

GRAND TRAVERSE HIKING CLUB SEPTEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

GTHC MEETINGS 2021-22

The Covid epidemic really fouled up our chapter's activities for over the last year. According to my records, we haven't met since March 2020. Since that time, we did not feel that it would be safe to hold an indoor meeting and since the Boardman River Nature Center closed down then, we didn't have any other choice.

Hopefully things have changed and this year things can get back to normal. It would be great to see everyone again.

The Nature Center has reopened and we can resume meeting there. To be overly cautious, in case the next wave of Covid gets out of hand, we have decided to have our September meeting outdoors. On Tuesday, September 21, we will meet at the picnic shelter located just east of the Nature Center. We will have a very short business meeting (welcome back, update on Chapter happenings since last year, etc.) then go for a group hike on the trails around the Nature Center. Sunset is at 7:41 pm that night so we should be back at the trailhead around 8:00.

If Covid settles down by October, we will meet inside the Nature Center. We are working on a program for that night and will advertise it when we get it.

The remaining meeting schedule for the year:

September 21
October 19
November 16
December 12, 2021 (Sunday, hike or ski at Muncie)
January 18, 2022
February 15
March 15
April 19
May 17

Other scheduled events:

Saturday, September 25 - NCT Public Lands Day hike, see details in separate article

Sunday, December 12 - Ski or hike at Muncie, followed by dinner at Peegeo's, information to be published later

Looking forward to seeing everyone again.

NCT PUBLIC LANDS DAY HIKE
Saturday, September 21

Each year, hundreds of thousands of volunteers come together on National Public Lands Day to assist with various projects designed to restore and enhance public parks, forests, waterways and more. North Country National Scenic Trail Day coincides with National Public Lands Day each year, to bring awareness, use and volunteerism specifically to the longest National Scenic Trail in America: the North Country Trail. It is held annually on the fourth Saturday in September, this year being the 25th.

To celebrate National Public Lands Day, the Grand Traverse Hiking Club will lead a hike at the Sand Lakes Quiet Area. We will meet at the Sand Lakes trailhead parking lot located on Broomhead Road at N44°43'24.58", W85°22'25.3". It is 3.7 miles south of M-72 or 4.3 miles north of Supply Road.

To simplify things, this will be a combination out and back and loop hike. This eliminates the need for a shuttle.

I am thinking of doing a hike of either 4.0 or 5.4 miles, depending on what the majority of those who show up desire. If we have enough people, we can split up into two groups and take separate routes. If someone wants an even shorter hike we can point you in the right direction for an out & back hike.

We'll meet at the Sand Lakes trailhead at 9:00 am. Bring a sufficient amount of water as well as your own lunch. We will either eat lunch along the hike or afterwards in the parking lot.

Let's get out on the trail and celebrate!

NPS VIP (Volunteer-in-Parks) PROGRAM

For many years, the GTHC and other chapters of the NCTA have been doing trail work under the management of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) and the National Park Service (NPS). NPS has provided us with the same insurance protection as NPS employees regarding injuries and tort claims. It is very important to note, however, that this means adhering to the same rules and policies that apply to NPS employees, and that the work and services you provide must be consistent with the type of volunteer work you have elected to perform. This is particularly important to help ensure that you, your interests, and your coworkers will be protected in the event of an injury, accident, or other incident.

In 2019, there was a review of the volunteer program by the Regional and Washington offices of the NPS. As a result of their findings, NPS determined that their existing program didn't provide adequate coverage and they must implement new measures to more accurately document who is serving as NPS VIPs, better describe the work that volunteers elect to do, and ensure that each person has made an informed decision about the type of volunteer role that is best suited for them. To accomplish this, NPS VIPs will be asked to read and understand the different types of position descriptions that are available and identify which specific positions they have elected to choose on the Volunteer Service Agreement. It was determined by NPS leadership that our past use of group agreements to document who is serving as an NPS VIP does not adequately assure that each person has been informed of the type of work that might be done, has been made aware of the potential hazards and risks associated with this work, and has been given the opportunity to choose the type of work that is best suited to the individual's unique personal interests and abilities. For complete information on the VIP program, see the Fact Sheet here: [VIP Program Paperwork Fact Sheet 15APR21.pdf \(northcountrytrail.org\)](#)

Each volunteer must complete a Volunteer Service Agreement. It is a four step process:

Step 1

Read the Position Description (PD) and Job Hazard Analyses (JHA) for the position(s) that best fits your interests, skills, and abilities.

Step 2

Once you have determined which positions you're interested in, please print and complete the Volunteer Service Agreement.

Step 3

Send the Volunteer Service Agreement to NPS Volunteer Program Manager Nic Loiseau and she will contact you when she receives the form.

Step 4

Have fun and be safe! Remember to submit your volunteer hours on a regular basis.

For easy step by step instructions to complete the form, click here: [Volunteer-In-Parks Sign-Up Process – North Country Trail Association](#)

Yes, this is more paperwork, but realize it is intended to give us volunteers adequate insurance coverage.

The VIP agreement is required for all NCT volunteers. This includes hike leaders, event planners, Board members, other administrative volunteers, trail crew, trail adopters, sawyers, and just about any one else belong to our chapter.

The NCTA does not yet have an easy way to enforce compliance with the VIP requirements. Eventually, they will check up on people who submit their quarterly volunteer time to verify that they have signed the VIP form. Also it will be a prerequisite for the sawyer training course.

Please join the other 15 members of the GTHC who have already signed and submitted the Volunteer Service Agreement and be safe while working on the trail.

National Park Service Volunteer Awards

Each year the National Park Service awards volunteers who reach certain volunteer hour milestones of 100, 200, 400, 1000, 2500, 4000, and 10,000 hours. This year's awards were announced at the Virtual NCTA Celebration on August 5.

The following members of the Grand Traverse Hiking Club were recognized:

100 hours milestone (Nametag and Certificate)

Paul Foley
James Smart

200 hours milestone (NCT Water Bottle)

Dan Caviston
John Gerty

1,000 hours milestone (Personalized NCT Vest)

Debby Page
Patty Warner

Congratulations Paul, Jim, Dan, John, Debby, and Patty for all your hard work. Volunteer work is what keeps the NCT an enjoyable trail to hike. We have received many comments from hikers appreciating how well our 100 miles of the NCT is maintained. Normally these awards are handed out at the Celebration. Since this year's Celebration was virtual, rather than in person, the awards will be mailed to you soon.

If you would like to see the presentation ceremony for entire list of award recipients from all 37 NCT chapters and affiliates, click here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kjUCFqHAI1>

The video also includes a series of trail work photos in which a few from our chapter are included. Thanks for submitting the photos, Patty.

Those six individuals listed above reached these milestones by quarterly reporting their volunteer hours to NCTA. Volunteer time includes attending Board meetings, trail crew work, adopt-a-trail, sawyer work, road cleanup, event leading, training, and any other activity that benefits the NCT or promotes the trail or our chapter.

It is important that volunteers report their volunteer time to NCTA. The National Park Service provides funding to each of the eleven National Scenic Trails based on each one's percentage of the total volunteer time submitted. Therefore, the more time that NCTA chapters submit, the more federal funding we receive, funds that can be used for trail materials, equipment and to meet other trail related expenses.

NCTA VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2021

Each year, the NCTA honors volunteers for their hard work on and for the North Country Trail.

The awards ceremony is held each year during the annual NCTA Celebration. Those who receive these awards have given exceptional service, often many years' worth, to the North Country Trail and the North Country Trail Association. There are 16 diverse award categories to represent the myriad of efforts put forth for the Trail. Descriptions of these award categories can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ITdPSiUmN89Pka3yhNlyrjdW7uV8wFwn/view>

From what I can tell from looking at the list of past recipients, I think only three awards are given annually in each category. This covers all 37 NCTA chapters and affiliates.

This year our some of our chapter's members received one of these prestigious awards. They include:

Thomas L. Gilbert Lifetime Achievement

An individual, in recognition of 15+ years of true dedication, exceptional service and outstanding contributions toward the dream of the North Country Trail, or the success and growth of the NCTA, not just local service. Service may be performed in a voluntary or paid capacity. **Awarded to Dick Naperala**

Trail Maintainer

A volunteer who has demonstrated exceptional dedication or achievements over a three-year period or more in maintaining or restoring preexisting Trail segment(s).

Awarded to Jerry Marek

Sweep

A volunteer, for tireless work and achievements behind the scenes on behalf of the Trail or the NCTA over a three-year period or more. **Awarded to Darlene Warren**
Congratulations Dick, Jerry, and Darlene for all you have done for NCT and GTHC. Also, thank you to those of you who nominated and helped with the nomination process for these award candidates.

GTHC BOARD POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The Grand Traverse Hiking Club by laws call for a Board of up to 15 people elected by the membership. Four of these officers are designated as President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The remaining Board members (up to eleven) are at large members.

In addition to the above mentioned elected officials, there are other positions occupied by at large members, including Trail Coordinator, Trail Town Advisor, Membership, Communications, Publicity, Trail Communicator, Tool Trailer Manager, and Programs Manager.

We have some vacant positions on the Board which we would like to fill. They include: President, Secretary, Membership, Publicity, and Programs. A brief description of these jobs:

President - Preside over meetings, direct activities of Chapter, spokes person and liaison to NCTA

Secretary - Maintain permanent written record of meetings, provide notices for meetings, oversee disposition and custody of corporate records.

Membership - Contact members whose membership has expired by over three months (NCTA contacts them earlier), and send welcome form letter to new and renewing members (personalized notice in addition to what NCTA sends)

Publicity – Manage Facebook page, post events to Ticker calendar, create and distribute press releases as needed, post chapter news to NCTA website and North Star.

Programs - Arrange for speakers for monthly programs, 8 times per year. Other Board members can provide assistance in finding programs.

Previous Board members holding these positions will be available to assist the new members in transition.

The most urgent need we have now is for a Secretary, a position we have been struggling by without for over a year.

In addition to the open positions listed above, we can always use at large members.

If you would like to take an active part in the management of our Chapter or need something to boost your resume, please consider volunteering for one of the available Board positions.

Arlen Matson 1934 - 2021

In May of this year, 2021, we lost a dear friend to cancer, Arlen Matson. Arlen was a dedicated trail leader, and founder of the GTHC. We all fondly remember his humorous stories and his detailed trail reports given at our monthly meetings. A true modern day Pathfinder.

I feel very fortunate to have known Arlen. We first met in the early 70's. We were both teaching 6th grade in the Traverse City Public Schools, but it wasn't until 1993, when he introduced me to the NCT, that I really got to know and admire Arlen. In 1994, he facilitated the founding of the Grand Traverse Hiking Club. For the next 27 years, we worked side by side on the NCT. During that time I got to know and admire Arlen for his love of nature and his dedication to his family, his church, his country, his teaching career and to the NCT/ GTHC.

Under Arlen's leadership as Trail Coordinator and with the help of many volunteers, the NCT in our region has been transformed into one of the most beautiful trails in lower Michigan. In the early days much of the national trail was on the Shore to Shore Horse trail and two track. This did not make great hiking. The main goal of the club was to create a well maintained, scenic pathway through the state forest. This involved many hours exploring new routes, writing up trail proposals, working with the DNR, and building new trails and bridges.

One thing Arlen really enjoyed was laying out a new trail. This involved studying topographic maps for scenic rivers, creeks and lakes and a lot of bushwhacking. He had a keen sense of where to put a new trail. He looked for unique trees, boulders and overlooks. After several walks through an area, he would flag the new path. One of Arlen's trade marks was to place the trail between two large trees.

Arlen volunteered thousands of hours to the NCT over the last 27 years. He organized trail crews to build trails, bridges, and boardwalks. He wrote grants, purchased trail tools, a tool trailer and brush mowers. He also established an Adopt-A-Trail Program and Sector Coordinator program and many other things too many to mention.

A few days before Arlen passed, I had a phone conversation with him. We reminisced about our accomplishments on the NCT. Arlen shared with me that his favorite sections of the trail were the Hodenpyl Pond Trail, Fife Lake Loop, and the Valley of the Giants. In appreciation for Arlen's countless hours of dedication a new bench and plaque is being placed in a beautiful, tranquil spot along 22 Creek in the Valley of the Giants. Arlen's family chose the location and plaque. Go for a hike, check out the area and sit awhile and reflect on Arlen's life.

Over the years, Arlen has been recognized for his many years of service and accomplishments by the NCTA. He has received the Distinguished Service Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award. I know Arlen was always very grateful to receive these awards but he also told me his greatest delight is

seeing people using and enjoying the Trail. There is nothing like a beautiful wilderness trail to bring people closer to nature.

When I think about Arlen's life, it reminds me about a quotation I heard many years ago. "What you do for yourself dies with you, what you do for others lives on." Arlen's life was one of Service and Dedication to his family, friends, church, country, students and the NCT. His legacy will live on for many, many years to come.

Richard Naperala