

THE KOOTENAI TRAIL

The Kootenai Trail is a collaborative effort of the Sunburst Community Service Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This 7 1/2-mile long, non-motorized, hiking and biking trail connects the Town of Eureka and the Mariners Haven Campground and Marina.

The trail is divided into 3 segments that correspond to the property ownership of the trail. Segment A runs from Riverside Park in Eureka west for just over one mile on property owned by the Mission Mountain Railroad. Segment B runs west for another 2 miles to the "Pigeon Bridge" area on property owned by the Corps of Engineers. Segment C continues westward for approximately another 4 1/2 miles, through the Rexford Bench Campground, past the Town of Rexford and into Mariners Haven. All of Segment C is located on Forest Service property.

Major entry points for the Kootenai Trail occur at Eureka's Riverside Park, at the Pigeon Bridge Fishing Access, the Rexford Bench Campground, the Town of Rexford, and Mariner's Haven Campground.

HISTORY OF THE KOOTENAI TRAIL

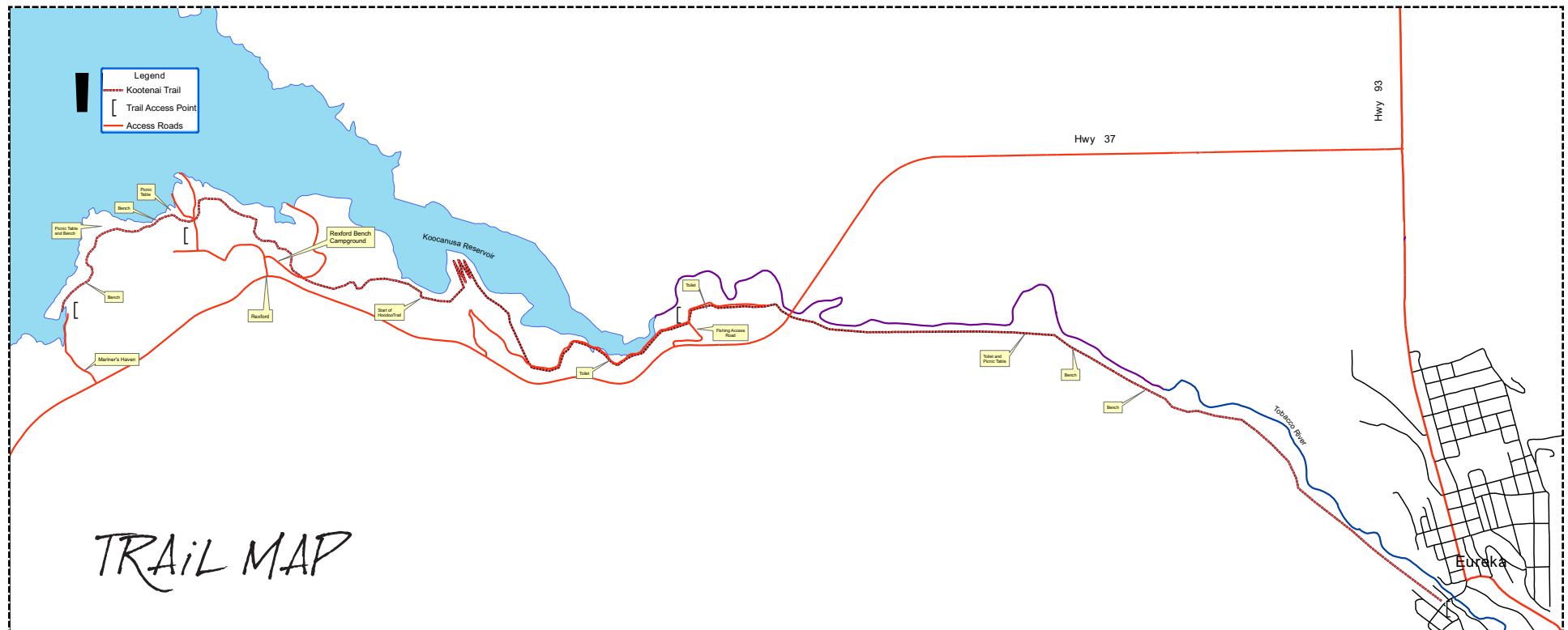
Early settlement of the Tobacco Valley was closely tied to the extension of the Great Northern Railroad from Columbia Falls to the Town of Rexford. This railroad link, started in 1901 and completed in 1904, was officially designated the "Columbia Falls Cutoff." It was built to gain better access to British Columbia.

Following the completion of the railroad, special trains brought in farmers from the eastern states. However, the biggest result of the arrival of rail service was access to lumber markets and the development of a timber economy in the Tobacco Valley area.

By 1909, the Eureka Lumber Company was the largest industrial enterprise in Lincoln County and the inland Northwest.

The Great Northern Railway Company offered frequent freight and passenger service (four different passenger trains came through each day) through Eureka until 1968, when the railroad was re-routed through the new tunnel built west of Trego due to the flooding of the Kootenai River and the formation of Lake Koocanusa.

In 1997 the Sunburst Foundation began efforts to turn the old unused railroad corridor into a "rails-to-trails", a public, non-motorized trail for hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders. Through many fits and turns over the years, the original project vision was finally realized in the summer of 2005 with the opening of the full length of the Kootenai Trail. A generous grant from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks has provided most of the funding for the Eureka segment of the trail.



TRAIL DO'S AND DON'TS

The Kootenai Trail is open to ALL non-motorized users.

PLEASE OBEY ALL SIGNS. They exist for your safety.

DOG OWNERS – Your pet is your responsibility. Your dog must be under your control at all times while on the trail. If you know your dog to be a potential threat to other dogs, horses or people, it must be leashed.

SEGMENT A of the trail contains active railroad track. Please stay clear of all existing railroad tracks. **NEVER** approach any railroad cars that happen to be present as they may move without warning.

THE KOOTENAI TRAIL is maintained primarily for hiking. Bicyclists and horseback riders are welcome, but should use caution at all times as the trail conditions may change without warning.

THE KOOTENAI TRAIL IS OPEN ALL YEAR. However, the trail is not maintained during the winter months.

Please report any trail problems or concerns as follows: Segments A & B to the Sunburst Foundation (297-0197). Segment C to the Forest Service (296-2536).

A SUMMER OASIS FOR SNOW BIRDS



Around 80 species of neotropical song birds spend their summer along the Kootenai Trail. Food, water, and shelter are plentiful in the variety of habitats found along the trail, ranging from cottonwood bottomlands to meadows and forest. Along the river, swallows, kingfishers and sandpipers can be found. The rock cliffs overlooking the trail afford nesting sites for hawks and turkey vultures. And as you pass the fencerows you will find magpies, ravens, crows and cowbirds all sharing pasture with the horses in the meadows.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

In true Tobacco Valley style, community members and groups have provided collaborative support and energy in the development of the Kootenai Trail. Yet more remains to be done. There are numerous ways Tobacco Valley residents can support the Kootenai Trail project:

Experience the Trail. You can explore the trail by participating in one of the numerous organized activities regularly sponsored by the Kootenai Trail committee or by checking it out on your own at any time. Please refer to the map or call the committee (see below) for suggestions for possible explorations.

Join the Kootenai Trail Committee. Link up with the efforts of other interested residents by participating in the regular meetings of the Kootenai Trail committee. Watch for notices in the newspaper or call one of the contact phone numbers.


Lend a Hand on Trail Work. Offer to help on some of the numerous on-going trail projects such as:

- control of noxious weeds
- pruning of trees and bushes
- placement of signs, picnic tables, and benches
- pathway grading
- trash collecting

Donate. While the basic trail construction has been completed, money is needed for numerous trail improvements as well as maintenance. The Sunburst Foundation maintains a special fund used exclusively for the Kootenai Trail. Consider making a donation to this fund to help with trail improvements or upkeep. All donations are tax deductible.

For more information about the Kootenai Trail, please contact: The Sunburst Community Service Foundation at 297-0197 or www.sunburstfoundation.org.

This Project Was Funded By a Grant From the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The Sunburst Community Service Foundation is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.



A RAILS-TO-TRAILS PROJECT
FOR MONTANA'S TOBACCO VALLEY

