



NEWS RELEASE

June 22, 2018

Two Albertans Honoured for their Dedication to Recreational Trails

Two Albertans received recognition awards at the Alberta TrailNet Society Annual General Meeting in June 2018.

Wayne Marshall of Calgary received the annual Trail Blazer Award for his volunteer work in mobilizing volunteers to rebuild The Great Divide Trail that runs from Waterton National Park in the south to Kakwa Provincial Park in the north.

Danny Smyl of St. Paul was the first time recipient of the Trail Tracker Award for his work as a founder and continuing supporter of Alberta's Iron Horse Trail in Northeast Alberta and the development of the Trans Canadian Snowmobile Trail, as well as for obtaining funds for the rebuilding of the Beaver River trestle bridge on that trail.

"These individuals have made significant contributions and demonstrated long-standing commitment to and involvement in trail planning and development in Alberta," said Ross Hayes, TrailNet's board president. "These trails are important locally, regionally and nationally as sections of Trans Canada Trail's 'The Great Trail.' They provide opportunities for recreation and tourism, support active living and community development, and offer alternative transportation choices."

Alberta TrailNet Society is Alberta's provincial trail council, a non-profit organization governed by a board of directors including representation from multiple provincial trail user associations. For more information, go to www.albertatrainet.com or call toll-free 1-877-987-2457.

Backgrounders: Bios of both Award Recipients

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BACKGROUNDER

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Wayne Marshall – Great Divide Trail Association - 2018 Trail Blazer Award

Wayne Marshall received the 2018 Trail Blazer Award for instigating the volunteer program and work parties to re-invigorate work and progress on The Great Divide Trail that goes from Waterton National Park in the south to Kakwa Provincial Park in the north.

A retired Southern Alberta Institute of Technology instructor, Wayne learned about the Great Divide Trail from a colleague when the two were delivering a SAIT program in Indonesia in 2003. This led Wayne to research this trail when he returned to Calgary; he found there was indeed a Great Divide Trail Association (GDTA), but it had been inactive for many years.

When Wayne contacted some of the original GDTA members who showed some interest in resuming long-delayed yearly trail maintenance trips. The missing element was an individual with motivation to kick-start 5-day volunteer work events - Wayne found his calling. He applied for Temporary Forest Authorizations enabling the work to occur and organized the first work parties in summer 2004 with 10 – 15 volunteers per outing. Old bridges were re-built, new bridges constructed and trail was brushed, limbed, drained, cross-sloped and paint blazed. Short term use of vital power equipment was donated by retailers employing SAIT power mechanics graduates. Basecamp essentials were purchased: cook tent, Coleman stoves, wash facilities and pit toilet ‘furniture’ along with tool purchases made with MEC grants. Everything was stored in Wayne’s garage until a year ago.

Maintaining the trail has now grown beyond any individual’s capabilities. An around-the-campfire decision was made in 2012 to formally share Wayne’s workload among other committed volunteers. The Great Divide Trail Association re-activated its federal incorporation status in April 2013 to become the custodian and promoter of this trail. The GDTA is now a vibrant organization with a strong membership base. In 2016 – 2017 facilitated sessions for developing vision, mission, goals and implementation plans were conducted to secure the sustainability of this Canadian backcountry long distance trail icon.



Wayne Marshall receives the 2018 Trail Blazer Award from Alberta TrailNet president Ross Hayes.

Danny Smyl - St. Paul Trail Blazers – 2018 Trail Tracker Award

Danny Smyl of St. Paul is the first recipient of the Alberta TrailNet Society Trail Tracker Award, given for his significant contributions of time and effort toward developing, improving and maintaining Alberta's Iron Horse Trail, part of Trans Canada trail's 'The Great Trail'.

Danny has had a long and varied career in trail building in the Lakeland region. He was an early participant in keeping trails in place when Lakeland Provincial Park was built near Lac La Biche 20 years ago. He was a founding member of the Riverland Recreational Trail Society, which built and maintains the Iron Horse Trail. He was active in obtaining and installing signage on this trail and for 10 years, he organized trail groups to help operate it. During the trail's formative years, he sat on the Alberta Recreation Corridors and Trails Advisory Committee to develop a province-wide plan and standards for trails. Danny continues to be a director for the Riverland group and during the past few years, he was involved in securing funds from the federal government and others for rebuilding the Beaver River trestle bridge (burned by vandals in 2012) and Texas gates along the trail.

As the regional representative of the Alberta Snowmobile Association (ASA), Danny was also involved in routing the National Snowmobile Trail to align with existing ASA trails. He has been a long-time president of the St. Paul Trail Blazers and has a strong connection to the landowners who have allowed about 400 km of snowmobile trails to be built and maintained in the St. Paul area. He worked with five regional snowmobile clubs to found the Iron Horse Grooming Foundation and purchase a large groomer for winter work on Alberta's Iron Horse Trail and snowmobile trails in the region.

Danny's volunteer work has gone beyond trail development: along with other volunteers, he founded and built the CAP arena in St. Paul and maintained it for the 35 years. He has been active in fundraising for recreation groups, Portage College and Kidsports.

Danny managed and now owns a car dealership as well as two recreational vehicle outlets in St. Paul and Cold Lake. He is an active mountain biker, geocacher, canoeist, old-time hockey player and an ardent mountain snowmobiler who is involved in all aspects of his local recreation scene.



Danny Smyl (left) receives the Trail Tracker Award from Marvin Bjornstad, ASA rep. on TrailNet's board.



Beaver River trestle