

CHEQUAMEGON CHAPTER NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2026

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- **Chequamegon Chapter NCT in Wisconsin Facebook Page:**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/4004210863146372/>
- **NCT in Wisconsin Facebook Page:**
<http://www.facebook.com/NCTinWI>



The Chequamegon Chapter of the NCTA Holds Annual Fall Meeting for 2025

On Saturday, November 8th, 2025, at the Drummond Civic Center the Chequamegon Chapter of the North Country Trail Association held their Fall Meeting presided over by Chapter President to dozens of members. Chapter President Mel Baughman discussed highlights of the Chapter's business and accomplishments, Mary Stenberg discussed membership, Ed Ronkowski gave the Treasurer's report, Julia Waggoner discussed volunteer hours, Derek Ogle discussed the state of the western trails, Marty Swank discussed the Chapter's communications with the public, Joyce Cielecki discussed the Chapter's guided hikes this year. The Honor Award was given to Derek Ogle, and the VIP Award was given to Joyce



Cielecki.

Photos top to bottom: 1. Mel Baughman runs the meeting as participants listen intently. 2. Mel uses



visual aids.

3. Julia Waggoner gives a Volunteer Hours presentation.

4. Joyce Cielecki received the Chapter's VIP Award for 2025 and gave a presentation on planned fun hikes for 2026.

(Annual Fall Meeting continued)



Photos top to bottom: 1. Derek Ogle discussed trail maintenance on the western sections of North Country National Scenic Trail. 2. Marty Swank discussed Chapter promotional efforts for 2026. 3. Derek Ogle receives the NCTA Honor Award for 2025 presented by Mel.



NCT Navigators Combine Fun with Volunteer Trail Maintenance

On Monday's hike on 12-22-25, the Navigators combined a fun hike with trail maintenance on the North Country National Scenic Trail, Lake Owen Trailhead in the Chequamegon National Forest.

Sara Balbin had this to say: "The depth of snow was deep, and breaking trail with snowshoes was a good workout. However, we had fun working as a team removing the branches and small trees blocking the first part of the trail."

As with most tasks, many hands make the work less taxing and, in many cases, actual fun!

Photos by Sara Balbin.



Photos left to right: 1. An assist to keep the small saw from binding. 2. Another assist to keep the saw from binding. 3. Teamwork on a small evergreen that ended up on the trail.

Annual First Day Hike Held at Copper Falls State Park

On January 1, 2026, about 30 people gathered at Copper Falls State Park to welcome 2026! On snowshoes, skis and even sleds, we immersed ourselves into winter's breathtaking beauty along the Red Granite Trail. Although it was only 10 degrees outside, we toasted around a warm fire with hot drinks and delicious treats. New friendships were made and old friendships were nurtured...what better way to begin the new year than by making memories!

Julia Waggoner described the event as "Stunningly lovely in the woods." Photos by Julia Waggoner.

(First Day Hike Continued)



Photos top to bottom clockwise: 1. The Group Photo before start of snowshoeing. 2. Freezing rain followed by heavy wet snow causes trail damage with evergreens. 3. A naturally flocked Christmas tree. 4. Treats for the end of the hike! 5. A pause for a photo. 6. Ellie gave a presentation before the hike began. 7. The snowshoe adventure begins.



Chequamegon Chapter Holds Annual Meeting

The Chequamegon Chapter of the NCTA held their Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 11, 2026. The meeting took place at the Town of Drummond Civic Center in Drummond, WI.

Reports were given by Chequamegon Chapter's current officers and appointed staff members. Proposed fun hikes, promotional efforts, and proposed trail maintenance/building events were discussed. The chapter plans on hosting seven fun hikes and co-hosting two special NCT gatherings this year.

A highlight of the proposed trail maintenance/building season for 2026 is the start of the proposed Canthook Lake Re-route Project. This project was originally proposed in 2010!



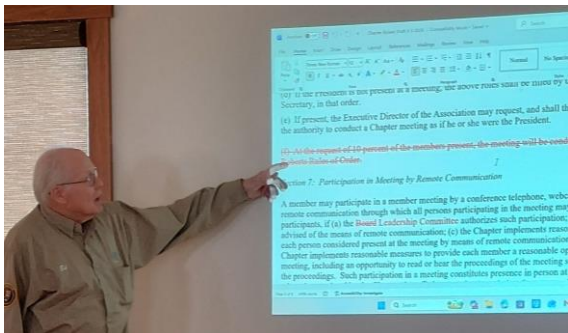
Chapter President, Mel Baughman reported on a number of behind-the-scenes events and chapter updates for late 2025 – 2026. Mel also shared a report from Matt Davis, the NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator.

Katie LeMoine, Recreational Technician, Great Divide Ranger District, shared information, and updates from the USFS.

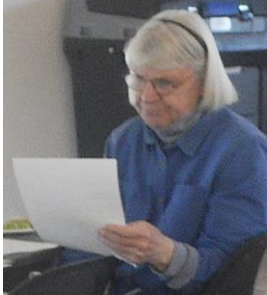
The meeting was topped off by a presentation by hiker Colin Tingo on a hike of the Wisconsin North Country National Scenic Trail with fellow backpacker Matt Ostrander.



Photos by Ed Ronkowski and Vickie Swank.



Photos clockwise top to bottom: 1. The group photo of attendees. 2. Mike Triesman gave trail status update on eastern sections of the NCT. 3. Colin Tingo gives a presentation on hiking the Wisconsin NCT. 4. Chapter secretary Julia Waggoner takes meeting minutes. 5. Fun Events Coordinator, Joyce Cielecki, discusses planned fun hikes and events for 2026. 6. Katie LeMoine gives USFS updates. 7. Ed Ronkowski gives opinion on proposed Chapter Bylaw Changes. 8. Mel Baughman leads the meeting. 9. Jim Fridsma gave an update on Western sections of the NCT.



Several NCT Navigators Tackle Rainbow Lake Wilderness NCT

By Marty Swank

On Friday, May 1, NCT Navigators did Spring Cleanup on their adopted section of North Country National Scenic Trail in the Rainbow Lake Wilderness. Sara Balbin had this to say about the effort: "After the latest severe storms, today a few



Navigators tackled clearing their adopted section of NCT in the Rainbow Lake Wilderness section. The Silky saw worked beautifully on the larger trees."

As with the Chequamegon's other section of wilderness NCT (Porcupine Lake Wilderness), power tools are not allowed. The Silky saw is quickly becoming a favorite downed tree removal tool. It folds for easy carrying and the teeth are designed to cut on both push and pull (twice as fast?). One drawback: care needs to be taken in opening and closing the saw. The teeth are VERY sharp!

Chequamegon Chapter Trail Adopters are in the process or have completed annual Spring Trail Cleanup. Some sections of NCT were hit harder than others and in the case of wilderness sections, Volunteers

cannot use chainsaws so these can take longer.

Photos Left to Right: 1. Kristin Dahl uses a Silky saw while Michelle Vassallo keeps the tree from binding. 2. Kristin removes downed tree from North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT). 3. Sid Schwarz uses a Silky saw to cut a larger tree that has fallen across the NCT. Photos by Sara Balbin



Spring Cleanup on National Scenic Trail Near Long Mile Lookout



On Thursday May 14, 2026, Tom Matthiae, Joan Cervenka, and Jackie Kruse did spring trail maintenance on their adopted section of North Country National Scenic Trail from Long Mile Lookout to County Rd D. Jackie reported: "We removed several trees on the trail using chainsaw and my handy little handsaw the chapter provided. Joanie did lots of lopping of eye gougers as well. The trail is in good shape for now! Wildflowers are also beautiful right now ". Photos by Jackie Kruse.

Photos left to right: 1. Tom Matthiae uses chainsaw on tree across the NCT. 2. One of the messes that Tom, Joan, and Jackie worked on. 3. Tom on another one of the messes and with proper PPE.

Chequamegon Chapter Holds First Fun Hike of the Season

By Joyce Cielecki



On Saturday, May 16, 2026, five adventurous hikers explored the North Country Trail from Delta Drummond Road to Long Lake Branch Creek. The hikers enjoyed the beautiful views of Mirror, Esox, and Overby lakes, and Hike Leader Bob Lind of the Chequamegon

Chapter pointed out interesting facts along the way.

Photos top to bottom clockwise: 1. Group photo

of participants with charming Mirror Lake in the background. 2. Beautiful Esox Lake with beaver hut. 3. Hike leader Bob Lind on majestic Esox Lake. Bob Lind is a Trail Adopter for part of this section of North Country National Scenic Trail.



Multitasking Volunteers Achieve NCT Accomplishments

By Marty Swank

On Saturday and Sunday, May 23 and May 24, Volunteers of the Chequamegon Chapter of the North Country Trail Association put 2026 trail plans into action.

Creating two designated backpacker's campsites along the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) was a major focus with a secondary focus of creating a safer and dryer NCT crossing of a wet area by building a single plank boardwalk to span the distance. All three gains were on North County National Scenic Trail in the Chequamegon - Nicolet National Forest.

A long sought after designated backpacker's campsite was approved by the USFS on Lake Owen for this year and completed on May 23. A former old road had downed





trees, brush, and other obstacles removed, three tent sites were cleared, four benches were assembled, a fire pit/grill was installed, and a trail register box was installed at the trail intersection. A second designated backpackers' campsite was partially constructed on NCT above Nelson Lake. Three tent sites and a fire ring were created, and a new Nelson Lake sign was installed. Chapter Volunteers still must clear a trail from Nelson Lake to the campsite and add other finishing touches.

A temporary fix to a wet area of NCT between Wisco Road and Old Grade Road had become hazardous at times and was replaced by a single plank puncheon by Chapter Volunteers.

Chequamegon Chapter Volunteers for the two-day effort were Mel Baughman, Kevin Schram, Mark James, Jim Fridsma, Jim Crandall, Mark Belknap, Clair Morud, and Ed Ronkowski.

Photos by Kevin Schram, Mark Belknap, Jim Crandall and Ed Ronkowski.



Photos previous page, left to right: 1. Volunteers brush, remove downed trees and branches from the old road - future trail into the Lake Owen Backpacker Campsite. The register box mounted on post can be seen in the background being carried in. 2. Volunteers sit around the campfire ring on newly assembled benches. Clockwise from Mel Baughman (wearing hardhat), Jim Crandall, Clair Morud, Mark Belknap, and Jim Fridsma. Photos top to bottom clockwise on this page: 1. Claire Morud using a McLeod to brush trail while Mark Belknap lopps and Jim Crandall assists. 2. Jim Crandall (back) and Jim Fridsma use McLeods to make one of the tent pads. 3. Mark J. working around the firepit while Mel works on a tent pad. 4. The finished firepit with benches and registration box to right. 5. Mark James with McLeod in front, Jim Crandall, and sitting Jim Fridsma.

(Multitasking Volunteers - May 23-24 Continued)



Photos clockwise, top to bottom: 1. Kevin Schram stands by a new sign above Nelson Lake that he made. 2. Jim Fridsma and Mark James install the register box and post at the new backpacker's campsite and Jim installed the Nelson Lake sign. 3. Mel works on a tent pad at the new site. 4. Single plank boardwalk installed. Volunteers front to back: Mel Baughman, Kevin Schram, Mark James and Jim Fridsma.

Chequamegon Chapter Holds Second Fun Hike of the Season

By Joyce Cielecki

On Thursday May 28, 2026, seven people enjoyed a beautiful spring day hike on the North Country Trail from Snake Trail Road to Old Grade Road. The highlights of the hike included Sallygirl Overlook, the Swedish Settlement (and its newest resident, a barn

swallow), the Marengo River and the Marengo River shelter, and the always-stunning Juniper Rock Overlook. The trail was in excellent condition, and many thanks go out to the Chequamegon Chapter Volunteers who maintain this section of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT)! Photos by Joyce Cielecki.

For more information about future hikes/events see details at North Country Trail Association's Calendar of Events at <http://northcountrytrail.org/events/map> or at the Chequamegon Chapters Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/4004210863146372/>



Photos clockwise top to bottom: 1. Hikers with beautiful Marengo River in background. 2. A pause to take in the view of Sallygirl Overlook. 3. Barn Swallow make a home in the Swedish Settlement spring house. 4. Stunning views from Juniper Rock overlooking the Marengo River Valley. Marriages have taken place here.

National Trails Day Celebration on the North Country National Scenic Trail

By Peter Nordgren

All three Wisconsin NCTA Chapters participated in a National Trails Day Celebration on Saturday, June 6, 2026. Thirteen hikers plus four-legged regular Ellie enjoyed National Trails Day on sections of the North Country National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin. The Brule St. Croix Chapter was the main host with participants meeting at Highland Town Hall near Lake Nebagamon, with choices of morning hikes and a noon potluck. Pink lady slippers were in bloom among the red pines, and a host of other wildflowers were identified in the mesic forest and sand prairie habitats.

Chapter presidents Bethany Thomas from Heritage Chapter, Mel Baughman from Chequamegon Chapter, and Teresa Nelson from Brule St. Croix Chapter, gave welcomes and updates. The lunch was superb.

Thanks to hikers, hike leaders, organizers, the NCTA and the AHS for making our 30th annual [#nationaltrailsday](#) celebration a success. Photos by Teresa Nelson.



Photos top to bottom, clockwise: 1. Bethany Thomas, Heritage Chapter President, explains the new trail



segment from Sullivan Fire Lane to Gurney 2. Hikers ready to hit the trail! Left to right: Jen, Tenby, Hike Leader Allen, Ellie with 4 legs & Annette. 3. Mel Baughman, Chequamegon Chapter President, gives an update on new campsite at Lake Owen. 4. The Highland Town Hall is a favorite spot for trail activities including a potluck. 5. Brule-St. Croix hike leaders Jon Hughlett and Al Decker are ready to hike with Bethany

Thomas and Joe.

NCT NAVIGATORS at A Glance



(NCT NAVIGATORS at A Glance Continued)



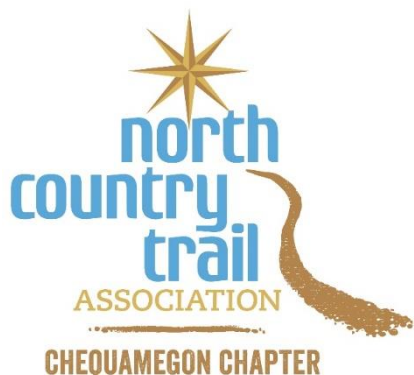
Remainder of 2026

Chequamegon Chapter Fun Hikes

Open to Everyone!

See the NCTA Events Calendar for more details:
northcountrytrail.org/events

- Meet at 9 am for all hikes, unless otherwise noted.
 - RSVP not required, but for timely alerts about schedule changes, please RSVP to che@northcountrytrail.org
 - In the event of severe weather concerns, hikes will be cancelled or postponed.
1. **Saturday July 25** - Mineral Lake Road/FR187 to Brunsweiler River and back (3.8 total miles)
 2. **Thursday August 6** - Lake Owen Peninsula loop, starting at Lake Owen Recreation Area Picnic Grounds (3.5 miles)
 3. **Saturday August 22** - Porcupine Lake Wilderness, County Road D to FR213 (east) parking lot, (4.3 total miles), shuttle vehicles*



4. **Saturday Sept. 26** - National Public Lands Day, stay tuned—activities and hikes to be determined, check NCTA Events page this summer for more details!
5. **Thursday October 1** - County Road D to Long Mile Lookout and back (5.5 total miles)
6. **Saturday October 10** - Season Grand Finale hike, new Canthook Lake Reroute! Check NCTA Events page this summer for more details.

* No pets allowed on shuttled hikes.

See Events description for more details at North Country Trail Association's Calendar of Events at
<http://northcountrytrail.org/events/map>

or at the Chequamegon Chapters Facebook Page at
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/4004210863146372/>

CLIP & SAVE

President's Notes:

by Mel Baughman

On June 13 at a NCNST Board of Director's meeting, I met our new Executive Director, Kate Hagner. I found her to be very personable and extremely well qualified. There was a lot of praise for other staff members at the meeting as well. I just want you to know we have excellent leadership on our national staff.

Within our Chequamegon Chapter I also acknowledge Kevin Schramm for stepping up to lead work crews on two weekends this spring and summer to build new campsites on Lake Owen and Nelson Lake. Jim Fridsma made five log benches and assembled several sign posts for those campsites. Derek Ogle participated in flagging four miles of the Canthook Lake Reroute, then returned with friends to complete **all the chainsaw work** needed to clear that new section of trail. Of course all our Trail Adopters deserve credit for clearing up the trail this spring following a severe winter. Joyce Cielecki has organized fun hikes for us—some completed, others yet to come.

I look forward to working with many of you this summer as we continue building a 4-mile reroute from Canthook Lake to Square Lake. This is part of a 7-mile reroute. It's the biggest project we've tackled since I joined the Chapter 13 years ago. But I know our dedicated volunteers are up to the challenge!



2025 Chequamegon Chapter Awards

Chapter Award Nominations:

2025 NCTA Chapter Honor Award



Derek Ogle

Chequamegon Chapter Vip Award



Joyce Cielecki

Honor Award

Derek Ogle -- Elected to the Board as Co-Western Trail Manager in November 2024. He has done an outstanding job in his first year. He took the lead in updating the Chapter's list of Trail Adopters; helped gather information to update the Chapter's tool and supply inventory, made several trips to pick up or deliver tools and supplies to Mike Trieschmann, Jim Crandall, and Rick Pomerleau/Mary Stenberg; learned how to operate the DR Mower so he could instruct other trail adopters; wrote several instructive memos to all trail adopters, attended Chainsaw Certification training, participated in several Chapter Workdays—taking the lead on a

chainsaw crew during one Workday; maintained his adopted section of the NCT in the Rainbow Lake Wilderness while also helping to clear adjoining sections; and responded quickly to my email questions, instructions and suggestions.

--Nominated by Mel Baughman

VIP Award

Joyce Cielecki – Appointed the Chapter's first Hike Coordinator in fall 2024. In no time at all she made a list

2025 National Park Service Hourly Awards



Tom Piikkila
200 Hours



Rhiannon Harmon
100 Hours



of two hikes per month that covered all the off-road sections of the NCT within the Chapter boundaries. She coordinated with me on dates and times for hikes. She posted full details about hikes on the NCTA Events Calendar and worked with Mary Swank on a poster and news announcement about hikes. She has led most of the hikes so far this year with a couple of exceptions due to her need to care for an ill family member. She collaborated with me to prepare a pre-hike discussion and safety talk with participants and carried a Chapter first aid kit on all hikes. Overall, she has exceeded my expectations for a new Hike Coordinator.

-Nominated by Mel Baughman

The Chequamegon Chapter Leadership would like to thank all the many Chapter VOLUNTEERS for making 2025 such a successful year. Despite frequent storms, a government shutdown, and other obstacles, we have received many compliments on the state of our sections of North Country National Scenic Trail and have managed to increase our Chapter's Membership! An extremely big Thank You too all!