

Foy's to Blacktail Trail: Then and Now

By Gabriel Dillon

In September 2016, I ran across two trail users near the Chase Overlook. We were all enjoying a mountain bike ride and took a moment to share our knowledge of the area. It turned out they were planning on riding from Herron Park to Lakeside the very next day, and invited me to join. Foy's to Blacktail was a bucket list ride for me, so my wife graciously agreed to let me go even though we had a 5 week old baby at home.

I loaded up with 4 liters of water and enough food to fuel an entire day of mountain biking, and met a group of people at Herron Park.

I was familiar enough with the route: go up the Chase Trail to this *one* road, ride up it until the hike-a-bike, push your bike for 15 or so minutes to the ridge, then head south. Then try not to get lost. Most roads lead you in the correct direction, generally speaking, but some might lead back towards Highway 93 while others loop back to the historic route.

The leader of this group had ridden the route 3 times in as many weeks. He also had a GPS track loaded onto his smart phone. We still got on the "wrong" road at least twice and hiked our bikes up to the ridgeline several times only to find the "easy" way after descending back to the road.

Tired and hungry, we found our way to Tamarack Brewing after 6 hours. Nachos and beer never tasted so good.

Fast forward to September 2017 and everything has changed. I was now the Administrative Coordinator of FTBT and got to be a part of the organization in the year where everything came together. The easements had been granted and the trail had been built. The rains cut down on the dust of newly-created tread and the smoke had finally cleared out of the valley.

Now the trail starts from the Chase Overlook—the same place I'd met those fellow mountain bikers—and stays to the ridge from the get go. No more hike a bike, no more guessing which road to take, and no more baby-head sized boulders along the trail. In many ways, the thoughtfully designed singletrack is more challenging: it's steep when it needs to be, but still rideable, and scenic throughout.

As the snow continues to melt up high, I look forward to my next passage on the trail. I feel lucky to be part of this community and give much thanks to all our members.



It is no longer a 15 minute slog up to Hike- A- Bike. In fact, the trail now descends to this spot coming off the ridge.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For More Details and Updates Visit FoystoBlacktailTrails.org

June 2 (Sat): National Trails Day, help build and maintain trails in Herron Park.

June 3 (Sun): Annual Herron Half/10k/5k & children's 1k race run to benefit Foy's to Blacktail Trails. Run in the Herron Half/10k/5k, our biggest fundraiser! Visit www.HerronHalf.org for details.

June 28 (Thur): Dressage and Obstacle Challenge Show (equestrian).

July 7 (Sat): Jumper Derby (equestrian).

July (TBD): Spirit Bear Classic, XC mountain bike race and festival. Contact thomasshelit@gmail.com for details

August (TBD): Evening of Jumping (equestrian).

August 18 & 19 (Sat&Sun): 12 & 24 Hours of Flathead Bike relay. Visit www.24HoursofFlathead.org for details.

September 1 (Sat): Glacier Pony Club Mini Event (equestrian).

September 9 (Sun): Foy's to Blacktail Trails Thank You Party at Herron Park

September 23 (Sun): Inaugural Foy's to Blacktail Trail Marathon. Visit www.FTBTraces.org for details.

September 29 (Sat): National Public Lands Day. Come help build and maintain trails in Herron Park.

September 29 (Sat): Flathead Combined Training Mini Event (equestrian).

Horse events and maintenance of jumps in the meadow are sponsored by Flathead Combined Training Association. Check them out at www.flatheadeventing.org and their Facebook page. New members welcome! Spectating at events is always free.



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Kalispell, MT 59903

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Foy's to Blacktail Trails | PO Box 81 | Kalispell, MT 59903 | www.FoysToBlacktailTrails.org

LETTER FROM THE BOARD:

Dear FTBT Supporters and Enthusiasts,

Your donations continue to fuel momentum on the Foy's to Blacktail Trails System--thank you! We hope you are getting out and enjoying your investment.

Yes, the new Foy's to Blacktail Trail is finished! Plenty of folks have ridden, run, and rolled the route

before the snow fell. Late summer saw dusty trail conditions, smoky skies, and eventually a few good rain storms. This spring we are working on a new trail map and by early summer we will have trail markers in the ground.

The 2018 work season will focus on the Foy's to Blacktail Trail between Blacktail Mountain and the USFS boundary to the north, as well as the Lakeside to Blacktail Trail. This will be the first full-sweep maintenance work on these trails since construction. A Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) crew and FTBT volunteers will improve drainage, remove loose rocks, thin/prune to USFS specs, and improve line-of-sight in curves.

MCC will build a new spur trail just south of the Emmon's Saddle trailhead. The .75 mile trail will connect the Foy's to Blacktail Trail to Emmon's Spring on West Patrick Creek

Road, and create a small trailhead there. Emmon's Spring runs cold and clear, a welcome addition to the Foy's trail and highly requested by thirsty trail users. This will create a loop opportunity from the Emmon's Saddle trailhead.

MCC will also build a small connector trail just below the summit of Blacktail Mountain that will link the Foy's to Blacktail Trail to the ski area. This spur will allow events like the Foy's Marathon to utilize the ski area's trails and lodge, and provide a loop opportunity on the south end of the Foy's trail.

Last fall volunteers built a timber frame hikers' shelter that will be erected on the Garske/Cutter property at Old Coon Hollow in June 2018. Volunteers leveled the site, poured footings, and packed in a hand-made picnic table. This is a remote spot so we'll pack in the timbers, assemble the trusses and have a true barn-raising experience. The site is roughly halfway between Herron Park and Blacktail Mountain, and sports expansive views of the valley and the Swan Range. Many thanks to John Garske and Shelia Cutter for their generosity.

As you can see, we have lots of improvements on the horizon and we hope to see as many members as possible on our main volunteer days: June 2nd for National Trails Day and September 29th for National Public Lands Day.



Imagine how nice it will be to have a shelter in such a remote part of the Foy's to Blacktail Trail. It will be a welcome sight come sun, rain or snow!

BRANDING & TRAIL SAFETY: How FTBT's Safety Message Originated

By Charline Payne

You've probably noticed a consistent theme in our advertising. Several years ago, two of our former board members met George and Elma Giavasis in the backcountry of Glacier National Park. At that time George and Elma did not live in the area. They soon decided to make Kalispell their home, and embraced the Foy's to Blacktail Trails project almost from the beginning. They started their own graphic design company, now called Highline Design. They know the importance of creating a brand that establishes a unique name and image in the consumers' mind through advertising and marketing using a consistent theme. George and Elma at Highline created our maps, posters, kiosk history boards, Herron Half advertising, online graphics and of course, this newsletter.

Over the years, increased use of Herron Park trails led to safety concerns. Flathead Combined Training Association members approached FTBT with concerns about horse-pedestrian-cyclist interactions. Our board members agreed that a cohesive trail etiquette message was important. A few board members tried to design a safety card on their own. George of Highline Design generously stepped up to design a graphic to complement our "Say Hi--Pass Wide" message. His professional experience in messaging enabled FTBT to produce a highly effective product (posters and cards) conveying trail safety protocol. We receive many positive comments about these materials, and credit them with helping to create a friendly and safe attitude among trail users.

Thank you again George and Elma! Stop by and meet them at Highline Design at 136 2nd Street West in Kalispell. You'll see why many other businesses in the area are discovering their talent.



When a cyclist encounters an equestrian on the trail, be sure to announce yourself and stand upright so the horse recognizes you as a human and not a predator.



When approaching a horse, step off the trail and be sure to speak up. Horses get spooked if you stay silent. Use extra caution on blind curves.

THANK YOU
—FOR—
YOUR SUPPORT!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

To the Flathead County Parks Department for working to continue stewardship of the trails in Herron Park.

To the Flathead National Forest for an enthusiastic partnership to maintain trails on the Island Unit.

To Montana State Parks for awarding FTBT grants in support of our mission.

To Plum Creek/Weyerhaeuser and F.H. Stoltze, who have always been professional, honest, generous, and supportive.

To John Chase and his late brother Myron for donating the first trail easement in 2006 and allowing us to enjoy his forest.

Join Foy's to Blacktail Trails Today

Your gift supports trail building, stewardship, nature education, signage, maps, & more.

Support the place you love.

Become a FTBT Member for as little as \$15 a year (and receive a membership decal).

- \$15 Friend \$45 Family \$100 Supporter
 \$250 Sustainer \$500 TrailBlazer \$_____ Other

FTBT is a 501(c)3 non profit and donations are tax-deductible. We will not share your personal information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____ (Used for infrequent updates)

I use the trails for: Hiking, horseback riding, cycling, running, dog walking, skiing

Do NOT send me a membership decal

Make checks payable to **Foy's to Blacktail Trails** & include this form with your donation.

Mail checks to **FTBT, P.O. Box 81, Kalispell, MT 59903**, or donate online at FoysToBlacktailTrails.org.

Contact **406.203.3939** or info@FoysToBlacktailTrails.org.