



# GaLTT Newsletter 2020

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Photo: Hugh Skinner



On the job, L-R: trails project manager Barry Moerkerken, President Rob Brockley, Trails Ops chair Peter Danenhower.

Year round we clip trails all around the island to keep them passable. We manage GaLTT's signage on trail licences and rights of way, replacing outdated or vandalized signs (sadly, this still happens), and we report to RDN Parks, BC Parks, or Islands Trust Conservancy any damage to their signage. Some of our trails become minor streams in winter, so in the Fall, we cleared the ditches (again!) along the River Place Trail in Cox Park to allow winter rainwater run-off. Early in June our crew redirected the Church Street to Tin Can Alley trail onto the street allowance so that it can remain open during nearby development. Later in June the crew trimmed the well-loved trails in Haven Woods, which were recently realigned to allow for the landowner's privacy at their new home. In November we built a new connecting trail between the two sections of Chichester Road up near Orlebar Point. And at the end of the year we completed more trail connection work in Cox-Descanso-Haven-Malaspina area to complement the McConvey Trail.

## Boardwalks

Our four September and October work parties were entirely occupied building magnificent raised boardwalks over the well-loved Macdonald to Peterson connector trails, which always flood badly in winter. Our intrepid, soggy work parties installed a total of 150 feet of new boardwalk, including covering the slippery surfaces with safety mesh.



## ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

For several years Gabriolans with disabilities have expressed their frustration at the lack of an accessible beach on this beautiful island. We have discussed this with BC and RDN parks officials, exploring what might be done and whether funding is available for the work. We were able to get some funding to explore the possibilities for improving access at Twin Beaches. We also conducted a survey about the best way to do that, expanding the questions to include the accessibility of our trails and parks more generally. During the spring we invited all Gabriolans to complete our survey, which included people using wheelchairs and walkers, those with fear of falling, those walking with infants in strollers, and those with sensory impairments.

A big thank-you to the 284 Gabriolans who filled in the survey. The results made it clear that islanders value accessibility to natural spaces, both for those with existing restrictions to mobility and for those who are part of an aging population. They specifically identified impediments to access and priorities for action. There were some clear contradictions in individual priorities, and we received thoughtful comments on the difficulty of balancing the wish to leave places in a natural state with making them more accessible. In November we received the final report of the complex survey from Wave Consulting, and the committee met at year's end to discuss how best to quickly focus on some actions in the short term to improve shore access to at least one beach and to provide at least one level, accessible trail loop in our park system.





### Conservation—Invasives Committee

Of course, invasive plant control is not only about broombashing. GaLTT's work continues all through the growing season dealing with all the other invasives common on Gabriola—*Daphne laureola*, Tansy ragwort, English ivy, Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed, periwinkle, yellow flag iris, and beloved Himalayan blackberry. The work has become so time consuming that GaLTT decided a separate Invasives Committee was needed, with a specific band of member volunteers. Lou Skinner and Libby Gunn are setting up the committee, which Libby will chair. To help control invasive plants contact Libby: [invasives@galtt.ca](mailto:invasives@galtt.ca).



### Sharing the trails—Cycling Committee

When GaLTT started, there were mostly walkers on our trails, with a significant smaller group of horse-riders. Now we are seeing a lot more bicycles. Some have found this transition in trail use confusing—even scary— so one thing we managed this past year was the installation of “Share the Trails” signage at significant trailheads, indicating that cyclists must give way to walkers, and everyone must give way to horses. But cyclists come in various forms: mountain bikers, commuters, and, increasingly in recent years, e-bikers. Park boards have different rules regarding e-bikes—some

ban them, others restrict their use. And there's the question of wheels in general: are the needs of off-road commuters different than recreational cyclists? What about whizzing mountain bikers? How can cyclists safely and happily coexist with walkers, dogs, and horses? To sort some of these issues out, GaLTT has formed a Cycling Committee, initially chaired by Derrill Shuttleworth.

## WE'RE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Please join any of GaLTT's working committees and bring your skills and energy to help spread our ever-increasing workload. Email [info@galtt.ca](mailto:info@galtt.ca) and we'll put you in contact with the right group for your interests.

And by the way—although we've had good turnouts at our special invasive-bashing activities, lately the number of people (especially women) coming out to help with the regular Sunday trail-building and maintenance tasks has dropped off. Now's your chance to wield a wheelbarrow—or a hammer, or clippers—and let your inner labourer out for the good of all. Don't let it pass you by!

To volunteer, contact [trailwork@galtt.ca](mailto:trailwork@galtt.ca) or [invasives@galtt.ca](mailto:invasives@galtt.ca)



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