

# Glacial Hills Progress Report

11-15 to 5-16

Kelly Ferguson, Glacial Hills Treasurer

## ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the progress the Friends of Glacial Hills have made in their effort to create a financially sustainable organization that, “Preserves the natural resource values of Glacial Hills while providing a premier public recreational area that significantly contributes to the health and prosperity of Antrim County”.

# Glacial Hills Progress Report

In November of 2015, Brad Gerlach, then the trail manager for Glacial Hills, presented a report highlighting the successes of our first season. Since that report, we have replicated our success in many areas, identified our challenges, and built on our opportunities.

## **Successes**

**Activities** - The Friends Group continues to host a variety of well-attended activities including: group rides, hikes, and snowshoeing—we even partnered with the Antrim Conservation District to host two events: a wild flower/invasive species hike, and a tree planting. This winter, in partnership with Short's Brewing we offered groomed trails for fat tire biking

**Website and Facebook** –Our Facebook page continues to draw friends and “likes” for, not only the trail, but also for the “charming” town of Bellaire. Additionally, our website, three other trail websites, and the Chamber website continue to encourage visits to Glacial Hills.

**Fundraising** – At the end of November, we launched our sponsorship campaign—to date we have sold thirty-two annual sponsorships (mostly via our website) totaling \$3,550.00, and three, \$1,000.00/3yr. business sponsorships. We also received an additional \$3,85200.00 in donations.

In December, Short's held a benefit to raise money to purchase a groomer for fat tire biking. The groomer was purchased and put to use in January, giving experienced bikers a chance to extend their season, and others a chance to learn a new skill.

**Partnerships** – In February we signed an MOU with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy that defines each organization's responsibilities to the other. Under this agreement, the GTRLC has begun an economic impact study to gather the hard data to support our efforts at Glacial Hills. As part of this study, trail counters were placed at each of the trailheads recent data is attached (See Appendix A). The GTRLC has also committed to help us raise money for an endowment and continues to send work crews out to supplement our volunteer's work on the trail.

Short's Brewing continues to support Glacial Hills through event sponsorship, merchandise procurement, and volunteers.

We are working with Mike Meriwether and Tom Clement from the Antrim County Conservation District to assess forestry needs and reduce invasive species populations.

We are proud members of the Bellaire Chamber of Commerce and value their advice and support.

**Volunteers**- Glacial Hill's volunteers are the heart of our organization. With thirty members, they are a force of nature, mustering out to tackle storm debris and showing up faithfully for our Thursday morning work sessions.

**Forest Home Township-** The Township continues to support Glacial Hills by providing mowing at the Eckhardt trailhead and Porta Potty services at both the Eckhardt and Vandermark trailheads. They also serve as our fiduciary.

## **Challenges**

As with most small startup volunteer organizations, our single challenge has been sustainably staffing the organization and, tangentially, maintaining the trail. In spite of our growing sponsorship and donor base, we were unable to financially support a hands-on trail manager at thirty hours per week. Regrettably, the uncertainty of Glacial's financial situation forced Brad to resign the Trail Manager position in February.

This single challenge led us to evaluate our management plan and develop other opportunities.

## **Opportunities**

**Management Structure-** On March 7, 2016, twenty people gathered at the Forest Home Township offices to discuss the future management of the trails at Glacial Hills. Among those gathered were: regular volunteers, trail users, two County Commissioners, a County administrator, two representatives from the GTRLC, two representatives from the Antrim Soil Conservation District, three Bellaire business representatives, and five Glacial Hills Board members.

Participants worked in three teams to brainstorm and record their thoughts about the following topics:

1. Trail Use
2. Maintenance
3. Events
4. Infrastructure
5. Promotion and Marketing
6. Fundraising
7. Roles of the stakeholders
8. The importance of each of these items in terms of the budget and effort.

Based on the results of this meeting, the Board took the following actions:

1. Adopted a new staffing model
2. Hired new staff
3. Adopted a new budget

**Staffing Model-** It is the Staff's responsibility to ensure the trail is maintained; to draft a volunteer plan and coordinate the volunteers; to write (with the Board's input) and implement the strategic plan, including the fundraising plan; to write grants and identify other funding streams; to maintain the budget; to draft and publish information via our established promotional sites and keep the Board informed.

We recommend hiring a professional manager as a part-time employee of Forest Home Township at a pay rate of \$20.00/hr. for a total of 800 hours/year (April 1, to October 1, @ 20 hrs. per week; October 1, to April 1, @ 10hrs. per week).

**New Staff-** On May 19<sup>th</sup> the Glacial Hills Board hired Lee Kurt as the new Trail Manager. Lee has a strong educational and experiential background in recreation and tourism. Before joining the Glacial Hills team, she was the Trail Planning and Management Director for TART in Traverse City.

**New Budget-** The Board voted to follow the Township's fiscal calendar therefore, on April 1<sup>st</sup> we adopted a new budget and established fundraising goals (See Appendices B and C)

**2016 Capital Improvements** – For 2016, the only possible capital improvement would be the addition of small changing rooms for trail users in the Vandermark and Eckhardt parking lots. One of our volunteers is working with an Eagle Scout to build one of these structures.

**2016 Scheduled Events** – For the purposes of this document “Events” means races, etc. that require trail closure for a period of time. The Friends' Group will continue to hold activities (such as guided hikes and rides) the schedule of which will be available in late winter. The 2016 Events as currently scheduled:

- Mountain Bike Race, Sunday August 21, 2016

**Long-term plan and budget for potential acquisitions** – The stated goal for the project relative to trail expansion has been to connect the trails to Bellaire. This connection serves many important goals including

- Providing easier access for Bellaire residents and visitors (this was a top goal in Bellaire's recent survey)
- Encouraging users (by leaving from and returning to Bellaire) to visit our local businesses
- Facilitating the addition of needed trail (such as additional hiking loops near Bellaire and more family friendly hiking trail)
- Eliminating the need to expand the current parking lots (which are already overfilled many weekends) and add bathrooms, etc. since the town already has ample parking and other public facilities

At this time, the Glacial Hills project will not be creating a separate fund for potential acquisitions or a separate budget. The projected costs would vary greatly based on which property would be available and which mechanism would be used to expand the trail (outright acquisition to trail easement). Any acquisitions will require a separate fundraising campaign and likely a Michigan Natural Resources Trust.

## Trail Manager's Memo -

Greetings Commissioners,

I am honored for the opportunity to serve as Trail Manager for the Friends of Glacial Hills. Together we will execute plans and cultivate partnerships to solidify long-term sustainability of The Pathway. Glacial Hills Pathway is a remarkable asset providing numerous direct environmental, health, social and economic benefits to our region. Strong community leadership has created a premier multi-use single-track for outdoor recreation heavily enjoyed by locals and beyond. Thanks to the County's investment in Glacial Hills and with your continued support, we will manage this valuable resource using the industry's leading best practices and standards. Thank you for your leadership and community service and I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,



Lee M. Kurt

Trail Manager  
Friends of Glacial Hills  
231.676.9344



## Appendix A.

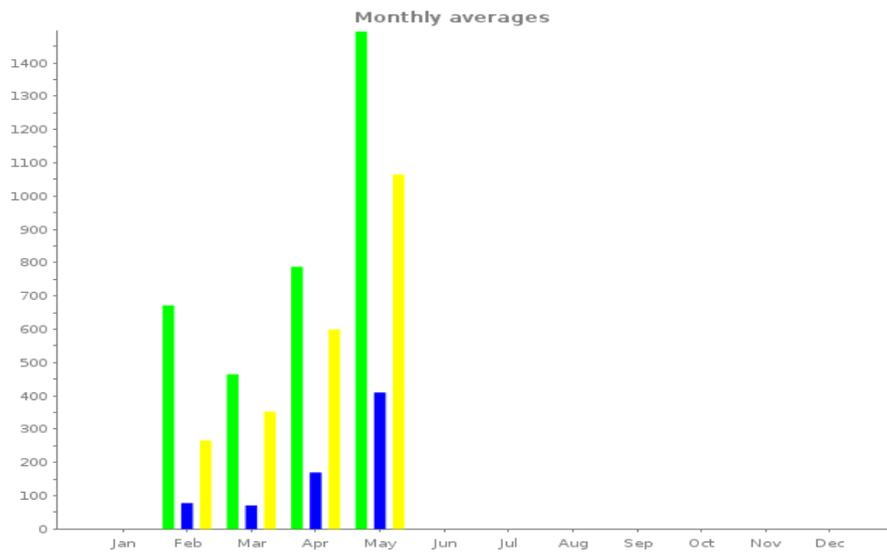
### Trail Counter Data

### Months of the year

From 2016-02-05 to 2016-05-27

Report generated on 2016-05-27 05:59:24 (UTC -06:00) by slagerquist@gtrlc.org

[www.trafx.net](http://www.trafx.net)



Site Name	Average	Median	STDV	Min	Max
Eckhardt	854.9	730.0	387.0	465.0	1,494.5
Orchard Hill	182.3	124.1	137.2	71.0	410.0
Vandermark	571.1	476.5	310.5	266.0	1,065.3

A = adjustment applied, D = divide by 2 applied, F = filtering applied

## Appendix B.

Glacial Hill's Budget

4-1-16 to 4-1-17

### Budgeted Expenses

<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Promotion</b>	<b>Tools/ Maintenance</b>	<b>Signage</b>	<b>Chamber Membership</b>	<b>Parking Maint.</b>	<b>Port- A- Potties</b>	<b>Misc.</b>
\$16,000.	\$1,500.	\$500.	\$600.	\$200.	\$1,250.00	\$1,300.	\$1,000.

### **Current Month Account Balance**

Balance May, 1 2016		11,755.20
Deposit	3,000.00	
<b>Debits</b>	<b>0</b>	
Ending Balance		14,755.20

**Appendix C.**  
Fundraising Goals

**Budgeted Revenue**

<b>Goal</b>	
<b>Annual Sponsorships 4/Mo.</b>	<b>4,800.00</b>
<b>Combined Sponsorships 2/Mo.</b>	<b>3,600.00</b>
<b>Other donations &lt; 75.00 including donation tubes</b>	<b>900.00</b>
<b>Other donations &gt; 150.00</b>	<b>1,800.00</b>
<b>\$1000.00 donations 6/yr.</b>	<b>6,000.00</b>
<b>Events</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>
<b>Sponsored Benefit Events</b>	<b>3,000.00</b>
<b>Merchandise Sales</b>	<b>500.00</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>22,600.00</b>