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Rails officially become trails through the Valley

“This is no longer an abandoned rail bed,” said Mike Trinacity of Sport Nova Scotia. “Now we can tell people we have a great outdoor recreation facility here.”

Trinacity was speaking on Wednesday, Oct. 26 in Jordantown at the opening ceremonies for a string of new Digby County trails: the Missing Link trail from Jordantown to Weymouth, the Story Book trail in Weymouth and the Sentier de Clare trail through Clare.

Two dozen people including politicians, ATVers, trail advocates and volunteers gathered for speeches at the trail head just off the Jordantown Road in Jordantown. Rick Jacques, coordinator for the Annapolis Valley Trail Coalition, and Rod LeFort, of the Weymouth Waerfront Development Committee, cut an alder branch to open the trail.

The opening marks the launch of the Annapolis Valley Trail System (AVTS) and indicates that the trails meet the multi-use trail construction standards as established by the Department of Natural Resources, said Trinacity.

“We are moving from the construction phase to focus on maintenance and now we can shift to promotion and marketing,” he said. “Now we can say this is a great trail.”

There is still work to be done on signage, speed limits and rules of the trail, plus other enhancements like picnic tables, gazebos and interpretation panels.

Various trail groups and municipalities opened a total of 18 trails covering nearly 200 km of the former Dominion Atlantic Railway and CN rail lines in Kings, Annapolis and Digby Counties on Oct. 26.

The trails have a total of 55 new bridges, 1000 culverts, 100 gates and 10,000 neighbours.

Trinacity said in terms of dollars, the AVTS is now the third largest recreation facility in the Valley after the Kings Mutual Century Centre and the Fundy Y Complex.

The trail work thus far has cost a total of \$5 million dollars; \$2 million for the Missing Link and Story Brook trails and \$700,000 for the Sentier de Clare trail.

The 70 km of trail in Digby County are open to all user groups including ATVs. Some of the sections in and around Kentville do not allow ATV access.

The Bear River to Sissiboo Trail Association has been developing the trails from the Bear River to the Sissiboo, in Weymouth. They plan to finish work next year on the Basin Sunset Cove in Smith’s Cove and the Scallop Trail in Digby.

Rod LeFort says they plan to make the Story Book trail in Weymouth into a loop ending back in the village at a proposed playground.

The section in Annapolis County from Paradise to Bear River is still in the planning phase. According to a press release the big river crossings at Moose River, Bear River and Sissiboo River “will require major infrastructure or alternate routes to cross or bypass”.

The plan is to eventually connect Yarmouth to Halifax and Middleton to Bridgewater.

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