



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 25, 2018

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**Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Names Nebraska Trail Visionaries
2017 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions**

*Ross Greathouse and Lynn Lightner recognized for nearly four decades of dedication to building the
Nebraska trails movement*

Lincoln, Neb.—Two life-long visionaries who were instrumental in building some of Nebraska’s most treasured pathways were named Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s (RTC’s) 2017 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions.

Many across Nebraska credit Ross Greathouse and Lynn Lightner—who have been friends and fellow trail builders for nearly four decades, and who are avid runners and cyclists—with laying the early groundwork for the Nebraska Trails Foundation and for playing significant roles in the fundraising for, and completion of, most of the trails now supported by the foundation. Greathouse and Lightner will be honored for their work on Nebraska’s trails at a private ceremony sponsored by RTC at the Jayne Snyder Trails Center on Feb. 8.

“What sets Greathouse and Lightner apart is that their volunteerism, their steadfast commitment, their drive to build trails—even under tough circumstances—has never waned,” said Jeff Doppelt, the benefactor of the Rail-Trail Champion award. “We have them to thank for miles and miles of rail-trail in Nebraska.”

To date, Lightner has overseen the construction of 40 trail bridges and 30 volunteer work crews, and his work extends to Iowa, where he helped raise money and complete a bridge on the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, part of RTC’s national Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. Greathouse estimates having raised \$2.5 million for trails, and has also contributed to the planning of major trails and networks such as: the 219.3-mile Cowboy Trail, which has been decades in the making and will stretch more than 321 miles when complete; and the Quad-State Trail and Missouri Statewide Trails Plan, an extensive trail system in Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa.

“Stories from the early days of the rail-trail movement are always inspiring,” said Keith Laughlin, RTC president. “People like Ross Greathouse and Lynn Lightner were truly pioneers—literally fighting to preserve the land and the corridors as trails that millions now consider commonplace.”

Both men point to the recently completed 22.9-mile Chief Standing Bear Trail, which now spans from Beatrice to the Nebraska-Kansas border, as their greatest accomplishment. Named after the Ponca Tribe's legendary leader, Chief Standing Bear, the trail serves as a lasting landmark for the tribe and its history and has been a project in the making for 25 years. Lightner and Greathouse helped facilitate the transfer of ownership of 19.5 miles of the trail to the tribe in May 2017.

In honor of their achievements, RTC and the Doppelt Family are making a gift in their name to the Homestead Conservation and Trails Association, Inc. for the Chief Standing Bear Trail.

Since 2011, the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions Award has honored more than 30 individuals around the nation who have made significant contributions to the rail-trail movement through their hard work, volunteerism and support—in short, those who have gone above and beyond in the name of trails.

To learn more about the life-long contributions of Greathouse and Lightner and the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion Award, visit [RTC's TrailBlog](#).

Editor's Note: Press interested in attending the private ceremony on Feb. 8 at the Jayne Snyder Trails Center can contact Patricia Brooks at 202.351.1757 and patricia@matchmapmedia.com.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).