

FAQ FoBCT

What is the Friends of Berrien County Trails? A non-profit 501C(3) organization comprised of people who want to see more non-motorized trails (pedestrian, bike and water trails) in Berrien County be developed. The goals of the FoBCT are to identify trail needs, help with funding development, advocating for trails, and educating the public about how trails benefit our community.

When was the FoBCT's established? The FoBCT's first started organizing in June of 2019. In early 2020 the Friends of Harbor Country Trails began the transition to become Friends of Berrien County Trails. Harbor Country Trails had existed for many years prior to this doing great work in the Harbor Country area with the same mission and purpose as the FoBCT's. The decision was made to create the larger scope to include all of Berrien County.

What has the FoBCT's done? So far much of the work has been organizational and working on the transition. Covid 19 hit in early 2020 and slowed down progress on organizing events and advocating for trails. We have developed a Facebook page and this website to improve awareness of the group. We have been involved in assisting municipalities and organizations with development of their trail projects.

What does the FoBCT plan to do? We plan to be more active in our mission and goals as Covid permits. We have had a few fundraising events and plan to have more. We will be organizing fundraising rides to increase awareness and raise funds for future trail development.

What trails are currently being worked on in Berrien County? The Marquette Greenway extension from the Indiana State Line has been a project supported by The Friends of Harbor Country Trails and continues to be by FoBCT's. The trail extension is proposed to be from the State line to New Buffalo. We are also supporting work of the IN MI River Trail extension from Niles to Berrien Springs. The group supports the Berrien County Linear Trail concept of a trail network connecting Berrien County Parks with a trail network. There are a lot of trails being planned and much work to do!

Why are trails important to Berrien County? Trails are important to any community for many reasons.

- The first that comes to mind is for the health and enjoyment of our community and neighbors. Trails are proven to improve health by providing a safe way to walk, run, bike or paddle. Doing these activities on the sides of roads or undeveloped water trails is dangerous. Distracted driving has increased the occurrence of car/ bicycle accidents.
- Another huge factor is economic development. Trail studies show very clearly that communities with a well-developed trail network have an economic advantage over those without them. As we welcome millions of visitors annually to our beautiful great Southwest having a trail network is very important.
- Attracting new residents to our area is also a great reason to develop trails. Many people specifically look for trails and recreational opportunities when deciding where to locate.

This just scratches the surface! Our area is lagging well behind other neighboring communities in trail development. The time is now to catch up.