



COPPER LINK TRAIL

FRESH PATHS FOR ANACONDA



MEGAN NIELSEN PHOTOS, MONTANA STANDARD

Matt Johnson, left, and Justin Sims mountain bike on the Copper Link Trail in Anaconda on July 23.

Multi-use route in Anaconda’s south hills brings new recreation opportunities to area

MEGAN NIELSEN
megan.nielsen@mtstandard.com

Just a stone’s throw from town, a new trail system aims to expand opportunities for recreation in Anaconda.

The Copper Link Trail, a new multi-use trail, opened in the hills on the south side of Anaconda in mid-July. The 2.8-mile trail runs from Sunnyside Road to Birch Street on Anaconda’s A Hill and C Hill.

The trail is part of a larger vision for Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, connecting people to open spaces and recreation opportunities right in town.

For Barbs Schott, an Anaconda resident whose two black Labs are voracious for walks, having a trail system accessible from town is a huge asset.

The wide and low-grade trail was designed to allow for different users to share it. The path is intended for use by pedestrians, cyclists and horses.

The Copper Link Trail is a project undertaken by the Anaconda Trail Society, a nonprofit whose mission is to develop and steward trails for a healthy Anaconda and surrounding community, and others.

“This trail was a whole group effort,” said Emily Adams, president of the Trail Society.

The project, which cost over \$100,000, received funding from multiple sources. The trail society contributed \$8,000 from their own fundraising efforts and secured \$60,000 in funding from the Trail Stewardship Program, a grant through Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

“ATS was the champion of the Copper Link Trail,” said Carl Hamming, planning director for Anaconda-Deer Lodge County.

Approximately \$40,000 in additional funding came from the Natural Resource Damage Program, accomplished through work with Anaconda-Deer Lodge County.

A hike on Anaconda’s new Copper Link Trail, in photos

NRDP’s website states their mission is “to recover damages for natural resources injured by the release of hazardous substances and to restore, rehabilitate, replace or acquire the equivalent of the injured natural resources.”

Anaconda was the site of a smelter from the 1880s to 1980. According to the Smelter Hill Uplands Claim and Restoration Plan run through NRDP, large volumes of hazardous substances, including arsenic, were released into the air and the emissions were deposited onto the land, resulting in the severe loss of vegetation and contaminating nearly 17.8 square miles of land in the mountains surrounding Anaconda.

NRDP dollars have supported a host of restoration projects in the vicinity of Anaconda. According to Hamming, the county has been working with NRDP for a number of years to get to a point “where we could start to see implementation of recreational amenities around the community of Anaconda.”

Close to 10 miles of trails have been constructed by the county this summer. Hamming said trail users can look forward to seeing crews put finishing touches on the work in the upcoming months, including trailheads and signage, as well as additional trail-building in the upcoming years.

Please see **TRAIL**, Page A2



Emily Adams, left, and Barbs Schott walk on the Copper Link Trail in Anaconda on July 23.

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

‘Eager to dive in’

New President Jeremiah Shinn takes the reins at UM

NICOLE GIRTEN
nicole.girten@ravallirepublic.com

As students and faculty prepare for the start of the fall semester later this month, Jeremiah Shinn is getting his bearings in the first weeks of his tenure as the 20th president of the University of Montana.

He knows where to park, how to print, and has his Griz card, he told the Board of Regents during their July 9 meeting.

“I’m really eager to dive into the opportunities and challenges ahead in service to our students and to the state,” Shinn said in the meeting.

The next day Shinn sat for an interview with the Missoulian to discuss those opportunities and challenges, including threading the needle between providing a quality education and maintaining affordability for students.

Seth Bodnar announced in January he would be stepping down as president of UM amid rumors he was planning to run for U.S. Senate. In March, he filed as an independent in the race.

More than 70 candidates applied and six were interviewed for the position, but Shinn was the only finalist announced.

Squaring curriculum relevance, humanities ‘core’

Before Shinn accepted the leadership position at UM, he served as interim president at Boise State University.

On his resume, Shinn touted improving efficiency across the university from reducing financial aid response times, increasing mental health screenings and improving the search process for new hires.

He served in the position about a year, and in light of a 3% budget cut from the Idaho state legislature, decided earlier this year alongside the school’s provost to merge two colleges and close another.

According to reporting from Idaho Education News earlier this year, the university merged the College of Education and the School of Public Service, and decided to sunset the College of Innovation and Design, which had been in operation since 2015.

In his discussion with the Missoulian, Shinn said he had to make some “difficult decisions” about how some colleges were organized, but ultimately believed it was the right decision.

“The financial realities of how those colleges were organized meant that we were not achieving the economies of scale that was necessary to serve our students at a reasonable cost,” he said.

“Absent reconfiguring some things, rethinking some things, at a point either cost increases or quality decreases,” Shinn said.

Earlier this year UM decided to end the literature master’s degree program, along with minors in Irish Studies and Chinese, citing declining enrollment. English department leadership told the Missoulian they didn’t appreciate how the administration went about making this decision, describing it as “disturbingly unilateral.”

Shinn said he doesn’t know all the factors which went into the decision, so he doesn’t know what he would have done, but said the university will “continue to make difficult decisions.”

“We want to be sure that our curriculum is relevant for our students,” Shinn said. “We want to be sure that we’re meeting the needs of our students and meeting the needs of the state.”

But, he said, the humanities will continue to be at the university’s core, especially in the age of artificial intelligence.

“The liberal arts and humanities are as important as ever in an AI world,” Shinn said. “AI can answer questions — but it doesn’t have judgment, it doesn’t have discernment — and that’s something that the liberal arts and humanities teaches us.”

However, how students are introduced to the humanities has to change, he said.

Please see **SHINN**, Page A2