



Managing Your NCTA Memberships FAQ

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Membership Matters

Do our volunteers or trail users need to be members to get involved? No. Membership matters, but it is only one of many ways to support the Trail and Association's mission.

How does a Chapter benefit from membership? Membership provides the Association's Chapters with funding to carry out their work. When an individual or family joins a Chapter, \$12 of the membership cost is designated to that Chapter.

How does the whole Trail benefit from membership? Membership funds outreach initiatives across the Trail. It keeps maps updated and free, it underwrites programs like the Hike 100 Challenge, Next Generation Coalition, and JEDI, and it makes the North Star magazine possible. Membership ensures every mile of the Trail is maintained and protected through advocacy. An exceptional trail experience for everyone is possible because of memberships

Are memberships annual? Yes. Your membership starts on the date your payment is processed and continues for one full year. The NCTA will alert you when your membership is up for renewal.

How do people join or renew memberships? This can be done at northcountrytrail.org/join-renew or via direct mail. Membership website links and remittance envelopes are included in all renewal notices.

Can someone be a member of multiple Chapters? No, the NCTA bylaws state individuals can only have a membership with one Chapter. But individuals can volunteer, hike, make gifts, or request to receive multiple Chapter newsletters as ways to stay connected.

Can at-large members volunteer for a Chapter or with the Association? Yes. Remember an individual does not have to be a member of a Chapter, or of the Association, to get involved. The Trail welcomes everyone to hike, join, or volunteer on a Trail project, committee, or in the Lowell office. We do recommend volunteers join the National Park Service (NPS) Volunteer-in-Parks (VIP) program, which provides volunteer protection and annual recognition.

Is there an option to pay monthly for my membership? Yes! The Mile Makers Club is a cost-effective way to make a long-term impact for the Trail and the Association. The minimum amount for a Mile Makers Club membership is \$9/month, though you can customize your monthly amount for limitless possibilities. Mile Makers Club membership renews automatically each year unless indicated otherwise. Learn more at northcountrytrail.org/mile-makers-club.

Chapter Funding and Reporting

What is the difference between a membership and a member? The Association has [nine membership levels](#). There can be multiple members under one membership if joining at the Family level or higher. This provides a better representation of how many people are involved with a Chapter.

How many people can be included in a Family membership? People who are living in the same household may be listed in a Family membership. Any membership level \$55 or more can include family members.

Is there a benefit for a couple to purchase individual memberships instead of a family one? Not really. A Chapter would be gaining an extra \$12 but in doing so it would cost twice as much to maintain the membership (two times the *North Star* copies, administrative support, etc.) and there is a greater chance of Chapter Report errors. A better route is to join with a Family membership and give an additional gift to a Chapter.

Can a person designate their full membership to a Chapter? No, an individual can join a Chapter by selecting any of the nine membership levels. If an individual joins a Chapter and wishes for more than the designated \$12 to go to a Chapter, they can give an additional gift to a Chapter.

What are Chapter payouts based on and when are they issued? Chapter payouts are based on the Chapter's number of memberships and not each person included in that membership (if it is a Family membership). The membership count occurs on January 15 each year and funding is based on the number of active memberships on that date. Chapters receive this funding twice a year: June and December.

How will a Chapter know the status of a membership? Monthly Chapter Reports include the total number of active memberships, members names, and those who are lapsing (including renewal date) will be highlighted. Lapsing members remain on your report for 90 days after our third renewal attempt and are then removed.

What is a lapsed membership and what happens to them? A lapsed membership is one that has not responded to any renewal notices. Like you, we want to stay connected with people who have shown their support for the Trail so we continue to send the *North Star* and Blue Blaze Bulletin (e-news) for 90 days after our third and last mailed renewal notice has been sent. We also invite lapsed memberships to return during our end-of-year and spring appeals, as well as our fall *My NCT* Membership Drive. We keep membership information for seven years before archiving.

How and when are people notified of their membership status? The first notification is sent by a clearly identified email on the first of each month. This is followed by direct mail that includes a remittance envelope, sent on/near the 15th of each month. The Association is in communication with individuals the month prior to renewal date, the month of, and the month after renewal timeframe has passed. For example, memberships with August renewal dates are notified in July, August, and September.

Why do some people receive a notice after they have renewed their membership? We do our best to update the status each month before sending a notification but there are times when a person's renewal crosses with a notice or Chapter report. If a membership status is in question please contact NCTA staff.

How can Chapters help? The best way to grow membership is to retain members, and we do that by strengthening relationships. When a new person joins, invite them to an upcoming event or hike. When someone renews, send them a thank you email. If someone is lapsing, reach out to let them know how important they are to the work you are doing. Remember some of our lapsing memberships may be a timing issue and you won't know that until speaking with them. In those cases, simply thank them and know that it will be updated on the next report. There are many great things happening in each Chapter so you are never alone in your work - people are eager to share their best practices.

Building Relationships

Can people purchase gift memberships? Yes, giving a gift membership is a great way to raise awareness of the Trail. The gift recipient will receive a notice of their membership.

What do new memberships receive? A hard-copy welcome package that includes a membership and NCTA sticker, a thank you note, a bookmark, and a special welcome letter with helpful tips and invitations to get more involved.

What do renewing memberships receive? A thank you package that includes a letter, a NCTA and collectable membership sticker.

Gift Designations

How can a person make a gift? Philanthropic gifts, which are not memberships, are another great way to support the Trail. Gifts can be made to the Association and can be designated to Chapters as well. Learn more on the [NCTA Ways to Give](#) web page.

If I am a sustaining (monthly) donor, will I be allowed to designate this as my membership? Yes, for a minimum of \$10 a month we can honor your intention for membership. Unfortunately, our current software restrictions only allow a sustaining option on our "Give" page. If you are making a sustaining (monthly) gift that is intended to be a membership, please let us know. We will also reach out to confirm this with you and apologize in advance for the inconvenience.

What happens if I make a gift but really meant it to be a membership? No problem. Please contact the NCTA Database and Membership Administrator or the Data Entry Specialist to make any changes. Contact information can be found at northcountrytrail.org/staff.

What if the Chapter learns someone makes a gift but was really meant to join/renew a membership? During the transitional year (2021-2022) we will make sure an individual's intention is honored. This will include a review of the individual's membership history to make sure we are applying the funds correctly. Chapters who believe they have individuals who made a gift with the intention of joining a Chapter can ask the individual to contact NCTA staff directly. NCTA can not release gift amounts or make changes to donor records without direct approval from the individual.

Growing Membership

Can our Chapter reach out to at-large members or program participants, like the Hike 100 Challenge? Without the approval of the individual, contact information cannot be shared with Chapters. We are building pathways for at-large members and program participants to learn more about Chapters. This is one reason the new calendar system is so important to the Association. Communications are encouraging new members, at-large

members, and program participants to check out what’s happening in their area and get involved. For programs like the Hike 100 Challenge, we are adding a “please have a local Chapter contact me” approval section to registration forms and will forward that information as appropriate.

What is NCTA doing to help grow membership? Our focus is on retaining memberships by strengthening relationships with current members and acquiring new memberships through outreach. This includes working with Chapters for a successful *My NCT* Membership Drive, improving our communication with branded membership materials, keeping our Chapter Outreach Kits current, showcasing Chapter and Association events through a new calendar system.

We look forward to working together in creating and sustaining a robust NCTA membership to meet the needs of today and leads to a bright future for the Trail.

Can our Chapter process new memberships or renewals when approached by an interested party (e.g. at an event)? Yes. If you have a device with internet access (e.g. iPad, laptop) we recommend you walk them through the online form at northcountrytrail.org/join-renew. If internet access is unavailable and the new/renewing, offer an NCTA membership remittance envelope, which includes fields to write in personal information and credit card information. They can then be sealed for security, and mailed to NCTA Headquarters for processing. Request these envelopes from hq@northcountrytrail.org.

References

| Level | Annual Membership |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Individual | \$40 |
| *Family | \$55 |
| Trail Scout | \$100 |
| Trail Angel | \$250 |
| Trail Builder | \$500 |
| Trail Blazer | \$1,000 |
| Trail Guardian | \$2,500 |
| Trail Leader | \$5,000 |
| Trail Champion | \$10,000 |

*A Family membership covers one household. Any membership level \$55 or more can include family members.

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For additional staff members and their contact information, visit northcountrytrail.org/staff.