

## President's Report - AGM May 2012

The mandate of the Central Alberta Regional Trails Society (CARTS) is to promote and foster trail development in Central Alberta. For several years now, CARTS has focussed its efforts on developing the Trans Canada Trail within Central Alberta. Working with dedicated volunteers, municipalities, Alberta TrailNet (ATN - the provincial trails organization) and Trans Canada Trail Foundation (TCT - the national trails organization) we have been making progress.

This report will provide an outline of progress to date and provide information on the society's plans for the coming year.

### **Background:**

- One of the first steps in the process of building TCT in Alberta was to get Central Alberta on the TCT map. Several years ago, the planned route for the TCT did not take in most of the communities in this region. CARTS did not believe that it was a wise idea for Canada's national trail system to bypass one of the busiest corridors in the province. CARTS also believed that Central Albertans had a strong desire to have and use trails and would welcome a trail that could link their communities.

- Through CARTS, Central Alberta's municipalities have been working together on trails. Several years ago, the map for the TCT was changed in Alberta to include a trail linking communities from Penhold to Wetaskiwin. Much of the trail registered as TCT was done so on road rights-of-way with the intention of moving it to an off-road trail. To this end, we have had meetings with members of Alberta Transportation, MLAs, municipal councillors, and members of ATN and TCT. To date, most of the trails between communities and within communities along this corridor have been registered as TCT.

- Registering these trails was vital in order to obtain funding available from the TCT Foundation and ATN.

- Once Central Alberta had a registered section of TCT, we asked the TCT Foundation to fund a TCT coordinator position to assist our small band of volunteers in moving along the process. This was helpful in the initial planning stages for the TCT in Central Alberta. The total value of this grant was approximately \$25000. We also applied for grant money to pay for engineering studies for two bridges that fall along this section of TCT Trail – one in Ponoka over the Battle River and one in Lacombe County over the Blindman River. A grant was received in the amount of \$68,000 for the engineering studies for both bridges.

-We involved all the communities in the planning process and the Town of Ponoka and the County of Lacombe headed up the process of building these two bridges. Since these bridges were part of the TCT, we applied for and received grants totalling \$400,000 (\$200,000 for each bridge) for their construction from both TCT and ATN. The bridges were constructed in 2010.

## 2011 – Connecting Trails and Expanding our Vision

### **Connecting Trails:**

#### Ponoka County:

With the construction of the bridges, one of the main goals for CARTS was the construction of trails to connect to the bridges and the communities beyond. In 2010 and 2011, the Town of Ponoka spearheaded the construction of connecting trail between the Battle River Bridge and the border of the County of Lacombe. CARTS facilitated and supported a funding request for grants for this section

of trail and grants in the total amount of \$150,000 were obtained from ATN and TCT. This trail was completed to a rough gravel/dirt trail standard.

#### Lacombe County:

The County of Lacombe also completed a connecting trail from Hwy 597 to the Blindman River Bridge including a recreational area beside the bridge in 2010-2011. Much of this trail is to a paved standard.

Lacombe County is currently in the process of putting down trail between Blackfalds and Lacombe. CARTS was instrumental in assisting the county in receiving a \$288,790.00 grant for this project. The trail is planned to be to a paved standard with sections of boardwalk and will pass by Lacombe Lake. It is expected that this section of trail will be completed in the late summer or early fall of 2012.

Penhold to Springbrook Trail: CARTS worked for several years with Red Deer County and the communities of Penhold and Springbrook to facilitate the construction of a trail through Red Deer County connecting Penhold and Springbrook. CARTS was instrumental in facilitating and supporting a request for a \$50,000 grant to assist with the construction costs of this trail. Unfortunately, the grant has not yet been received, because the trail has not been completed. CARTS is currently working with all concerned parties to work out a plan that will facilitate completion of this trail in the near future.

### **Expanding Our Vision**

In recent years, CARTS has been making great strides to promote and foster trail development in Central Alberta with the help of its municipal members and volunteers. Since 2006, CARTS has facilitated and supported grant applications to Central Alberta Municipalities for trail development totalling more than \$920,000.

We still have much to do to connect communities in Central Alberta. In recent months CARTS has been working on plans to facilitate future trails connecting to Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Olds and Bowden.

In 2011, meetings were held with the municipalities of Penhold, Innisfail, Olds, and Bowden and Penhold, Innisfail, and Bowden decided to participate in our organization.

In the future, we hope to facilitate feasibility studies looking at trails connecting each of these communities and proceed from there in building trails connecting these communities to the rest of the Central Alberta Trail network.

**CARTS Website:** In the past couple of years, Paul Pettypiece, the current Vice-President of CARTS has developed an excellent website to help promote and inform Central Albertans about trails.

**A Note of Thanks:** CARTS appreciates the support of the Trans Canada Trail Foundation and Alberta TrailNet in moving Central Alberta trails forward. CARTS would not exist without the support of dedicated Central Alberta volunteers and the support of the municipalities in Central Alberta. Together we can build something special.

**CARTS Current Community Participants:** City of Red Deer, City of Lacombe, County of Lacombe, Towns of Penhold, Blackfalds, Ponoka and Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Bowden and the Hamlet of Springbrook.

Debbie Olsen