



Tracks & Trails

Glendalough State Park • Battle Lake, MN • Spring 2021 • #104

Exciting Glendalough Projects are in Motion

by Dan Malmstrom

On May 13th, the long-term planning committee of Glendalough Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) met via Zoom conference with staff members of the Minnesota DNR to discuss two important projects underway in Glendalough – the Sunset Lake Trail and the new Visitor Center. We are excited to report that both projects have experienced significant traction and funding!

Ben Bergey, DNR Northwest Regional Parks Manager led the call with support from Erik Wrede, the DNR project consultant on numerous projects statewide. They provided updates and facilitated discussion on both projects with the planning committee members Steve Nelson, Joan Vorderbruggen, Peter Christianson, and Dan Malmstrom, along with our DNR team members Jeff Wiersma and Shawn Donais.



General depiction of the route alignment for the new Sunset Lake Trail segment.

Bergey reported the Sunset Lake Trail has been fully funded with \$975,000 of state and federal grants that were supported with matching funds from Glendalough Park Partners. This trail segment will run from the park entrance at County Highway #16 and meet up with the existing paved trail at the Annie Battle Lake bridge. It will traverse the prairie grasslands west of the park road to Sunset Lake, with its final section intersecting the new Visitor Center. This project is queued to begin sometime in the DNR's fiscal year 2022 which runs

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A Park Called "Our Own"

by Dan Malmstrom

Perhaps like many Park Partners, Lisa and I have grown to appreciate access to federal lands as we experience incredible places like Voyageur, Yellowstone, Glacier, Zion, Shenandoah, and others. The same is true of ventures in Minnesota in the Boundary Waters, Itasca, Gooseberry, Cuyuna, Tettegouche, and others. Although we are indirect, fractional owners of such public resources, we share a deep sense of gratitude and stewardship for them.

In the case of Glendalough State Park, the Cowles and Ballantine families donated their private family retreat to the state to become Glendalough with a desire for families to experience its beauty for generations to come. The public has been wonderfully rewarded through their vision and generosity.

Recently I became acquainted with a family who has experienced the richness of Glendalough since its very



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Rasmusson Committed to Glendalough

by Dan Malmstrom

Over the years, Glendalough Park Partners has enjoyed great relationships with our state lawmakers, and it appears that tradition will continue with Jordan Rasmusson. A year ago long-time State Representative – and Glendalough advocate – Bud Nornes decided to not seek re-election. In his departure, Bud endorsed another Otter Tail County professional, Jordan Rasmusson. Jordan won the vacated spot in the 2020 election.

Nornes had represented Glendalough so well over the years.

A few examples include teaming up with Senator Dan Skogen and Governor Tim Pawlenty to influence 2010 bonding for the Glendalough Trail loop. In 2018, he worked with Senator Ingebrigtsen and the Park Partners to influence bonding for our new visitor center. Not only was Bud a strong advocate for Glendalough in St. Paul, but you would often see him at the annual Walk for Glendalough. A true Park Partner.

Rasmusson seems enthused to follow in Bud's tradition as he was one of the very first people to show up for the 2021 Walk on April 24th. Jordan recently attended the Citizens Advisory Board meeting on May 20th to become acquainted with the board and its many important projects in motion with the DNR.

As a first term State Representative, Jordan is well-equipped to represent our area. He knows Otter Tail County as a sixth generation Rasmusson. Jordan graduated from Fergus Falls High School and went on to receive his B.A. in Government at Harvard. Subsequently, he had career stops at McKinsey Consulting and Bain Capital. He currently volunteers as a board member at the Fergus Falls YMCA and the Otter Tail County Historical Society. Jordan and his wife Emma reside in Fergus Falls.

We welcome Jordan to the Park Partners team and look forward to his collaboration as he joins our influence and stewardship toward Glendalough.



Media Experience GSP at Governor's Event

by Dan Malmstrom

Our team stood ready on Friday, May 14th as media from across the state of Minnesota descended on Glendalough State Park. A team of Park Partner volunteers and park management had prepared several months in anticipation of the Governor's Fishing Opener held in Otter Tail County in 2021. Erik Osberg from Otter Tail County and Val Martin from the City of Battle Lake led the planning efforts as Battle Lake and Glendalough were featured destinations.

Volunteers were stationed in downtown Battle Lake, and at the park entrance kiosk, Galloping Goose, Lodge and the yurts to provide our guests with information, services and local hospitality.



Glendalough team of Jon Nygaard, Jeff Wiersma, Lisa Malmstrom and Stephanie Drange await media arrivals on Friday morning.

Although the governor did not visit Glendalough State Park, we were fortunate to have the DNR Commissioner visit early Friday morning. Sarah Strommen and members of her team hiked from the Molly Stark shelter across the Annie Battle hiking bridge and made their way to visit the popular Glendalough yurts.

A steady flow of media and the public began to arrive in the park throughout the day. It's estimated that more than 20 media professionals ranging from social media sites, publications, and radio personalities from as far north as Warroad and south to Austin were experiencing Glendalough for the first time.

An example was Kristen Glazer (Instagram@expeditionkristen and ExpeditionKristen.com). She told her followers, "Such a fun day exploring all over Otter Tail County! One of my favorite moments was biking through Glendalough State park. Everything is so green and vibrant. And the smell of the freshly growing grass was palpable".

All the volunteers did an exceptional job describing Glendalough's history, heritage fishery, array of unique

attributes, and growing popularity as a primitively managed state park. One media fishing duo from Minnetonka – after receiving some tips at the Galloping Goose – boarded a canoe and experienced the incredible Annie Battle Lake black crappie bite first-hand.



Kristen Glazer experiences the beauty of the Glendalough Trail for the first time.

As a Citizens Advisory Board member, it was a pleasure to observe the first-time visitor experiences. It was also quite impressive to watch the Galloping Goose team serve our guests. They are a fabulous, full-service concessionaire for people visiting Glendalough.

The weekend weather was beautiful on Saturday and Sunday. The campsites were full, the bike trail busy, and Annie Battle Lake was teeming with water bikes, kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards as the general public enjoyed 80° temperatures and calm waters all weekend.

Silent sports were in full array as Glendalough kicked off summer 2021.

President's Remarks

Like me, I'm sure you look forward to the return of spring weather each year. Spring 2021 has to be one of the most anticipated spring arrivals ever! As we slowly emerge from the icy grip of Covid-19, many of us are vaccinated and enjoying real hugs from our grandkids once again. And now as many of you return to the lakes area, hopefully we can be more relaxed as we get together with our friends and neighbors, albeit without throwing caution to the wind. I have always been thankful for life in our gorgeous lakes area, but this last year has given me a whole new level of appreciation for the area and who we share it with.

Thanks to many of you, the Self-Guided Walk for Glendalough on April 24th was a success once again despite the limitations imposed by Covid restrictions. Some participants came to the park to celebrate Earth Day

weekend and our mail-in donations were incredible. Your generosity is so important as we move forward on several major projects this year and next. Representative Jordan Rasmusson continued the long-standing annual tradition started by retired State Representative Bud Nornes of attending the Walk in person. We appreciate Jordan's support and look forward to working with him in the future.

As you read in our last issue of Tracks & Trails, Glendalough Park Partners joined with Otter Tail County to host the Governor's Fishing Opener this year. Our goal was to shine a spotlight on the wonderful natural resources in the county and generate positive media attention for the local hospitality industry.

I have talked about Glendalough's "super volunteer" David Hansen previously and he's earned the spotlight again! Through David's efforts Glendalough is now registered with Thrivent Choice, a charitable grant program that gives Thrivent members the opportunity to direct Choice Dollars to specific organizations, which now includes Glendalough Park Partners. Thank you David for your incredible support over the years.

Our team has put together another interesting issue of Tracks & Trails. You'll see updates about our exciting park projects, and Sarah Govig will tell you how to participate in a summer-long Scavenger Hunt sponsored by the Parks & Trail Council of Minnesota.

Finally, if you would prefer to receive your Tracks & Trails newsletter via email, let us know at glendaloughparkpartners@gmail.com. This is especially useful for our snowbird friends who wish to receive T&T copies in the fall and winter months. Even if you prefer to receive the newsletter by regular mail, we would appreciate your email address for occasional future updates. Let us know either way, so we can serve your preferences accordingly.

Thank you one more time for your incredible support!

Steve Nelson, President
Glendalough Citizens Advisory Board
stevenbrucenelson@gmail.com

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from July 1st, 2021 to June 30, 2022. This is an exciting development for park visitors as it completes the 12-mile bike and pedestrian trail loop, making the trail completely off-road from the City of Battle Lake and school to Glendalough. Families, students, bikers, hikers, and roller blade enthusiasts will be thrilled with this new segment that unifies all previous trail projects.

Bergey then presented two design options for the new Visitor Center. The Visitor Center project is in the design refinement phase and is a very promising addition to Glendalough as well. (see second option below)



A preliminary design elevation option for the new Visitor Center presented by the DNR

The CAB planning committee offered feedback and questions to ensure the final design would align with the original trail center plan we developed and presented to the DNR and Senate during the successful 2018 bonding process. The dialogue was very useful.

Either of the Visitor Center options would be great additions to Glendalough; however the CAB believes a variation of the second design option will better serve the growing number of visitors and students visiting the park. (127,000 visitors in 2021 and up from less than 50,000 in 2014). A variant of the second option would provide more interpretive and educational space, along with sufficient rental square footage for the park concessionaire.

At this writing, the DNR believes preliminary cost estimates for the complete plan will be in excess of \$2,000,000. Further refinements will be made to the design plans along with a determination of DNR internal funding sources. Funding raised for this project currently stands at approximately \$1,250,000 – a combination of \$750,000 of 2018 state bonding, \$250,000 of Legacy Grant funds, and more than \$200,000 of philanthropy raised by Park Partners. We will consider a capital campaign, if needed, once the design, plans and costs for the new Visitor Center are finalized.

In the meantime, the local Park Partners board continues to enjoy a great working relationship with the DNR in our mutual stewardship toward the park. These two projects are the newest examples of our effective partnership spanning nearly 30 years at Glendalough.

Statewide Scavenger Hunt Includes Glendalough State Park

by Sarah Govig

Beginning June 1, visitors to Glendalough State Park – and many parks around the state – will participate in a statewide Scavenger Hunt sponsored by the Parks & Trail Council of Minnesota. A tailored checklist has been created for each park, including Glendalough. The checklist includes 20 items in five categories (Mammals, Flowers, Trees, Humans and Birds) to showcase the diversity of life within our park.

Glendalough Park Partners is a member of the Parks & Trail Council of Minnesota and we are thrilled to offer this Scavenger Hunt to our membership. The summer event is open to park goers of all ages, with weekly drawings for \$20 gift cards.



For more information and access to the Glendalough checklist and instructions, please follow the link at <https://www.parksandtrails.org/events/2021hunt/>

Additionally, Glendalough Park Partners will do a separate drawing on September 12th from the submitted entries. Have a great time, good luck and happy exploring.

Park Story continued from page 1

beginning in the early 1990s. Without owning a grain of sand on any of its lakes, they have made Glendalough “their own” in so many ways.

In the February 2020 issue of Tracks & Trails, you were briefly introduced to Steve and Diane Christianson, formerly of Fergus Falls. They were killed in a tragic car accident last year. Over the years, I had heard stories about Steve from a mutual friend, and his passion for fly-fishing muskies among the northern islands of Lake of the Woods but had never heard of his Glendalough experiences.

I set out to learn more. Fortunately, Steve and Diane’s grown children have nearly 30 years of Glendalough memories. You see, Steve and Diane chose to enjoy Glendalough during all seasons, every year. Their children speak the language of Glendalough’s public experiences.

Their son Trevor expresses it so well. “I recall asking my parents a few times over the years why they never bought a lake cabin. I remember my Dad saying something like ‘we have access to thousands of lakes already’. As my brother Titus and I were growing up, our family visited dozens of lakes in Otter Tail County. I remember a couple summer days in the 1980s when we tried to see how many lakes we could swim in one day. Once Glendalough became a State Park, our parents must have been among the first to “discover” it. Glendalough quickly became our favorite lake place.

I remember holding my Dad's hand as a young boy while snorkeling. Since the early 1990s, snorkeling has been my favorite activity at Glendalough. Last July, three generations of our family snorkeled together in the creek between Molly Stark and Annie Battle. Both of my parents, my seven-year-old son Thomas, and me exploring together. I think we met my parents at Glendalough about 10 times last summer, the last occasion being on Labor Day weekend. During one of their last visits to Glendalough, sometime in mid-September, Dad caught a bass while fly fishing, and a huge muskie attacked the bass and broke his fly rod. Chuck, dad’s brother, shared the details of this Glendalough story for the funeral guests. We were blessed with so many good times at Glendalough with my parents over the past 25+ years.”

Due to the commitment of the Minnesota DNR and Glendalough Park Partners, the park has been developed with a sensible balance of public amenities while preserving the simple, primitive experiences that are fundamental to Glendalough. You can feel the harmony of those simple pleasures in the Christianson memories.

Their daughter-in-law Melinda reflects, “Steve and Diane spent countless days at Glendalough, enjoying each season there. They cross country skied in the winter and took in the fall foliage – which Steve documented with thousands

of photos. I would argue that summer was their favorite season due to fishing, biking, and spending time on the beach with their family and friends. Steve was often wading in Annie Battle Lake to fly fish and loved having his grandsons fishing alongside. Diane was happy to play with the boys in the sand or take a tired child for a stroller walk on the bike trail. They packed more than enough food for picnics – no one would go hungry! Our favorite spot was a picnic table near the lodge.”

As we imagine Steve and Diane experiencing Glendalough from its fledgling beginning, we understand their appreciation for the amenities to support public experiences while keeping Glendalough pristine and primitive. Families can now enjoy enhancements like new and renovated facilities, picnic areas, restrooms, showers, trails, rentals, camping, yurts, and much more.

Although Steve and Diane’s time in Glendalough has faded into one of the park’s beautiful sunsets, their legacy of experience and stewardship remains. Katy (daughter-in-law) reminisces, “I can picture Steve in his faded turquoise sun shirt at a picnic table preparing his fishing tackle while Diane gently swings a grandson in a hammock nearby. And then there’s Steve engaged in a water fight with all the boys and Diane laughing as she gets caught in the spray. They delighted in the beauty of Glendalough and taught us the joy of doing the same by their example.”

Glendalough is a place we each can call “our own”.

Walk in the Park - 2021

by Tracy Kortlever and Dan Malmstrom

On Saturday, April 24th, park enthusiasts from around the region participated in our 25th annual fundraising event, “Walk for Glendalough” – and many are still walking.

Not unlike 2020, we modified our event to be a Self-Guided Walk to comply with the Covid-19 restrictions in place at Minnesota state parks. And similar to 2020, your outpouring of generosity was vibrant and continues at this writing.

Last year, with the onset of Covid-19 in March, our Walk committee did a quick pivot to encourage walking in the park without our traditional public gathering, coffee, lunch, program, and prizes. Although we clearly missed the social element of seeing our park friends, the 2020 Walk generated safe activity and your donations exceeded \$10,671. It was great response in very trying times!

As the 2021 Walk event approached, the Covid-19 restrictions were still very real and the committee announced a well-planned self-guided Walk, complete with t-shirts and free plants, but again without the gathering and program attributes. The park staff did an incredible job

of preparing for Earth Day weekend so our families and friends could enjoy Glendalough's pristine setting, wildlife, interpretive qualities, and diverse trail opportunities as spring began to show its new life. To date, we have received nearly \$13,000 in Walk 2021 donations and those funds will be put to great use toward public amenities. The timing of your generosity for these amenities is perfect as Glendalough State Park eclipsed 127,000 visitors in 2020 – a huge growth over the prior year – a stunning trend that has continued since 2014.

Although we usually celebrate all the great things happening in the Park at the Walk, we are working hard to keep you informed in other ways. This newsletter is one avenue, along with articles in the Battle Lake Review. You may also stay informed via the popular Park Partners and Glendalough Trail Facebook pages which often include real-time happenings.

If you would like to become a Park Partners member, make a 2021 Walk donation, or receive our Tracks & Trails newsletter, please contact GlendaloughParkPartners@gmail.com. You can also mail us at:

Glendalough Park Partners,
P.O. Box 901
Battle Lake, MN 56515

The Walk committee is so grateful for the 2021 response, your generosity, and the local businesses that supported the self-guided event.

It was (and is) another great day for a Walk in the Park!

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Jeff's Jottings

by Park Manager Jeff Wiersma



Special thanks to Christensen Construction for volunteering to grade the park's gravel roads this spring. The potholes were beyond belief!

Make your campground reservations early! All weekends within the 120-day reservation window may already be almost booked! You may want to consider camping on a few weekdays instead when the park is less busy.

Megan Hodnefield is our new Park Operations Intern. Her mom worked here as a Parks Worker in 2002. I guess it runs in the family! Three additional new employees will be starting at Glendalough in the next couple of weeks. With only two returning seasonal employees, this the most turnover at Glendalough in many years.

Park Projects

Bike Trail Loop Completion – Engineering will be finalized after wetland delineation takes place this spring. Full funding has been identified! Construction will likely start in 2022.

New Trail Center – Preliminary design is still in progress. A considerable funding gap remains despite Parks and Trails adding an additional \$250,000 to the project. Costs of building materials are skyrocketing.

Annie Battle Lake Boat Access – A re-design of the Annie carry-in access and watercraft storage area is being done concurrently with the trail center design, but no funding has been identified yet. The re-design will take parking off the road, add a drop-off loop, and protect the shoreline from further deterioration. It will remain a carry-in access only.

Boundary Survey – The southwest boundary of the park was surveyed for installation of boundary signage. Some differences with a previous survey are still being worked out, after which the new signs will go up.

Prairie Restoration – Flower seed harvested at Glendalough was delivered to Lake Country Gardens to be grown up into plugs for transplant in Pam's Prairie next fall. Volunteers will be needed to plant in October.

Firewood Bin – A fiberglass roof will be installed on the campground wood bin – no more tarps!

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From St. Paul

Glendalough received a lot of attention from statewide media during the Governor's Fishing Opener in Otter Tail County. DNR Commissioner Strommen made a brief visit to the park during the event and expressed a desire to include State Parks and Trails in future GFO events whenever practical. Glendalough may again be setting a trend. Special thanks to our Governor's Fishing Opener volunteers!

Many COVID-19 restrictions on outdoor activities have been removed, and the picnic shelter can now be rented at full capacity. Indoor spaces are still restricted and require masks. The lodge is open daily for one household at a time to view the interpretive video and displays. The dining hall is open for up to six people to use the Wi-Fi, etc. No food or drink is allowed in either building at the present time, except for private rentals (capacity of 6). The office is open daily for limited hours, but for just one household at a time.



Glendalough State Park Advisory Board:

Steve Nelson – President (2022)
Dan Malmstrom – Vice President (2023)
Sarah Govig – Secretary (2021)
Peter Christianson – Treasurer (2021)
Tracy Kortlever (2021)
John Christensen (2022)
Chris Estes (2022)
Jay Anderson (2023)
Joan Vorderbruggen (2023)

DNR:

Melody Webb, NW Region Parks and Trails Manager
Ben Bergey, District Recreation Supervisor
Shawn Donais, Region Naturalist
Ben Eckhoff, Area Naturalist
Cindy Lueth, Region Resource Specialist

Glendalough State Park:

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Jeff Wiersma, Park Manager

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Tracy Kortlever • membership

NEW/RENEWING PARK PARTNERS

We have received over 100 contributions to Park Partners in the form of membership renewals and Walk for Glendalough 2021 donations this quarter. Your generosity is greatly appreciated! We are hopeful that Walk 2022 will include our traditional social gather once again!

MEMORIAL/HONOR

Memorials given by Don & Judith Loe in memory of:

Mike Setterlund
Jim Archbold
Carl Tegtmeier

Memorials given in honor of Rita Buntje:

Don & Judith Loe
Leland & Judy Rosenquist
Maylon Thorstad
Dean & Jill Damrau
Paul & Debra Ness

Memorial given by Tom & Grace Stoebe in honor of:

Mary Sue Gibson

Memorial given by John & Anne Cline in honor of:

Helen Estes

Thank you for keeping your memberships current. Please review the date on the address label of your Tracks & Trails to check your membership status. Send your membership correspondence to:

Glendalough Park Partners
PO Box 901
Battle Lake, MN 56515

**Next Advisory Board Meeting: Thursday, August 19, 7:00 p.m.
Glendalough Lodge**

Thank you, Park Partners!

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