Dear Adventure Cycling Members,

2014 was an extraordinary year for me and for the Adventure Cycling Association. Personally, I checked off one of the big items on my bucket list, riding diagonally across North America from Key West, Florida, to Homer, Alaska — a journey made all the sweeter because the last stretch (from Missoula to Anchorage) was done as a part of our famous North Star tour. It was one of the most amazing trips of my life, and made me appreciate anew the “adventure” part of Adventure Cycling.

Speaking of which, I had the pleasure of participating in another banner year for this unique organization. Our staff and volunteers — with your generous support — hit many new milestones, including:

• More Adventure Cycling members than ever (47,500!).
• More pages and stories than ever in our beloved and recently re-designed magazine, Adventure Cyclist.
• Publication of our newest Adventure Cycling route, the Idaho Hot Springs Mountain Bike Route, which has already gone into its third printing.
• Adoption of more new U.S. Bicycle Routes (USBRs) such that, within the last three years, 16 states have designated USBRs totaling more than 8,000 miles — and there is much more to come, including Part II of a Best Practices Guide to further develop this official system.
• More tour participants than ever (meaning more good times than ever!), with even more tours planned for 2015 (105, a doubling of available tours over the last five years).
• Awarding of our first-ever Young Adult Bike Travel Scholarships, which enabled two young people to take our Introduction to Road Touring course and then become ambassadors for bike travel around the U.S.
• Important advocacy efforts to create better bike travel conditions, including collaborative work with Amtrak to launch pilot projects for roll-on/roll-off bike service, and work with the National Park Service to create more bike-friendly park units, for example in the Natchez Trace.
• Beta testing on the Northern Tier of new digital map products which will ultimately enable cyclists to utilize our superb routes and service waypoints on mobile devices.
• More major exposure for bike tourism, as we co-organized a first-of-its-kind major conference on bike travel in San Diego this November, and promoted cycle tourism through conferences and trade shows around the world.
• Record levels of participation in our electronic media, with more subscribers than ever to Bike Bits (our e-newsletter), Facebook, Twitter, and other social media channels.

Add to this all the preparatory work we did for projects like Bicycle Route 66 (launched in March 2015) and our 40th anniversary celebrations in 2016, and you can see why I consider 2014 a banner year.

And last, but not least: Thank you for all that you have done! Your memberships, donations, tours and map purchases, volunteer hours, and plain old enthusiasm have made it possible for Adventure Cycling to continue its exciting work of inspiring and empowering people to travel by bicycle.

Wally Werner, President
Adventure Cycling Board of Directors

Mariia Solomatova (from Russia) and Chunyu Ou (from China) met in a free English class and embarked on a bicycling tour from San Francisco to the East Coast, with plans to continue down to South America. They both carry jars of soil from their home countries as protection from bad luck and homesickness (“works well so far”).

When they stopped by Adventure Cycling headquarters in September 2014, Mike Minnick and his pooch Bixby had traveled more than 7,000 miles on Mike’s Yuba Mundo cargo bike (with Bixby’s crate mounted to the back). Mike told us, “More than one year in, I know that one year from now, I will still be on my bike, with my best friend, having the adventure of a lifetime.”

Though they said, “Life on two wheels is great,” simply riding the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route wasn’t enough for Samuel Harney, Kurt Williams, and Spencer Harding. In addition to their light bike-packing setup, they hauled a full set of climbing gear — rope, cams, harnesses, climbing shoes, etc. — on their tour, stopping to climb along the way.

Franziska Hollender wasn’t a cyclist until about a year before she arrived at Adventure Cycling headquarters, when she picked up her father’s 1980s steel road bike and cranked it right into high gear. In March 2014, she entered the World Cycle Race, but had to drop out due to injury. She bounced back and entered the TransAm Bike Race, riding through Missouri to Iowa.
Quiet roads cascading through sub-alpine terrain, cozy mountain towns for breaks between saddle time, blue-ribbon trout streams to fish — but let’s get to the good stuff: hot springs to soak in at the end of each day.

While it may be under the radar for many, Idaho has some of the most spectacular country the West has to offer — possessing all the key ingredients of a popular bike-touring destination with all the beauty and remoteness sought out at every corner of the globe.

The idea for the Idaho Hot Springs Mountain Bike Route came out of our annual “Big Ideas” gathering here at Adventure Cycling. Cartographer Casey Greene had been scoping out more places to explore singletrack touring, which is quickly becoming an exciting offshoot of bike travel.

Not to mention, it was high time Adventure Cycling published another mountain bike route. Our members had been asking for more off-pavement riding options beyond the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route (GDMBR) — our premier off-pavement cycling route. We were sure this passage through Idaho would deliver a new and exotic route for the off-road seekers.

Another great leap for Adventure Cycling was the development of the digital data offerings. We introduced GPX tracks, instead of GPS route waypoints, as we do for our other routes. GPX tracks provide users with a navigational path that displays as a line with an indicator of your location in relation to that line.

And for those who will always appreciate the craftsmanship of a paper map, a major innovation in this map layout is the detachable narratives. Casey had a good insight: bikepackers do not want to haul out the whole map to see what’s next. His solution was to arrange the narratives such that they could be cut from the map without disturbing the rest of the layout. This smaller cue sheet could then be stashed in a jersey pocket or easily reached framebag.

The finished product is a two-map set as stunning as the route itself — one bi-directional Main Route map and the second Singletrack Options map — that guides cyclists through the breathtaking landscape of central Idaho along a spectacular 518-mile route. Another first for Adventure Cycling: 227 miles of backcountry singletrack riding options, which riders can choose to ride as loops off the main route.

Not to be overlooked, the maps highlight the 50+ hot springs options to plan around. “There are few things I’ve found that go together as well as a day of backcountry bicycling followed by a relaxing soak in one of nature’s own hot tubs,” Greene said. “Those who’ve never experienced it are in for a real treat.”

With the addition of this route, the Adventure Cycling Route Network grew to 42,180 miles. Our Routes & Mapping staff are as excited to add to this constantly evolving, ever-growing national web of routes as our members are, no doubt, to plot out their next adventures.
In January of 2014, Adventure Cycling and Amtrak formed a pilot project. Made up of bicycle advocates, industry professionals, rail passengers and advocates, and transportation officials, the task force formed to address both long and short-term goals for improving bicycle access and services on Amtrak lines. The Task Force is overseeing two pilot projects within the Northeast region that will facilitate design solutions which will enable bicycle storage without the need to disassemble and box the bikes. This is welcome news, however, 67% of Amtrak lines do not provide bicycle service, which limits travel options for cyclists. The Bicycle Task Force will help Amtrak address this issue through the roll-out of pilot projects.

In addition to the efforts of the Bicycle Task Force, Adventure Cycling responded to many requests for service improvement on bicycle routes by creating a spreadsheet of timetable and baggage service information that now lives on our multimodal webpage. Taking this a step further, we integrated the Amtrak system map into our interactive Adventure Cycling Route Network map: adventurecycling.org/amtrak-map.

These exciting developments continue to progress, and in 2015 we expect to announce the new pilot projects that will make travel for all cyclists easier.

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For October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014.
The Adventure Cycling Association staff wants to thank you for helping grow our bicycle travel community.

Top row (left to right): John Saber, Michael Demer, Nathan Taylor, Alex Strickland, Rachel Stevens, Eva Dunn-Ford, Lyndsey Hess, Jake Buck, Josh Tack, Saara Snow, Gage Roze, Jim Sayer, Brian Bonar, Arleen Hall

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Thank you!