

Call of the North

Vol. 9 Issue 1

FREE for members



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Bad Medicine Contingent of Itasca Moraine Chapter

By Ray Vlasak

Plans for 2005 are three prong: westward trail toward Tamarac Wildlife Refuge; Itasca Park and east to assist with the 2007 connection goal; and certification of segments between Itasca Park and Clearwater Co. 39.

A preliminary meeting was held with Tamarac and Becker County representatives to begin the trail corridor identification in Becker County north of the Refuge. Decisions on this section are needed to identify the Becker County entry point, which in turn is needed before the final corridor in Clearwater County can be completed. Public land is readily available in this area, but the location of lakes, refuge restrictions, and multiple land authorities create challenges to the planning. The westward planning is a priority for 2005.

On September 17-19 a trail building crew cleared about a mile of trail in Itasca Park that had been flagged in the spring. This section connects the existing trail with the south Park Entrance on MN Hwy. 71. The treadway work is planned for this spring and summer. We plan to flag new trail from Hwy. 71 to the east Park boundary or perhaps the pipeline clearing (1/2 mile) before leaf-out. Also a trail kiosk is planned for the entrance



Sept. 17-20 Trail Builders. Left to Right, Dick Kroener, Blaine Byrd, Jerry Beckham, Harlan Liljiquist, Kelly Byrd, John Bredemeier. Not pictured, Bill and Sue Sanger, Merlyn Wesloh, Ray Vlasak

area where a trailhead parking already exists.

The far west section of trail between Itasca Park and Clearwater Co. 39 and the private property by-pass north of Gardner Lake await final certification. Potlatch has been rethinking past agreements in this area. At the fall Trail Summit Dorian Grilley, Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, offered to intercede with Potlatch officials on this issue. Hopefully Potlatch will now cooperate, and we can complete certification of these sections in 2005.

Editor's Note . . .

Think snow!!

I love to hike, but I am really missing some cross country skiing. Here in Steele County snow is in short supply. This last weekend we finally got enough to do a little skiing, but now the temperature has gone up and the snow has gone down—back to hiking on the trail next to the “glistening in ice” ski trail. Thank goodness I like hiking!

I believe our country is in a financial crunch; we need to be conservative with our finances. I believe this is the time that we as volunteers need to all come forth and do our part in seeing the NCT trail expand.

Our president, Jerry Johnson, has called a meeting April 5th. Let's show our support to Jerry and the trail by attending that meeting. At that meeting time we will discuss what we can do to help expand the trail. Yes, the country may not be able to afford to spend much money on trails this year, but we as individuals can do our part by just showing up at the meeting. You, who are reading this letter at this time, think about becoming an active participant this year. Your physical presence is needed and wanted!

You know expanding the trail may seem a bit frivolous; but we are Americans and a little frivolity is our nature!

Read Flo Hedeem's Update article on page 4. Just think, you can now hike the entire Chippewa National Forest on into the Paul Bunyan; that must be about 90 miles or more of through hiking! I am looking forward to the time when we can say you can start at Remer and hike through to the Mississippi Headwaters in Itasca State Park!

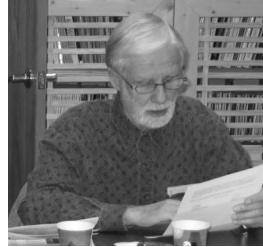
Sign up for one of the work schedules listed on the insert sheet.

Ginny Ruppe

Send your letters to the editor: *Ginny Ruppe, 429 Hilltop Avenue, Owatonna, MN 55060*

Star of the North Chapter Report

By Jerry Johnson, President



The next meeting of the chapter will be on Tuesday, April 5th, 7:00 PM, at REI in Bloomington. The agenda will include planning of chapter activities for the coming spring and summer. Given the chapter's location in a large metropolitan area, somewhat

removed from the actual trail, we are looking into ways in which we can have an active role in trail development and support. In addition to trail building, it may be that our large membership base can be used to effectively promote the trail here in Minnesota.

At our last meeting we voted to contribute \$1,000 from chapter funds to the NCTA drive to raise sufficient money to establish a full-time position for fund raising and development. The new position will be filled this spring, and it seems that the chapter might want to talk with this person to seek out new and innovative ways of promoting the trail. We need to partner with the Itasca Moraine Chapter and the affiliate trail organizations here in Minnesota in making the North Country Trail a recognized asset for the state.

A visit to REI is always fun, especially with spring coming on. Bring your list of hiking needs and your ideas for chapter activities and join us on April 5th.





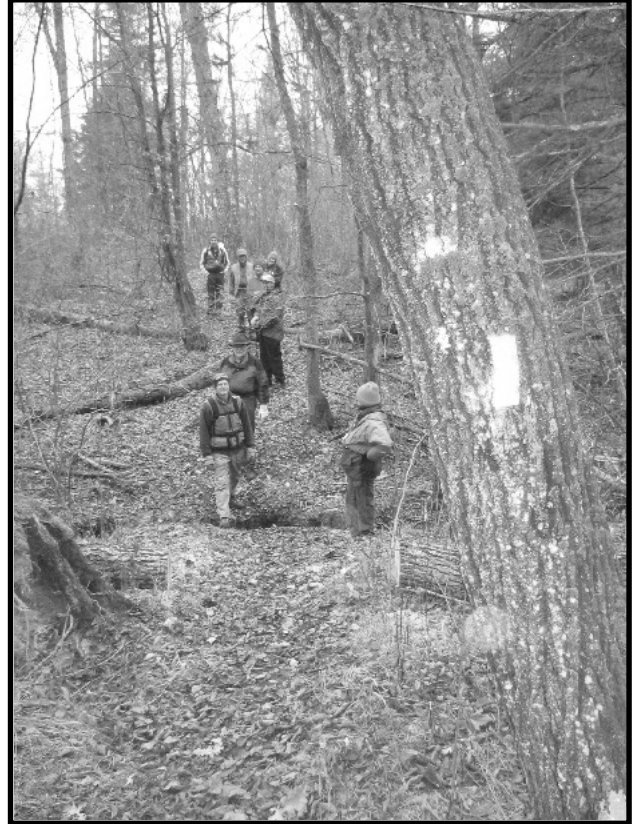
Update from the Itasca Moraine Chapter

By Florence Hedeem, Historian, Itasca Moraine Chapter, NCTA

Blue blazes help to assure hikers that they are on the treadway of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). On occasion, however, a white blazed footpath leads hikers to a spur of interest. In November, 2004, members and friends of the Itasca Moraine Chapter of the North Country Trail Association held a white and blue blaze 5.3 mile certification hike with Fred Szarka, National Park Service.

The hike included a .23 mile spur to the Chapter's pride and joy, the Waboose Lake primitive campsite. Access by foot to the site requires jumping across a beaver run (pictured), but is well worth the effort! The site is also accessible by canoe, has two tent pads, a fire grate, and a wilderness latrine. The peninsula is surrounded by beautiful Waboose Lake with a public access deep in the Paul Bunyan State Forest.

Work on this section of trail began in early 2003, Carter Hedeem and Harvey Tjader plotting the proposed trail first on computer and then on the ground. Work crews roughed in the trail so that it would take advantage of the proximity to Waboose Lake. In October, 2003, participants in the Hike for Hope got a look at what was to come. Then a crew from the Minnesota Conservation Corps did some serious trail building, followed by numerous chapter led crews, Bemidji State University and U of M YMCA Environmental Back Pack Club crews and, finally, two hard-hitting weeks of trail building in October, 2004, again by Chapter members and a crew of four from the Minnesota Conservation Corps. At one point a half-mile section of completed trail was wiped out by a logging operation and had to be rebuilt.



New camp site

The blue and white blazes were literally drying on the trees when 13 eager hikers joined Fred on the certification hike, November 16, 2004, from Akeley Cut-off Road to Steamboat Forest Road. Hugging ridges connected by drops into valleys, the trail is moderate to difficult for hikers. The rewards come from beautiful views and changing forest types with occasional close encounters with porcupines, beaver cuttings, and other wild things.

Trail building continues westward to Itasca State Park, but now the serious hiker can start on the NCNST south of Remer, MN, through the Chippewa National Forest and to the Steamboat Forest Road in the Paul Bunyan State Forest. Y'all come!

Trail Scouting on the Itasca Moraine

by *Harvey Tjader*

We like scouting trail routes in the winter because it's easier to see the lay of the land when trees and shrubs are without leaves. On the Itasca Moraine, we pay more attention to topography than vegetation. The state and county lands we are crossing are managed for timber production, so mature forest is likely to change soon to young forest. Young trees will grow up along the trail if it is located in a recently logged area. Either way, the vegetation will surely change. The topography changes much more slowly.

Topography, land ownership patterns, and existing roads and trails are the primary limiting factors in routing the trail through this rugged country. We frequently find places that are too steep for trail location. Sometimes these areas can't be avoided, so we plan switch-backs in the trail. Many of the small lakes in the Itasca Moraine have steep hills bordering them so you can't get close to them unless you are a mountain goat. When we can get close to one, we try to locate the trail or plan a campsite, there. The trees near a lake are less likely to be logged, but more likely to get felled by beavers. Even so, the scenery is attractive and we like providing opportunities for a hiker to get out of their boots and soak their feet in a lake.

Most of the land in the townships we have crossed is in state or county ownership, so avoiding private lands is not often a problem. However, some lands are designated as trust fund lands, required by the state constitution to be managed for revenue to support public education. A lease to cross trust fund lands will cost the North Country Trail Association more dearly, so we try to avoid them.

We try to avoid existing roads and trails as much as possible in order to discourage motorized uses on the North Country Trail and keep the trail as quiet as possible. This area (between Lake George and Akeley) is popular with off-road-motorcyclists and ATV riders. We haven't experienced much problem with

motorized incursions onto our trail, yet, but it has happened on portions of the trail within the Chippewa National Forest, so avoidance is our policy. Often, due to limiting topography and the fact that we are Johnny-Come-Lately, the best route already has a road or trail established on it. So far, we have been able to find a suitable alternative route in those situations.

Our tools of the trade include USGS quadrangle maps to show topography, aerial photos and forest type maps to show vegetative cover, a compass, a clinometer to measure slope, a GPS (global positioning system) satellite receiver, and flagging. Before going out, I try to upload a prospective route from a computer mapping program into the GPS to provide a reference while we are scouting. After we agree on a route, we collect GPS data so that it can be easily plotted in the mapping program.

Trail routing decisions are based on the consensus of those who turn out for the day, but are never really finalized. The route can change right up to the time the trail is built, and possibly even after. Our final deciding factor is our commitment to put the trail in the best place for the long run, even if it means more work in the short run.



State Coordinator's Message continued

raise from within the chapter \$1000 next year to help get this needed program started. We also committed to continue to find additional ways to further the trail with the resources available to us. Jerry is to be congratulated for his "if you got lemons make lemonade" attitude. Under Jerry's leadership our state's largest chapter will make significant contributions to Minnesota's NCT.

As I do in all winter editions of this newsletter, I'll ask you to pay special attention to the Minnesota Wilderness Trails Alliance's Boundary Waters trail maintenance registration sheet included within. Consider joining this effort to maintain our wonderful wilderness trails. You should know that you'll be joining literally 1000s of participants since 1992 to do this work and keep these trails open. Now more than ever the US Forest Service's limited resources dictate that if this work is not done by volunteers, it will be left undone and soon these trails will disappear. Remember that both the Kekekabic Trail and the Border Route Trail, key components of the Northeast Minnesota Route Assessment (what we've referred to in the past as the Arrowhead Reroute) are major focuses of this effort. Please consider this opportunity to shake off winter's rust and visit one of our state's most special places, while at the same time contributing to this important work and having a whole lot of fun.

I've saved for last the status of the Northeast Minnesota Route Assessment. Some of us have been following this issue for over 17 years, and I've devoted much of my last two messages to it. Last time I ex-

pressed hope that Congressional authorization might happen in the final period of the 108th Congress after the election, but it was not to be. We had no chance to do anything when the Chair of the House Resources Committee, Rep. Pombo, where this legislation must begin in the House, decided not to open the committee's office at all during the so-called lame duck session. This act not only killed consideration for our hoped for authorization, but eliminated consideration for any legislation that needed to begin in that committee. I did let you know that the chance for action at this end of session was slight, but I had hoped we could at least get our paddle in the water.

This means that our desired action must come in the new 109th Congress. I'll again ask everyone to contact our Minnesota Congressional Delegation, contact information will run at the end of this article. Again, everyone agrees that this issue is non-controversial and support by the entire Minnesota Delegation is all that will be required so everyone needs to do their part. Passage of this authorization will be national's first priority when they join the American Hiking Society's "Hike the Hill" lobbying effort in Washington, DC at the beginning of March. So rest assured that the North Country Trail Association is not taking this issue lightly.

With your action now we will finally be able to clear this long anticipated hurdle. Contact your Congressional representation today, or better yet, roll up your sleeves and contact our entire Delegation!!!

Minnesota Congressional Contact Information

Senator Norm Coleman: By fax - 202.224.1152;

By email: opinion@coleman.senate.gov

Senator Mark Dayton: By fax - 202.228.2186;

By contacting his web site - "<http://www.dayton.senate.gov/webform.html>"

All U.S. Representatives must be contacted on the web at - "<http://www.house.gov/writerep/>".

There you'll be asked to enter your state and zip code after, which you'll be provided an

opportunity to send a message to your Representative. Or you can fax them individually at:

Gil Gutknecht - 202.225.3246

Mark Kennedy - 202.225.6475

John Kline - 202.225.2595

Betty McCollum - 202.225.1968

James Oberstar - 202.225.0699

Collin Peterson - 202.225.2165

Jim Ramstad - 202.225.6351

Martin Sabo - 202.225.4886

Book Review

Mississippi River Canoe Adventure by Jim and Carol Otremba

I enjoy reading books by authors from Minnesota. It is especially interesting to me if it is a book about the outdoors. *Mississippi River Canoe Adventure* fulfilled both those interests.

Mississippi River Canoe Adventure is a daily journal written by Jim and Carol Otremba of St. Cloud. On September 3, 1996, they set out from the marshy rice paddies, Mississippi headwaters, in Itasca State Park and headed towards New Orleans—2,200 miles. This was their 25th wedding anniversary trip; a trip they had dreamed about for years.

The Otremba's said, "We were not experienced canoeists, nor were we in the best physical condition. But if determination and common sense were our greatest assets, then we had a chance to reach our dream of conquering the fourteenth longest river in the world."

The Otremba's describe the gear they chose to use and carry with them including type of canoe, shelter, clothing, and food.

Each day they recorded the type of animals and birds they saw, the weather they encountered, and the amount of miles they traveled, anywhere from 17 to 56 miles.

They mentioned the debris in the water, the portages that were necessary as well as going through locks that lowered them to the next level on the river. Traffic became heavier the further they traveled making it a little more treacherous for a small canoe.

The Otremba's were delighted with the people they met along the way. They met other canoeists who were also traveling to New Orleans.

The Otremba's reached their destination November 14, 1996.

In their book's Dedication, they said: "Let not age, ability, other people's opinions, or fear of failure keep you from trying to accomplish what you want."



Membership Form

<input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Pathfinder	<input type="checkbox"/> \$45 Organization
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Trail Leader	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 NCT Patron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Business
<input type="checkbox"/> Member of a specific Chapter: _____ <small>To date, the only chapter in Minnesota is the Star of the North Chapter</small>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Member of my closest local Chapter	<input type="checkbox"/> At-Large Member (Not affiliated with any Chapter)	

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Skill to volunteer (Optional) _____

Please mail, fax or phone your order to:
229 East Main Street • Lowell, Michigan 49331
Toll free telephone: 888-454-NCTA (888-454-6282)
If order by credit card, you may fax your order to: 616-897-6605

Call of the North
429 Hilltop Avenue
Owatonna, MN 55060



Place
Stamp
Here



FIRST CLASS

Winter

Activities Calendar

- April 5** — Star of the North Chapter meeting, 7:00, REI, Bloomington.
- March 8**—Parks and Trails Council's "Day on the Hill" lobby day at the state capital and Annual Dinner at the Town and Country Club in St. Paul.
- April 22-24** — Midwest Mountaineering Spring Expo.
- May 14 & 15**—Superior Hiking Trail Association's Annual Meeting at Wolf ridge ELC near Finland MN.
- June 18, 05** — Solstice Hike with John and Pat Leinen at Nerstrand Woods State Park.
- Aug. 11-14, 05** — NCTA Annual Meeting in Petoskey, MI.

North Country Trail web sites:

Home site: www.northcountrytrail.org
Star of the North: northcountrytrail.org/stn/index.htm

Itasca Moraine site: northcountrytrail.org/itm/index.htm

Visit our trail partner's websites for a list of their activities:

Kekekabic Trail Club: www.kek.org

Minnesota Rovers Outing Club: www.mnrovers.org/html/activities.htm or contact them at (612) 829-5142.

Superior Hiking Trail Association: www.shta.org/Events/Calendar/index.php.

The Kek, Rovers, Parks & Trails, and the Minnesota Canoe Assn. have a list of trail clearing opportunities at www.kek.org/mwta2004.html.

Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota:
www.parksandtrails.org, phone numbers are 651.726.2457 & 800.944.0707.