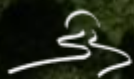


An aerial photograph of a dirt trail winding through a dense green forest. Three hikers are visible on the trail, moving away from the viewer. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a bright yellow-green shirt. The other two hikers are further ahead, one in a dark shirt and the other in a blue shirt. The forest is lush and green, with sunlight filtering through the trees.

# Discovery Routes 2023 Impact Report



**1000+**

We support a vast and diverse trails network with over 1000km of land and water trails



**40+**

We support more than 40 communities across the Near North



**56+**

We work with 56 community trail partners

**\$4 M**

We have secured over \$4 million for infrastructure and programming since 2000





## A Message from our Chair

On behalf of the Board I welcome new and old advocates to the trails community, and encourage you to review our 2023 Impact Report. As always, we are moving forward to further our vision of connecting communities and people while meeting the needs of trail users in the Near North.

We began the year with the drive to establish a Fund Development Committee and develop a targeted plan. Rod Bilz has championed the cause welcoming new volunteers who are keen to see Discovery Routes thrive. New & exciting trail opportunities are always on the horizon and need your support.

Over the past year we made significant advances in our marketing and communications through print and social media. Increased viewership to our website, Facebook, and Instagram accounts show some compelling performance stats.

We are all about expanding our reach to newcomers here at home and further afield so that you may experience the beauty and thrills of our region throughout all four seasons. We welcome you to become more involved, whether it be in pursuit of your sport, volunteer efforts or active contributions and support to our Board and committees. We value your input.

Discovery Routes stays-on-trail only through the commitment and hard work of our staff and volunteers.

A big thank you to our board of Directors, committee members, partner groups, organizations, agencies and municipalities who have taken an interest in working with Discovery Routes.

Susan Christian, Board Chair

## Our Vision

*A thriving trails network connecting communities and meeting the diverse needs of trail users in the Near North.*

## Our Mission

*To invest in partnerships for the development and promotion of sustainable multi-use trails and active transportation systems. Our collaboration and support connect citizens and visitors while stimulating economic growth, encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle and appreciation for the natural beauty and history of the region.*

## Land Acknowledgment

*The vast network of trails we celebrate exist on the traditional lands and waterways of the Anishinaabe people within the territory protected by the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850 and Williams Treaties of 1923. By recognizing and honouring the past stewards and original land keepers, we aim to work together where all can connect meaningfully with the rich history of the lands and waters we call home.*

### Board of Directors 2022-2023

Susan Christian, Chair  
Lance Belanger, Past-Chair  
Paula Loranger, Vice-Chair  
Peter Rooney, Treasurer  
Rod Bilz, Secretary  
Alan Korell, Member-at-Large  
Paul Waqué, Member-at-Large  
Tim Clayton, Member-at-Large  
Ken Prescott, NNTA Rep  
Jeffery Miller, Member-at-Large

### Fund Development Committee

Rod Bilz, Chair  
Bill Hagborg  
Shelly Morrison

### Staff

Jennifer McCourt, Executive Director  
April McClellan, Marketing & Communications (part-time)  
Cam Haslehurst, Youth Mentorship Program (summer student)



## Connecting Communities and People

Across the Near North, we have a thriving community of volunteers who provide stewardship for a vast and diverse trails network. We work together with our community-based trail partners to foster community involvement to support the sustainable development of local trails and regional connections.

### 2023-2027 Strategic Plan – YEAR 2

A year into the strategic plan has kept Discovery Routes on the right PATH... so to speak. It is our guiding document that continues to work towards **good governance and sustainability** for the organization.

### Fund Development Committee Established

We are thrilled to welcome new volunteers to the Discovery Routes family who are keen to help build sustainability for trails. With a **Fundraising Plan** and policies to **acknowledge and recognize donors**, our first dedicated fundraising campaign is ready to go.

### Trail Stewardship and Local Trail Champions

We are establishing a regional **Trail Stewardship Program** to **build capacity for local trails** by increasing collaborations and sharing resources. The new program includes **trail volunteer recognition**. We hope their contributions will inspire more folks to get involved.



Trail Champion Gerry Giesler with Susan Christian at The Pines in Powassan

*Why does Gerry volunteer? "I've always been an outdoors person and like doing outdoors stuff. What it boils down to is I like sharing my knowledge and making sure other people can get to enjoy the outdoors too."*

### Trans Canada Trail

We act as a regional coordinator to 340km of the Trans Canada Trail. We renewed TCT wayfinding signs on the **Old Nipissing Ghost Road** from Seguin Falls to Magnetawan and on the **Kate Pace Way** in North Bay. TCT Trail Classification was completed for these trails as well as the **Pat Haufe Way** in Nipissing Township.

### Voyageur Cycling Route

We are coordinating the development of the **Voyageur Cycling Route** connecting 29 rural and northern communities. Keeping connected to the east, we participated in **Eastern Ontario Trail Town** Workshop.

### Liability Insurance for Trail Partners

We are master policy holder providing \$5 million coverage to our Trail Partners: **Friends of Laurier Woods, Almaguin Community Trails, Forgotten Trails Association, Friends of a Vase Portages**, and **Trees for Nipissing**.

### Trail Signs on Three Towers and The Pines Trails

Trail signs are important to the trail experience, to navigate safely. In partnership with **NBMBA** and **Municipality of Powassan**, we are improving wayfinding on these trail networks.







## Inspiring Trail Use for Health and Well-Being

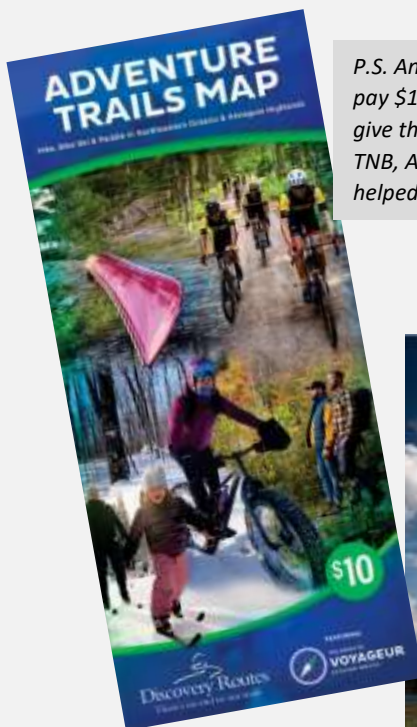
Trails support healthy lifestyles by providing an easily accessible and low-cost option to engage in physical activity. With expansive wilderness steps from our door and a vast active transportation network of rural and urban roads, there really is no end to our trails.

### Sharing our Trail Tales

We love our local trails and we love to share our connections to the outdoors through our own personal trail experiences. We've published articles in the **Almaguin Community Guide** and **local blogs** to help everyone explore, discover and deepen connection with nature, to our communities and to each other.

### Discovery Routes Adventure Trails Map

On sale now! The latest edition of our popular **Adventure Trails Map** hit the stands in April. It's being sold this year for \$10 to help cover the production cost.



*P.S. Anyone who isn't able to pay \$10 for a map, we will give them away! Our partners TNB, ACED and others have helped to make this happen.*

### #DiscoveryRoutes

We use **Facebook** and **Instagram** to engage with the trails community sharing compelling stories that recognize and highlight the impact of trail volunteers and inspire more people to get out, get involved and explore.



### Discovering local trails at DiscoveryRoutes.ca

Over 1000km of recreational land and water trails are highlighted on our website and trail enthusiasts are finding them. We are close to **60K visitors** to the website in 2023 up until October.





## Promoting Safe, Responsible and Equitable Access to Trails

We collaborate with local governments and transportation agencies to advocate for policies, infrastructure improvements and community engagement initiatives to ensure that trails are integrated into urban and rural planning processes and distributed equitably across the region. Our goal is to create an inclusive and diverse trail user community, where everyone can enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation and active transportation.

### 2023 ReCycle Bikes Program

We continue to promote affordable access to trails by reducing economic barriers allowing people of all income levels to use trails without financial hardship through our bicycle donation program.



**120 BIKES DONATED/ 100 distributed**  
**983 bikes since 2015**



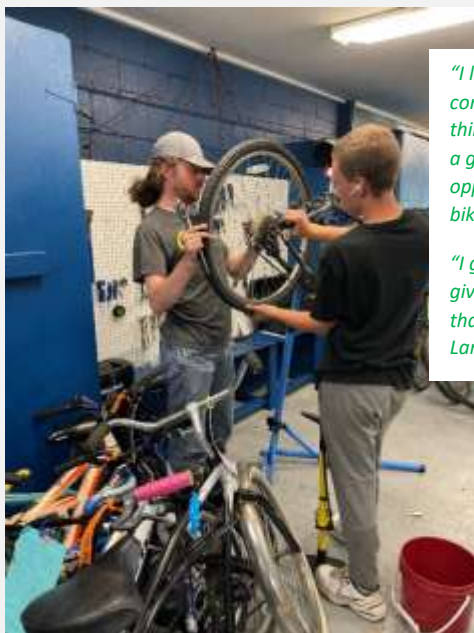
**223 VOLUNTEER HOURS**  
**1700 hours since 2015**



**327 KG WASTE DIVERTED**  
**2047 KG since 2018**

### ReCycle Bikes Youth Mentorship Program

YMP is a new program ready to officially launch in 2024 made possible with support from The **Thomson Family Foundation** through the North Bay & Area Community Foundation.



Volunteers Paul and Ayden working on donated bike

*"I like using my skills to give back to the community and to people who need a bike. I think cycling is a very important part of having a good life and that everyone should have that opportunity." Paul Davis, long-time volunteer bike mechanic.*

*"I grew up on two wheels and to be able to give other people that opportunity is worth it, that alone is enough compensation for me." Lance Belanger, volunteer since 2015.*

### Community Bicycle Education

We partnered with the **Near North District School Board** once again to deliver bicycle safety training.

### Advocacy for Active Transportation Facilities

We advocate for improved cycling infrastructure for the safety of all road users. Letters of support leading to funding this year include an active transportation corridor in **East Ferris**, maintenance on the Kate Pace Way in **North Bay** and a new multi-use pathway in **South River**. Paved shoulders and signs on **Highway 64** were also completed this year.

### Advisory Role to Municipalities

With expertise in cycling and trail infrastructure, Discovery Routes has an advisory role on the **North Bay Active Transportation Advisory Committee**.

### Anti-theft Bike Registry

**529 Garage** is a bike registry tool for law enforcement to identify the owner of a stolen bike. Community

cycling advocate Nicole has brought the program to North Bay to help reduce bike theft and promote cycling in the city. We are helping to register bikes and distribute anti-tamper stickers.



Paved shoulder on Hwy 64 near Lavigne part of the Voyageur Cycling Route advocacy for improved cycling infrastructure





## Supporting the Local Economy

Trails power the economy. Local spending by residents and visitors who use the trails and participate in trail events spend money on both goods and services related to active recreational activity during their trips, which generates additional economic activity and supports local jobs and businesses.

### Building Awareness of the Destination

We know our local trails! We know the hidden gems, the stories behind the trails and what makes them a unique and memorable experience. We've packaged our knowledge into **Self-Guided Multi-Adventure Trail Experiences** with downloadable resources and shared stories in **Explore Magazine, Ontario by Bike, Northernontario.travel** and French site **Norddelontario**. Our article "5 Multi-Adventures to Discover in Northeastern Ontario" was the best-performing article in a US campaign.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

Our message of trail use goes so much farther when we work together. We partner with a fantastic team of tourism agencies: **ACED, Tourism North Bay, NeOnt, DNO, Destination Ontario**. We love to collaborate with businesses and other non-profits too. A new partnership with **Commanda Heritage Museum** is renewing excitement around the Old Nipissing Road.

### Trail Event and Tour Support

Cycling events across the region are attracting 1000's of cyclists to the region. We are thrilled to support these events including **Ride for Jack, Ontario Cycling Championships** and **OBB North Bay & Lakes Tour**. We support these events through resource sharing and promotion.

### The Voyageur 200

In its inaugural year, we provided administrative support to this volunteer-run 200km charity **gravel bike race** with 100 and 60 km routes through East Ferris, North Bay, Mattawa and Bonfield. The event raised \$2K for the NBRHC Foundation to build awareness around a heart and stroke disorder called **Aphasia**. Way to go Jeff Miller!

### Outdoor Adventure Industry Resource Guide

In consultation with outfitters and tourism partners, we have developed a resource that analyses the current landscape of **non-motorized outdoor tourism** and describes the adventurer needs, operators, organizations and market-ready trail experiences in the region. The guide offers resources and recommendations that enable industry collaborations to support adventure tourism growth in the Near North.

### Visitor Trail Pass

Working in partnership with Tourism North Bay and North Bay Mountain Bike Association, we are exploring ways that visitors can contribute to the efforts of trail partners through a **visitor pass system**.



*OBB North Bay & Lakes Tour visits South River Brew Company with 40 touring cyclists*