courtney Equestrian Trails

A LAST NOTE

From your Equestrian Director: Cathy Wainio cdnwainio@yahoo.com ph#906-988-2232

How was your 2023 riding season? Did you make it out to Courtney? If not, check it out! Any little bit helps and every helping hand has made a big difference. You will not regret working with the positive volunteers from MI-TRALE. If you would like to help, please contact me. We value your support more than you know.



CATHY WAINIO MI-TRALE
EQUESTRIAN DIRECTOR



ONTONAGON COUNTY LABOR DAY PARADE

MI-TRALE was proud to participate in the 67th Annual Ontonagon County Labor Day Parade, held on Sunday, September 3rd, 2023. It was an amazingly warm day filled with brilliant sunshine and blue skies that welcomed the large crowd of attendees. We continued our tradition of a pre-parade, group cookout and then, when the 2:00pm EDT start time arrived, we were ready to roll!



As usual, we were delighted to hand out candy and “kid crafts” to on-lookers enjoying our entries going down the road. Our new, black, Ford F350 MI-TRALE Trail Maintenance truck was the lead vehicle, driven by Co-Trail Manager Mike Schulz. It had the important job of being the “Carrier of Candy & Crafts!” Next came three 4-wheelers and three Side-by-Side ORVs, (complete with MI-TRALE Safety Flags). All were piloted by our “Treat Distribution Gang.” From the bed of the lead truck, supplying treat re-fills to the “Distributors”, was Volunteer April Schulz.



These individual vehicles were followed by Member Brian Mandenberg, driving his truck, pulling our Maintenance Equipment Trailer. Presented on the trailer were various pieces of equipment. Directly behind that was another example of vehicles able to travel the trails: A Ford 4x4 Bronco, helmed by Volunteer Jeanette Clark.



The last entry of MI-TRALEs convoy was our white truck with Treasurer Dave Bishop at the wheel. It was pulling our Super Magnet. In the interest of making *your* trails as safe and hazard-free as possible, the Super Magnet is what we use to attract and collect, (for proper disposal), large pieces of metal that are dangerous to ORV traffic. Here is an example of the amount of metal debris we have collected during only the previous two outings of using the Super Magnet: On 6-22-23, we removed 185 railroad spikes. On 8-17-23, another 131 spikes were collected. On the day after the parade, Dave had the rig out on the LL Trail and picked up 210 spikes, 1 bar, 2 plates, 1 hook and 60lbs. of other assorted metal. Some labor for Labor Day!



All the Members of the MI-TRALE parade group were over-whelmed by the enormously positive response they received as they traveled down the parade route. “It’s great to know that one of our major local communities appreciates and supports our efforts in bolstering this family- and tourist-friendly recreational activity,” said President Don Helsel.



FREE SENIOR FALL COLOR RIDE

WE WERE SO PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT 2023's 14TH ANNUAL SENIOR FREE FALL COLOR TOUR, HELD THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS! IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT ALL THE GENEROUS DONATIONS FROM INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES.

THE ONTONAGON COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS WERE NICE ENOUGH TO ALLOW ATTENDEE AND BUS PARKING ON THEIR SITE. BUSES AND DRIVERS WERE SUPPLIED BY THE EWEN-TROUT CREEK SCHOOL. THE FORESTRY DIVISION OF THE MDNR PROVIDED 3 STAFF MEMBERS TO INFORM EVERYONE AS TO HOW AND WHY THE LEAVES TURN THE BEAUTIFUL COLORS THAT THEY DO. TWIN LAKES STATE PARK WAS VERY GRACIOUS IN PROVIDING THE ACCOMMODATIONS OF ORV AND BUS PARKING FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS AND ATTENDEES TO HAVE LUNCH ON THEIR GROUNDS AND PARK STAFF WHO VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE THE PASTY LUNCH.



THE COMBINED TOTAL OF THE 60+ SENIORS, THAT MI-TRALE WAS ABLE TO TAKE ON THE 22-MILE MORNING AND AFTERNOON TOURS, WERE ALL DRIVEN IN 20+ SIDE-BY-SIDE (S&S) ORV's DONATED FOR THE DAY BY LAND O'LAKES RECREATION IN LAND O'LAKES, WISCONSIN; HEADWATERS POLARIS IN WATERSMEET, MICHIGAN; HAMILTON'S NORTH COAST ADVENTURES IN WHITE PINE, MICHIGAN; THE ADVENTURE MOTEL IN MASS CITY, MICHIGAN; PAT'S MOTOR SPORTS IN GREENLAND, MICHIGAN AND NUMEROUS PRIVATE OWNERS. BETWEEN THE TWO TOURS, A DELICIOUS PASTY LUNCH, DONATED BY KRUPP'S MINI MART, (LOCATED IN TOIVOLA, MICHIGAN), WAS ENJOYED BY EVERYONE BEFORE THE AFTERNOON TOUR BEGAN.



THE TOURS TRAVELED ON THE BN, (BILL NICHOLL'S), TRAIL WITH STOPS FOR PICTURE-TAKING AT BOTH THE EAST AND WEST BRANCHES OF THE FIRESTEEL RIVER'S FAMOUS TRIPLE TRESTLE BRIDGES. HUSBAND AND WIFE ATTENDEES (FROM LOWER MICHIGAN) OF THE MORNING TOUR, AARON BALCOM AND JENNY BALCOM BOTH DECLARED, "EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS LESS SUNSHINE THAN LAST YEAR'S TOUR, THE FALL COLORS WERE BEYOND SPECTACULAR! WE HAD A WONDERFUL RIDE AND THE PASTY LUNCH WAS VERY TASTY!"



MI-TRALE TREASURER DAVE BISHOP WAS, ONCE AGAIN, THE ORGANIZER OF THE 2023 TOUR. HE STATED THAT, "IT IS OUR PLEASURE TO PROVIDE SENIOR CITIZENS, THAT DON'T OFTEN HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET OUT INTO THE FRESH AIR OF THE WOODS, TO REALLY SEE ALL THE NATURAL WONDERS THE UP HAS TO OFFER." BISHOP WENT ON TO SAY, "WE HAD SENIORS, NOT ONLY FROM THE UP, BUT ALSO FROM LOWER MICHIGAN, WISCONSIN AND A FEW OTHER STATES, THAT WERE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR'S TOUR."



DON HELSEL, PRESIDENT OF MI-TRALE, SAID, "DAVE IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR HIS SUPERIOR JOB IN COORDINATING ALL OF THE VOLUNTEER EFFORTS THAT MADE THIS TOUR SUCH A ROUSING SUCCESS! WE WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE ABOUT 20 MORE SENIORS, OVER LAST YEAR'S TOTAL, THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE THE GLORY OF AUTUMN COLOR IN THE UP. WE HOPE TO RAISE THAT NUMBER EVEN HIGHER FOR NEXT YEAR'S TOUR!"

HELSEL CONCLUDED WITH, "A HUGE THANK YOU" GOES OUT TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER, WHO DONATED THEIR TIME AND MACHINES, AS WELL AS TO THE MANY BUSINESSES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS, ALL WITHOUT WHOM MI-TRALE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS FREE EVENT POSSIBLE."



EWEN LOG JAMBOREE PARADE - September 30, 2023

The “Log Jam” is a two-day event held over an end of September weekend, put on by the Ewen Civic Association, celebrating the skills, arts and crafts that are related to the area’s logging industry. But, there is a lead-in on Friday with a craft fair, bake sale, soup and sandwich sale and a live band that evening, etc. It gets you ready to “log roll” for the weekend!

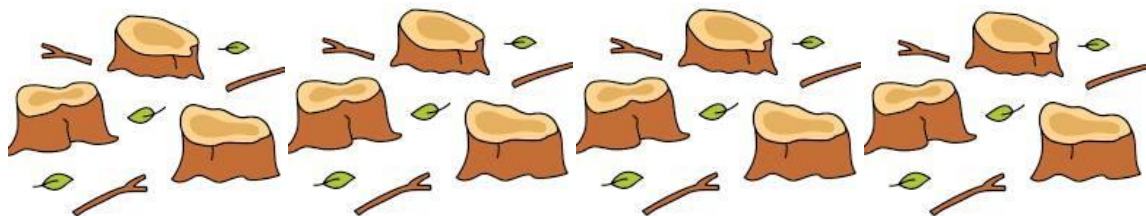
The parade is always held on Saturday, come rain or shine, in which MI-TRALE participates nearly every year. There are other events, prize drawings, a kids sawdust coin scramble, quilters presentations, often foot runs, canoe runs, and the ever-popular rubber ducky race. The 2023 Log Jamboree event presented a youth bicycle give away drawing offered by the Ewen Volunteer Fire Department and the immensely exciting chain saw and log rolling competitions brought to Ewen by professional entertainers.

2023 was a “come rain” year, but our dedicated Equine Director, Cathy Wainio, was there with both of her horses, Siiri & BelleAmie, along with two of her grandchildren, Gavin and Brianna. Director Jim Fooce was there, as well, driving MI-TRALEs black Ford-F350 Trail Maintenance Truck. The horses were costumed to suit the occasion and all the MI-TRALE human participants were appropriately garbed in lumberjack plaids.



Cathy holding Siiri with her Grandson Gavin and her Granddaughter Brianna on BelleAmie

Jim led our small procession followed by Cathy and her grandchildren and the horses. Cathy was concerned about her horses, as they were both parade first-timers. But, she said, “I had nothing to fear as horses and grandkids enjoyed being in the parade and did very well.” Despite the soggy weather it was nice to see all the folks that we did along the parade route. Hopefully we’ll see more MI-TRALE members out enjoying the Jamboree’s historic fun next year!”



OCTOBER 2023

Outside of some necessary trail repair/maintenance work, October had us working behind the scenes, with the start of our 2024 Membership Drive and (until we got to the end of the month with some fun in Bruce Crossing, Michigan!), with letters sent out to our State Senators, House Representatives and other Michigan Legislative Members regarding the Concurrent Resolution 11 that would severely limit access of public lands to foot-traffic only. Below is a portion of the text of that letter:

“We oppose Resolution 11 legislation that will restrict the use of our public lands. Public lands need to be open for access to all, no matter what activity they enjoy, not just limited to foot-traffic only. There are already approximately 300,000 acres that are currently managed by Michigan. These additional restrictions would further impact our lives by limiting how we are able to use our local resources. To name but a few items, we need these forests for timber harvest, recreation opportunities of all types and harvesting of food through hunting opportunities.”

We want to protect the trails we have worked so hard to attain and the reputation we have for maintaining them all in such good order for YOU our Members~~as well as the greater ORV and multi-use trail riding community across Michigan and our neighboring states. It would be a distinct tragedy if our access was taken away.



2024 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE – from the Membership Committee

October of any previous year is when we begin our annual membership drive for the following year and Membership renewal applications for 2024 are sent out via post mail in the early weeks of the month. Applications can also be found on the MI-TRALE web page: www.mi-trale.org for NEW or renewing members. Memberships are for January 1st through December 31st each year. We remind you to get your membership renewal sent in as promptly as possible and invite your friends to join. We need your help to keep the recreational trails safe and enjoyable. MI-TRALE is grateful for everyone!



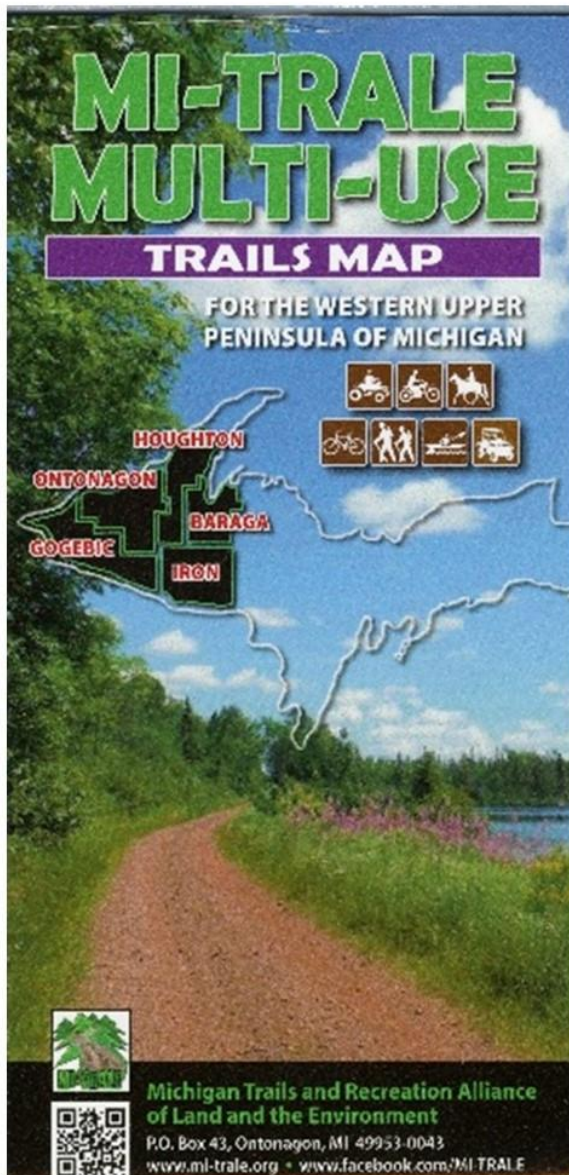
Your support is very important and much appreciated. Your membership helps to cover administrative and trail maintenance costs and the equipment needed to maintain nearly 550 miles of various types of trails. Feel free to share the contact information from the Membership Application with your friends, and any businesses, that you think would like to support the trails. You will find more information on the MI-TRALE website under the Club Stuff tab / Membership option.

Members will receive a “welcome package” to convey our thanks: The attractive 2024 decal that you can proudly display on your ORV to show your support, your membership card and a free MI-TRALE paper Trails Map. You can also find MI-TRALEs popular Map App, Michigan UP Trails, in Google Play, the APP Store, Android or iOS. All of MI-TRALEs members are notified via email of our monthly meetings. They are very informative and also open to the public. The MI-TRALE Membership Committee is very pleased to report is that we currently have 266 members, which is over two thirds of the way toward our expected membership total for 2024.

And those numbers are rising every day. We have many new members this year and are pleased to welcome them to the MI-TRALE organization. This year we have also offered reciprocal memberships with area groups who support trails, and economic growth, here in the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, as does MI-TRALE.

You might want to consider how else you could become involved with MI-TRALE. We can always use your help to keep this vital trail group moving forward for future generations of trail enthusiasts. Visit our website to learn more. Please feel free to contact us if you need more information. Thank you for your interest and support of the recreational trails here in the beautiful Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We could not do this without you! We are very thankful for your support.

(2024 Member Welcome Package shown below.)





Michigan Trails and Recreation Alliance of Land and the Environment

P.O. Box 43 – Ontonagon Michigan – 49953-0043 www.mi-trale.org

Membership Application

Annual Membership – January 1st to December 31st

CHECK ONE:

Individual \$25 _____ Family \$30 _____ (Each member will receive a decal. Provide names below.)

Small Business \$50.00 _____ Large Business \$75.00 _____ Donation \$ _____

Extra Decals (\$2.00 each) # of extra decals _____ **TOTAL ENCLOSED \$** _____

Please make checks payable to MI-TRALE, send to the address above and write "MEMBERSHIP" on the envelope. You can also find details on the MI-TRALE web under Club Stuff, Membership.

RENEWALS:

If your information has not changed in the past year, you do not need to complete this application. Just mail your check to the address above and note on your check that this is a "Membership Renewal."

If your information has changed in the past year: Please complete this application and mail it to the address above.

If you are paying with PayPal, please provide new information, under "Instructions to Merchants or Seller." (email addresses, phone #, names of family members, etc),

Membership Package: You will receive a MI-TRALE Membership Card, paper Trails Map(s) and a MI-TRALE Decal, that you can proudly display on your ORV or trailer. Business Members receive ORV decals and a larger 6x6 MI-TRALE Decal and the current Year Decal to display at their business.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY ~ Thank you!

Name(s) [Family Memberships – please include names of each family member]

Mailing Address _____

City / Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Email _____ Business' Website _____

Each member will receive email updates, meeting & event notices and the annual newsletter.
Membership Contact – *Cathy Wainio* – cndwainio@yahoo.com

BOO CROSSING - Saturday October 28th



Tim Peacy



Jim Fooce

To celebrate the fun of Halloween and Autumnal activities, Bruce Crossing holds its Annual Boo Crossing Fest. There are all kinds of activities for kids, and adults, including a haunted house!

Even though 2023 was a very cold and overcast day, Directors Tim Peacy and Jim Fooce were there to represent MI-TRALE, at the “Trunk-or-Treating” part of the event, with our big, black Ford F350 Trail Maintenance Truck. They had the truck parked in the Settler’s Co-op parking lot with the tailgate down, holding a big bucket of candy.



Both men were at the tailgate and happy to join in the fun of the event by handing out Halloween candy treats to all the children that came by. Tim said, “With the weather being as cold, and the skies as grey as they were, neither Jim or I expected a very large turnout. We were amazed at the huge amount of kids (and adults!) in costumes that we saw! A great accomplishment for Bruce Crossing, as this was only their second year of hosting this event. We were glad to see all the smiles on the kids faces as we handed out the treats!”



GEOCHING: A Fun, Worldwide Scavenger Hunt

by **Director Steve Slater – Geocaching Committee Chair**



If you aren't familiar with *geocaching*, now is a great time to learn more about it!

Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity, in which participants use a Global Positioning System (**GPS**), receiver or mobile device, to hide and seek containers, called geocaches, (or simply caches), at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world. The origin of the word “cache” comes from the French verb *caler* (ka-shay), meaning “to hide.”

As of 2023, there are over 3 million active caches worldwide. MI-TRALE has 15+ geocache locations on our trails for riders to find, as well as “travel bugs,” that travel from cache to cache via the courtesy of people like you. We have one fairly well travelled “bug” according to our reports!

If you have an interest in helping to hide and maintain our caches, please reach out to Steve Slater at: honda400ex2003@gmail.com or to mitrale.pr@gmail.com for more information.

We want to keep expanding this fun outdoor activity! Hope to see you escorting some “bugs” to a new location on our trails.....!



A found Geocache !



Travel Bugs & Log Book from the Geocache

The MI-TRALE logo decal on the tag of the red lizard is the front of the “bug” and next to it on the metal tag of the wood MI-TRALE keychain shows the back of a sticker used for tracking.

ONTONAGON HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS PARADE

We participated in the Ontonagon Hometown Christmas Parade, that took place Sunday, December 3rd, 2023. We were even lucky enough to win 2nd place in the Commercial Division for our entry! The parade route followed was from Parker Avenue to Ontonagon Street. The weather was delightful for December, temperatures in the 30s, some of the best conditions had in years. This was attested to by the good-sized crowd viewing the parade!



MI-TRALE had their most recent acquisition of a new Trail Maintenance Truck, a bright red F150 Ford, leading their three parade entries. We'd like to give a shout out to Bob at Peninsula Graphics for his superb design and application work with the wrap on the truck. Our vehicle wouldn't have looked so fantastic without his hard work. Thank you, Bob! The truck carried a large, inflatable Santa facing forward to "wave Christmas Hellos" to everyone who lined the parade route. Driving that vehicle was MI-TRALEs Treasurer, Dave Bishop, accompanied by his wife Pat along with Club President Don Helsel and his wife Sue



The next vehicle was another Ford truck, a cherry red F250, owned and driven by Director Jon Fourez. His mom Shirley was riding with him. There was a beautifully lit, live Christmas Tree in the back of that truck to bring smiles to everyone's faces.



The third and last vehicle was our existing Trail Maintenance Truck, a black Ford F350, also with great wrap work, done, once again, by Bob at Peninsula Graphics! This featured another Santa looking backwards at everyone waving “Goodbye,” as if to remind everyone to be “Nice” and NOT “Naughty.” No one wants to find coal in their stocking! Co-Trail Manager Michael Schulz was driving that vehicle, accompanied by his wife, Co-Trail Manager & Secretary Linda Schulz; his daughter, Volunteer April Schulz and Director Jim Fooce.



*We hope everyone had wonderfully happy, healthy, safe and peaceful
holidays with all their family and friends!!!*





MI-TRALE & SOCIAL MEDIA: Did you know.....?

MI-TRALE has a Facebook page!

[https://www.facebook.com/pages/MI-TRALE/ 120763167985263](https://www.facebook.com/pages/MI-TRALE/120763167985263)

We post trail conditions, meeting dates, trail maintenance dates / trail closures & openings / events and more!

In the last 90 days, 32,145 folks saw our Facebook page! During “riding” season, our reach is even higher!

You can even “pin” our group under the search function so it will be easy to find. Our Facebook page and Messenger provide you with an easy way to directly interact with MI-TRALE ~and~ gain up-to-date information.

Check it out!



A FINAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR~~

*It's definitely been a labor of love to put this Newsletter together for all of you.
And trust me, it has not been an individual effort!*

Every single member of the Board of Directors has contributed their time, checked my facts, offered their recollections, written articles on their areas of expertise and donated pictures in order that this publication would be as entertaining and as factually accurate as humanly possible. In other words, without their assistance, I could not have created this "Year In Review of 2023" for your (HOPEFULLY!) reading pleasure and information.

My talents lay working behind the scenes, beating computer keyboard keys, putting together press releases, writing letters and taking care of any chores in this vein that the Board of Directors requests me to do. (I also served on the Nominations Committee and continue to serve on the Membership Committee.)

This is my way of helping to spread the good word about MI-TRAIL among our local communities and informing them of all the hard work that we do to keep recreational opportunities abounding for trail enthusiasts. So, while you may not see me out on the trails, I am still working hard for YOUR organization.

I do hope you have enjoyed reading (and seeing the snapshots) about all that went on in 2023 and will be looking forward to even more in 2024!

Sincerely,

Your Editor ~ Donna Wolf

