



LANDMARK
CONSERVANCY

May 28, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kristin Thompson

kristin@landmarkwi.org

715.235.8850

What's Happening on the Brownstone Trail?



As many Bayfield locals know, the Brownstone Trail is a beloved, public trail that travels alongside Lake Superior on an old railroad grade. Landmark Conservancy (formerly Bayfield Regional Conservancy) helped set up the trail in 1996 in cooperation with private landowners who own sections of the trail. As users walk, bike, run, or ski, they pass over brownstone cliffs and a buffer of native trees and shrubs growing along the slopes of Lake Superior. This buffer provides wildlife habitat for many creatures, including migratory birds, and also protects the water quality of Lake Superior. Landmark Conservancy has enjoyed working with local community members for many years to maintain this vital artery of activity and to also improve natural areas along the trail.

Like other shoreline areas on the Big Lake, slopes adjacent to the Brownstone Trail are fragile and have been impacted by natural events and human activity. Along the trail, the steep slopes have likely been slumping for decades, especially in recent years. While erosion is a natural

occurrence, it is being aggravated by additional actions. These include removal of vegetation, hardened infrastructure at the top of slopes and increased runoff, inadequate stormwater management practices and increased runoff toward the lakeshore. Indicators of climate change, including rising lake levels, changing wave action, and more frequent and severe rain events, are also contributing.

Recently, slumping occurred in two areas following nor'easter storms in October 2017 and 2018. Since then, erosion has continued to occur, and the trail is now completely gone in one area, leaving a large and deep gaping hole. To help keep people safe and not cause additional damage, Landmark Conservancy has closed this section of the trail and asks residents and visitors to use the reroute along Highway 13.

Landmark Conservancy is taking action to see what can be done. We are currently working with a coastal engineering firm to understand the underlying causes of the slumping, and to identify options for restoration and protection of the nearby shoreline. We'll also be learning whether the trail can be fixed in its previous location. We'll be completing this assessment in 2019, and part of the trail will remain closed throughout the year. We will continue to engage the community, and will definitely need the community's support to implement next steps in the coming year or two. In the meantime, please contact us if you have any questions. And thank you for abiding by the trail closure.

Landmark Conservancy is a non-profit organization serving 20 counties across western Wisconsin, born of a merger between two nationally-accredited land trusts: West Wisconsin Land Trust and Bayfield Regional Conservancy. The conservancy works with private landowners who wish to conserve their land in perpetuity, and also with local municipalities, state, and federal entities to create public preserves for all to enjoy. As of 2019, Landmark has conserved over 35,000 acres in our combined 30 years of land protection work.

###