Jordan Valley 45° Chapter Newsletter

November 2026

President's Message

James Howell pattenlake2620@gmail.com

The morning dew is glistening on the leaves and grass. The birds busy themselves with waking the valley to a new day. The smell of coffee is gently wafting through the air. People are rustling in tents and poking heads from the circle of campers. Others notice the muffled sounds of cars approaching down the steep drive to National Fish Hatchery. The base camp for the work of improving the Trail through the Jordan Valley.

The delicious aromas are originating from the small screen pavilion on the north side of the Fish Hatchery property. Soon a line of volunteers snakes their way down to the pavilion, mugs in hand. Inside the pavilion a small but mighty group of individuals are putting the finishing touches on the breakfast for the 25 - 30 volunteers working on the Trail. This work will continue throughout the day as the Food Crew prepares breakfast, lunch and dinner for the hungry and appreciative Volunteers.
This is the start of a daily ritual which will play out over the next four days as the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter repairs and improves the North Country Scenic National Trail.

Everyone always enjoys good food in a group setting. This is true today as it was over 150 years ago in the lumber camps that dominated the Jordan Valley. It builds community and long-lasting friendships. People love to share a bowl of chili, enjoy a cup of coffee, or sit on a log in the woods, chewing a sandwich and discussing what's next on the work list.

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Important Links:

- Click here for link to Report Volunteer Hours
- Click here for link to NCTA Events Calendar
- Click here for link to Jordan Valley 45° page on NCTA website
- Jordan Valley 45° is on FaceBook - click here

Upcoming Hikes

November 21st – River Rd. Sports Complex to Petoskey State park

December 19th – TBD

President's Message Continued

People love to work on the Trail when they know there are meals at the end of the day; it brings them closer to the Chapter, acknowledges their importance and gives them a reward for a job well done.

This July the Chapter held a four-day trail project within the Jordan Valley Pathway loop. The nine Food Crew members prepared breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day. Breakfast and dinner were served in the pavilion, which also served as the meeting place for assignments and safety sessions. Lunches were delivered to the various work groups in the field. They called it Valley-dash!

At breakfast not only coffee, but a variety of foods that included scrambled eggs, cereal and yogurt were served. Each day the Food Crew Volunteers prepared. Lunch consisted of wraps, with choice of meat, chips, cookies and a refill of water. Dinner featured pre-meal refreshments and snacks, and a camper's gourmet meal each day. After dessert everyone would share stories, had time to unwind, and enjoyed the evening.



The JV-45º meals are prepared by the Chapter's Blue Blaze Cafe. Blue Blaze Cafe? What's that, you ask? The Blue Blaze Cafe consists of Volunteers who organize the meals for our multiple day work projects and other events. For the past five years, the JV-45º chapter has organized one or two multiple day work projects to tackle larger projects. And coinciding with these projects, the Blue Blaze Cafe provides trail Volunteers meals for the duration of the project.

Now the Blue Blaze Cafe moniker was coined on the Saturday of the Work weekend, by one of the Volunteers preparing food, deciding a more fitting name was needed for their group. The Volunteer using a piece of cardboard for sign material, painted a small sign announcing "Blue Blaze Cafe" and posted it on the door to the pavilion, it was an instant hit.

Well, this year it was time to honor those Volunteers who are so appreciated by all the JV-45º Volunteers. At our annual October Volunteer Luncheon, the Chapter leadership honored all our Blue Blaze Cafe Volunteers with tee-shirts, a new sign, and truly heartfelt Thank You. They are truly appreciated by all who attend both our work projects and annual events. Hats off to the Blue Blaze Cafe, truly the best food on the whole NCT.

Jim H



September 19th – Group Hike Report – Hatchery to Warner Creek

Story by Bob Courtois - bcourtois@comcast.net

A lovely hike today! We hiked 7.75 miles from the Jordan River Fish Hatchery to the Warner Creek Pathway trailhead on M32. There were 15 hikers plus a cute yellow lab named Tuck. The weather was perfect, cool and mostly sunny.



We all met up at the M32 trailhead and then drove to the Jordan Valley National Fish Hatchery. Our first three quarters of a mile (not on NCT) was on Jordan River Road to Three Tubes Bridge (not an official name but we called it "Three Tubes" before the 2025 bridge replaced the three culverts). A nice surprise, we saw a large salmon at the bridge. Apparently, the salmon are starting to run.

From there, we hiked two miles to an old beaver pond. The trail had been cleaned up quite a bit, but could use a little weed whipping. At the beaver pond, Doug painted fresh blazes to mark the turn in the trail. Some hikers were missing the turn and were climbing across the remnants of a collapsed bridge to the original trail that had been rerouted several years ago. The newer trail is up the hill along the ridge that circumnavigates the beaver pond and the many springs feeding it.



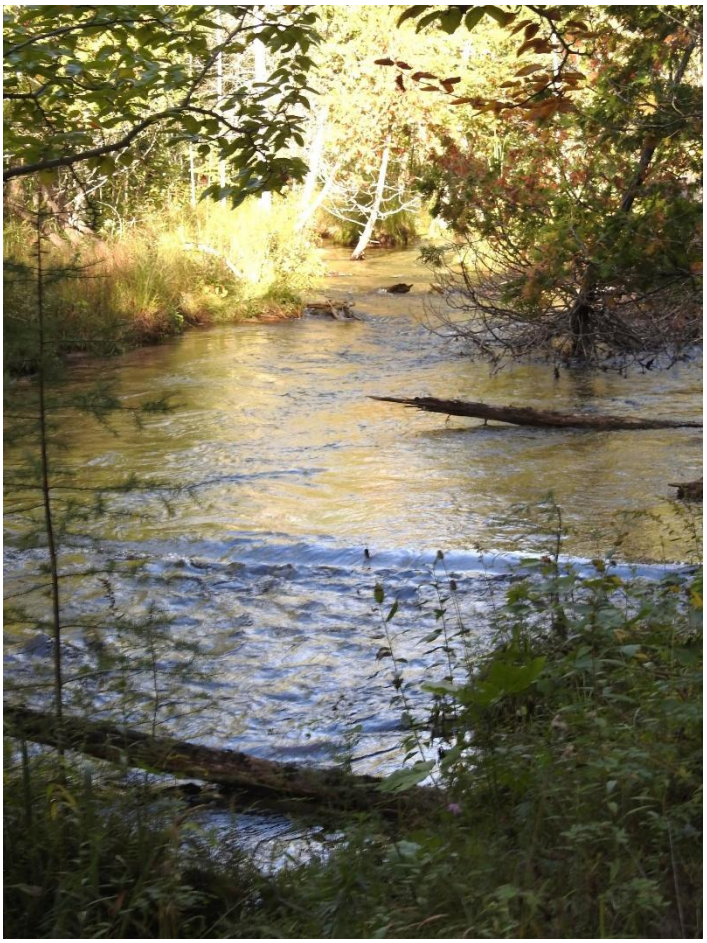
After passing the pond we proceeded a mile to the area under Deadman's Hill. One of the most interesting spots in the entire J45, this section is full of springs along the Deadman's rough hillside and above the Jordan River. In a July work weekend, about twenty volunteers repaired and replaced several puncheons over wet spots, which greatly improved trail safety. The work crew also tore down a dilapidated old viewing platform, and the materials have been cached for future repairs.

This area is part of a three-mile loop-hike that starts at Deadman's Hill Overlook, runs a half mile downhill to a register box, runs under Deadman's Hill before a half mile uphill return up to the Jordan River Pathway (JRP).

Although not part of the NCT, J45 volunteers also maintain about eight miles of the twenty-mile JRP that does not share the NCT. While passing though, Doug got stung by a bee or hornet and a minute later Edison got stung twice. The Stings were very painful and produced big hives.



From the register box it's a mile to Jordan River Road. At JRR, we did a short side hike to another new bridge over the river. At this spot it's a terrific view of the ridges along the east side of the valley and there is a large pool where the salmon (and bald eagles) hang out in October. We then headed north out of the Jordan Valley watershed to O'Brien and the Warner Creek watershed. Of course, we stopped to check out the "Beaver Deceiver" at the beaver dam that creates O'Brien Pond.



Although we did not see them, it appears that beavers have been at work placing mud along the top of the dam. Beavers would be welcome news as the dam is needed to retain the pond and we have not seen evidence of beavers in years.

We then skipped the extra two-mile hike on the Warner Creek Pathway, and returned directly a mile to the trailhead on M32.

A remarkable observation about the section from the unnamed beaver pond to O'Brien Pond are all the reroutes, puncheons, boardwalks and bridges. All of these projects involved dozens of volunteers and thousands of hours. All of the trail and structures require maintenance and, although there are official adopters for each section of trail, a significant amount of maintenance is done by roving crews and by people walking the trails.



After taking drivers back to their cars at the Fish Hatchery, nine off the group met at D&K Bar and Grill (formerly known as Larry's) for lunch. The food was excellent and Karen (owner) told us anecdotes about the business and local land owners.

Crucible Endurance Hike

Story by Doug Seaney dseaney@hotmail.com and Bob Courtois bcourtois@comcast.com

Our chapter was again honored to host the Crucible Endurance hike for the 4th year. This is a group based in southern Michigan that has two events each Year, one in Waterloo-Pinkney and one in the Jordan Valley. This year four of our members signed up to participate in the hike.



Prior to the event many hours of labor were contributed to get the trail in tip top shape. We worked on several very wet areas and covered the entire route to clear down trees.

We had many helpers out on several different days and different locations so I wasn't able to get a group picture. We received many compliments on our trail maintaining skills.



This was the fourth JVP hike for Crucible and, once again, Jack & Bobbie Turner cleared an area on their 80 plus acres on Turner Road at the edge of the Jordan Valley.

Jack is a great host. He mowed the camping and parking area and hauled in several loads of firewood for a fire pit at the hike's finish line. Jack entertained everyone with tidbits about his family and the history of the area. Amenities that were set up in the "Crucible Village" included port-a-potties, the fire pit, service tents and a food truck.



The 35-degree weather forecast for Friday night, no doubt, reduced the number of campers this year but, by sunrise, 325 shivering hikers had arrived and were raring to go. Although cold at the start, everyone warmed up quickly and most people were peeling off layers of clothing. Temperatures quickly climbed to the 50's with low wind and humidity. The sunny weather made it perfectly comfortable for hiking.





In the continuing theme of missing a group shot, here we are with Bob photo shopped in 😊.



After opening remarks by Justin & Carrie, Bob Courtois talked briefly about the NCT and the work of its volunteers. Approximately 325 hikers were then released in four "flight" groups. All hikers were registered with ID numbers and accounted for at each of three aid stations (at Three Tubes Bridge, Pinney Bridge and Landslide Overlook) and at the finish line back in the village. One hiker got her directions mixed up and hiked the trail in the wrong direction! She did not discover this until she arrived at a check station from the wrong direction. Luckily with the great tracking system the organizers use they were able to account for her and let her continue on. Participants were given 12 hours to complete the circuit and the last hikers ambled in just after sundown. Around 10 hikers bailed out during the hike due to minor injuries or fatigue.

Once again, Crucible made a generous donation to the North Country Trail Association. Crucible donates their profits to various causes, over $35,000 since 2019. Most of the regular hikers from Crucible hail from southern Michigan and nearby states (IL, IN, OH and NY), even had one from Sault Ontario this year.

More shots of trail work prior to the event. Sorry, no group picture as we were scattered around several different locations on the trail, over the course of 3-5 days.



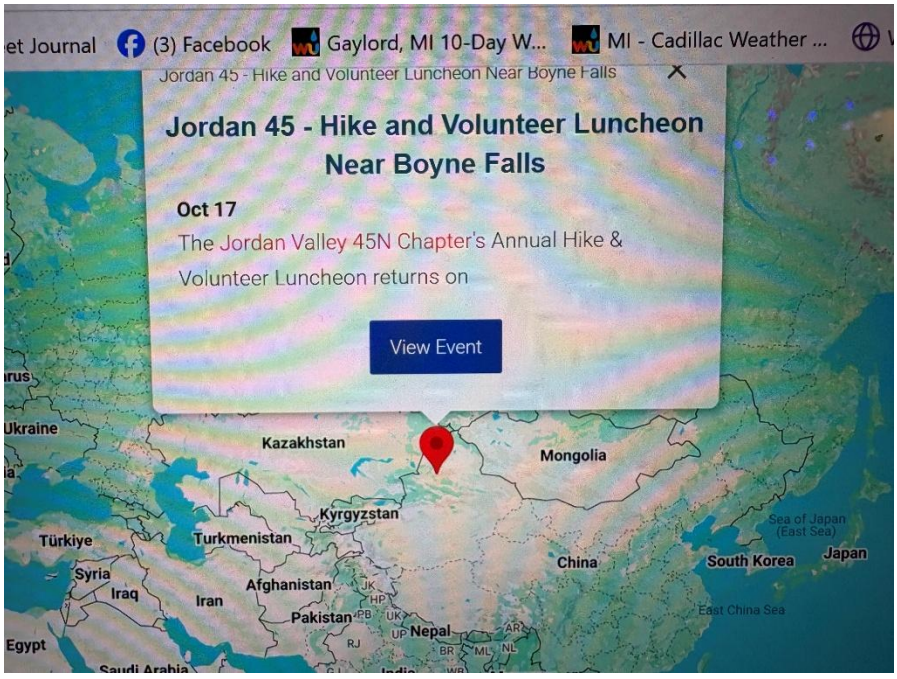




October 17th – Group Hike Report – Dobleski Rd. to Warner Creek TH & Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

Story by Bob Courtois - bcourtois@comcast.net

Twenty-one hikers and three dogs gathered at the Warner Creek Trailhead and, at 10 O'clock, all were shuttled to the trail's junction on Dobleski Rd. No one that we are aware of ended up in China. (Inside joke… who would have thought forgetting one little **(–)** in the GPS coordinates would send me to the other side of the world?) The majority of people were able to leave their cars at the Warner parking lot (hikes end) and that left only shuttle drivers parked on Dobleski. The morning started out crisp and cold, but sunny and only a light breeze. Temperatures overnight got below 30 and the predicted 1" of snow did not materialize. So, it was a cold start but after the first mile, mostly uphill, people were peeling off layers to stay cool. In contrast to everyone else, Kevin was only wearing a tee shirt!



Just west of US131 we passed through the half mile reroute that was completed in 2025. The reroute eliminated some nasty ups and downs that were thick with briars. This trail section, adopted by Jen Reynolds, is in excellent shape. Because of the thick vegetation, it is challenging to keep clear but it's a world of difference from only two years ago. (For a future project, Jim wants a tunnel under US131.)



From US131 to M32 it's very hilly and is a decent workout but the cool weather kept it comfortable. The recent damp weather produced a high number of mushrooms and the mostly sunny day really brought out the peak colors. At the high points on the hills, tree growth has effectively eliminated the views, but recent high winds knocked down leaves and has opened it up quite a bit. Evidence of the 2025 ice storm remains with topped trees and some hanging widow makers.

By the end of the hike, the large group was stretched out along a mile of trail. In anticipation of food at the volunteer luncheon, the group skipped the Warner Creek Loop. However, Rich Borowicz and his wife Anne who've recently adopted the loop skipped the hike and just came out to clear the trail. They then came to the luncheon.



Following the hike, everyone (plus 12 non-hikers) arrived at the beautiful Chandler Twp. Hall for our annual Volunteer Luncheon to acknowledge and thank all those who run the J45 Chapter and who build and maintain our 80 miles of trail. Every year dozens of people adopt trail sections, participate in scheduled and ad hoc workdays and, on their own, see work needed and just quietly do it.

Our fearless leader, Jim Howell started out the meeting with a recognition of the efforts of the newly named Blue Blaze Café (BBC). This terrific group provides meals at various work weekends, the volunteer luncheon and annual meeting. In addition to a BBC sign, these volunteers received specially made shirts with their names on the back. Then we all enjoyed a taco bar feast and plenty of desserts.





Jim Howell also talked about the many 2026 workdays (scheduled and ad hoc) and the focus this year on the Jordan Valley. Dan Dueweke reported that, currently, there is only one section by Petoskey that needs to be adopted. Bob Courtois summarized the monthly hikes and the fourth annual Crucible Events hike in October. Crucible signed up 325 people to hike 20 miles in the Jordan Valley. Crucible gave high praise to JV45° chapter for the condition of the valley and they also made a $2,500 donation to the NCTA.

Buckeye Trail Hike Fest – Salt Fork State Park Ohio

Story by Doug Seaney – dseaney@hotmail.com

A group of 10 from our chapter attended the Buckeye trail annual conference / Hike Fest in September. Officially we had 9 plus one extra Courtois but Bob and Bill are nearly interchangeable, so we adopted him as an honorary JV45° attendee. We managed to get nearly all of us together for a group shot, but I had to add Rich as he was hanging out with his new friend and couldn't be found for the photo op 😊.



The conference was well attended with a strong representation of NCTA members and many from Michigan. There was a chili potluck on Friday night with lots of socializing and trail talk. We were able to meet in person some folks that we only knew through internet / social media websites. They told us Ohio chili is meat sauce served over noodles… I thought that was spaghetti, but maybe that was too hard for the Buckeye's to spell? (I used to be a Buckeye so I feel I can poke some fun). There were several options for group hikes, some long and some short, as well as natural



resource education hikes and something called forest bathing, (I don't know, ask my wife or Evelyn). Transportation to the hikes was a group effort planned on the fly, most hikes didn't have a bus option. This seems like it may be the plan for future trail-fests as transportation is a huge expense and can be a logistical headache. One hike was to Hosak's Cave which is not so much a cave as it is a large overhanging rock formation. Another hike was to The Kennedy Stone House. Bigfoot seems to be a "Big" deal in this area of Ohio. There was a bonfire on Saturday night that was complete with stories of Bigfoot encounters. After the conference some stayed an extra day and others dispersed to sightsee and do some hiking on the trip home.





Save the Date!
January 9th

JV45° Chapter Annual meeting will be held at Hayes Township Hall 9195 Major Douglas Sloan Road, Charlevoix, MI 49720. We will be having lunch and our business meeting starting at noon.



BUILD IT

Let's Get To Work



By Duane Lawton
delawton@torchlake.com

Following the successful July work weekend in the Jordan Valley, we have been back to do finishing touches. On September 26-27 several of us worked on puncheon at the unnamed spring and at a wet spot halfway to Pinney Bridge. Then on October 20, Bob C. and I went in to put non-skid pads on some of the puncheon at unnamed spring. We also laid out additional puncheon that's halfway between there and Cascade. That still needs to be screwed together. I know that Bob also has done some finishing below Deadman's Hill.

Had a "gaps" review meeting with Paul Gagnon (NCTA Director of Trail Protection) and Kenny Wawsczyk on November 5th. We have several opportunities that have been pending landowner agreement for years. Kenny will be trying to get a DNR permit for a minor reroute in the Jordan Valley to reduce Jordan River Road walk by a couple hundred yards—hopefully we can do it in 2027.

Trail Coordinator Update

Dan Dueweke -dandueweke@gmail.com

It's the first week of November and I'm raking leaves in a T-shirt on a 70° day. If this el-Nino weather pattern continues, JV45 may get some clear ground hiking and trail maintenance opportunities well beyond our usual fall freeze up. Walking your sections during low or no snow conditions with a lopper and hand saw can certainly be beneficial on trails where the saplings are encroaching and the path is getting "squeezed". If you find a November storm blowdown and want some help with it, send me a note and we can get it cleared.

As for the hunters, I'd give them their two weeks to fill a tag, and don't forget to wear some blaze orange when you head back out.

Mark your Calendars for the 32nd Annual Quiet Adventures Symposium!

Saturday, March 6th, 2027. For more information - https://quietadventures.org/

This is a great annual event that is well attended by several chapters of the NCTA. We have had representatives from our local chapter for many years. It used to be called Quiet Waters but has evolved into Quiet Adventures to embrace other human powered outdoor sports, hiking, biking, paddling, fishing etc. If you are interested in attending as a worker at the NCTA booth, Kevin Whitley has attended several of these and has offered to answer any questions you may have. His e-mail is kjwtorchlake@gmail.com and his cell is 231-676-1400.



JV45 Leadership Meeting
August 27th 2026 – Landings Restaurant, Ironton MI 5:15pm

The Leadership meeting was held at the Landings in Ironton. There were no action items, but lots of discussion around planning for future work projects. Also discussed the huge success of the July work project and remaining loose ends to be completed.

- **Presidents Report by Jim Howell:**
- Chapter Info (as of 7/30/26)
  - Current active membership 192 (last month 194)
  - Chapter finances $12,657.57

- $708 received from member semi-annual donation
- $1,368.12 expended for Jordan Valley work project.

- **Up Coming Events**
  - Trail Adopter Luncheon Oct 17, 2026:
  - Annual Meeting: 1/9/2027 location Hayes (Charlevoix County) Twp Hall
  - Crucible Hike October 2-4.

CURRENT JV45° GOVERNING BOARD

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