

St. Louis Post-Dispatch BaratHaven trail opens

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DARDENNE PRAIRIE — A three-mile stretch of the Dardenne Greenway officially opens today at BaratHaven, with 33 more miles of trail to come.

Walkers and bikers began discovering the trail last fall even though grading was still under way. Workers completed the asphalt pavement about three weeks ago. Representatives of BaratHaven and Dardenne Prairie will join Great Rivers Greenway District officials in a ribbon cutting at 10 a.m. today at the trail head at Henning Road and BaratHaven Boulevard.

Three miles of trail follow Dardenne Creek and wind through the new 85-acre park within the BaratHaven development. The section will be part of the 36-mile recreational trail to be built by the greenway district.

Todd Antoine, Great Rivers deputy director for planning, said Thursday the organization is "very excited to have it open to the public even though people have already been using it."

Dardenne Greenway will follow the creek its entire length in St. Charles County. The creek rises in eastern Warren County and zigzags across St. Charles County before it empties into the Mississippi River north of St. Peters.

The park, Dardenne Prairie's largest, is within BaratHaven, a 165-acre project led by McEagle Properties.

Great Rivers Greenway officials and their consultant, SWT Design of St. Louis, hope to have the entire Dardenne Greenway plan done this year. A construction timetable is yet to be set.

The greenway will vary from unpaved nature trail, to multiuse paved trail, to city streets and, perhaps, water. Users could board canoes to follow the creek from St. Peters' Lakeside 370 Park to the creek's mouth at the Mississippi.

A water trail was not rated highly desirable among most people who responded to a survey taken at forums Great Rivers Greenway conducted last month on plans for the Dardenne Greenway. About 50 people filled out the survey, an agency spokeswoman said.

In contrast, 67 percent of the respondents rated as "very desirable" a "clean, green and safe network of connectivity for walking and biking in St. Charles County," the survey showed.

A majority of respondents also rated as "very desirable" the idea of keeping the "primary" trail separate from vehicular traffic and using the greenway to educate the public about stream bank conservation.

The Dardenne Greenway is to become part of what eventually will be a regional network of recreational paths. They will interconnect in what the Great Rivers district calls the 600-mile River Ring in the St. Louis region.

The district plans to hold a final series of Dardenne Greenway forums in October before completing the greenway's plans, said Nancy Ulman, manager of the Dardenne project.

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