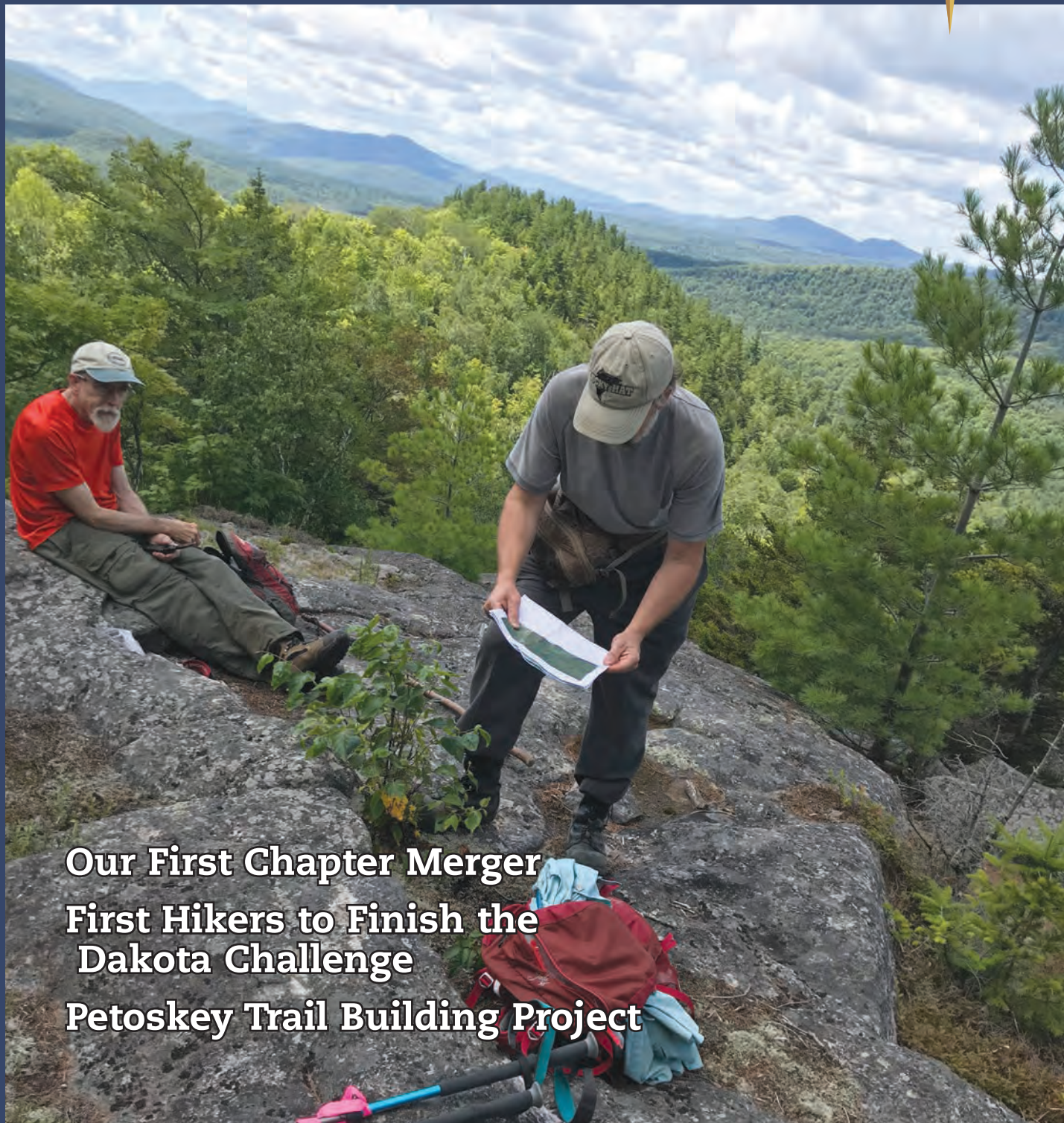


October-December, 2019

The Magazine of the
North Country Trail Association

Volume 38, No. 4

north star



Our First Chapter Merger
First Hikers to Finish the
Dakota Challenge
Petoskey Trail Building Project

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About the Cover:

Dan Smith (ADK- Cold River Chapter) and Steve Hayes from ADK-Onondaga reached the summit of Jones Hill during our trail building project up the east side. "ADK" equals the Adirondack Mountain Club in New York.

Photo: Mary Coffin

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Trailhead

Tim Mowbray, President

The seasons are changing again and it's a great time to be out on the North Country Trail to enjoy the beauty of the fall season. As we wrap up our summer and fall maintenance work and the building of new Trail, we should all take time to enjoy the wonderful sights and sounds along the way. Along one of our favorite sections of the Trail in Wisconsin we regularly see a variety of wildlife and often meet interesting hikers from around the country to share a little information about their use of the NCT.



Photo: Sue Mowbray

As you may know, it's been a busy year so far with passage of the federal legislation for the reroute to include the Border Route, Kekekabic and Superior Hiking Trails, and a new trail section into Vermont to meet up with a trailhead on the Appalachian Trail. Our Advocacy Committee is now turning its attention to some Congressional legislation that will hopefully bring parity to how the federal government distributes dollars to all the scenic trails across the country and provide level financial support to all of these organizations.

The Board of Directors, staff and Association members welcome a new staff person, Nancy Brozek, as Director of Development and Communications for the NCTA. Nancy will continue the work to develop financial and partner resources and provide communication to our volunteers and Chapters. Nancy starts her position at a key point in time when we are working to develop a new strategic plan for the organization, and we continue to expand the efforts to complete more sections of Trail along the route.

As the fiscal year 2019 enters the fourth quarter and we begin closing out our financial reporting for the year, we also begin the process of budgeting for 2020. Our budget for the new year will be reconciled with the goals coming from our strategic planning activity and input from Chapters and Affiliates. All of our organizational committees are gearing up to move ahead with revised goals and objectives to keep the organization moving ahead. The Governance Committee is in search mode for future board members and working on policy and procedure refinements to keep our organization focused on accomplishing our mission. Other committees continue to focus on activity that builds the Trail, recruits volunteers and supports the organization with community and donor involvement.

NCTA MISSION: The North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners. ✧

Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director

Not a day goes by that something inspirational doesn't come across my desk, stories about how the North Country Trail has impacted peoples' lives, how hiking has healed their souls, strengthened their bodies and provided an experience that is unparalleled. But my favorite stories are the ones about our community, how thousands of volunteers are working, day in and day out, to further our mission so more people have the chance to experience all the Trail offers. It's your stories that light my fire and rejuvenate my spirit every day.



Photo: Andrea Ketchmark

The North Country Trail community is made of thousands of people working across thousands of miles, all part of a team working toward a singular goal, to complete and protect the nation's longest National Scenic Trail. Each person gives so someone else can experience what we know well, that the Trail can change lives. You pay it forward with your actions and your stories inspire others to do the same. We are forever grateful.

In every issue of the *North Star*, we share those stories hoping they will bring as much inspiration to you as they do to us. In this issue you'll read about Calvin Kangas, the President of our Ni-Miikanaake Chapter. He gave his time and energy to the Trail up until the very end and leaves a legacy that won't be forgotten. And Libby Wheatley, who made sure the North Country Trail was taken care of after she was gone by including us in her will. These gifts of time, dedication and funding will propel us into the future.

You'll also read stories about looking forward. Next year the North Country National Scenic Trail turns 40 and all year we'll be celebrating where we came from and where we're going.

We're working on a new strategic plan to address our biggest needs including more trail planning and protection efforts, volunteer recruitment and training and sustainable funding to get the work done. We've done incredible things to get us to today but the next generation is relying on us today to make sure the Trail and the NCTA are around for tomorrow.

It's up to us to each of us to secure this future so as the Trail heads into its 40th year, we ask for your help. Like so many before you and so many who stand beside you, choose to pay it forward by volunteering or donating so future trail lovers can experience the magic. ✧



National Park Service Corner

Chris Loudenslager, Superintendent,
North Country National Scenic Trail



Chris Loudenslager

Photo: Mick Hawkins

It is my great honor to be able to introduce myself to you as the newly selected superintendent for the North Country National Scenic Trail! Having been with the Trail since 2015, first as a Trail Planner, then as the Trail Manager, I've had the great opportunity to meet many of you in person or otherwise connect with you by email or phone, so I'm hoping the fact that the new superintendent isn't a stranger brings some comfort. For those of you who aren't familiar with me or are new to the Trail, here's a brief introduction:

I grew up in a small farming community in southwest Michigan, just a few miles north of the Indiana border. I'd define my high school years

as pretty typical for someone from the area: I was active in sports, worked summer jobs on local farms, and made frequent trips "up north" to our family cabin adjacent to the Manistee National Forest. After high school, I attended college for a few semesters, but ultimately decided that enlisting in the United States Army was a better fit for my interests and needs at that time.

I returned to college after nine years of service in the Army. I began my career in natural resource management on Isle Royale National Park while pursuing my studies at Michigan Technological University. After completing my BS in Forestry and MS in Recreation Management from Michigan State in 2004, I accepted a position on the Wayne National Forest, where a majority of my time was spent conducting maintenance on the North Country Trail. In 2006, I returned to Michigan where I worked as a trails technician on Baldwin/White Cloud District of the Huron-Manistee National Forest. It was during this time that I became most familiar with the North Country Trail and began to foster my relationship with the local Chapters and staff of the North Country Trail Association. From there, I traveled to the Superior National Forest where I served in a number of different roles, as a West Zone Recreation Planner, as a District Recreation Operations Manager, and as the Forest's Veterans Program Manager.

The opportunity to return to Michigan, the National Park Service, and the North Country Trail has been nothing short of a dream come true. While the collection of my experiences has provided a diversity of opportunities within the realm of recreation management, I have always regarded myself as a "trails person" at heart and find that my most enjoyable days are those spent with like-minded individuals scouting out new trail, tweaking tread, and making a good trail better.

I recognize and appreciate that with every change in leadership, an organization has a reason to wonder what the new person will be like, how much they actually know about trails, how much that person will care about the Trail, and what changes will accompany that new leader. It is my sincere hope that over the many years that I have been associated with the North Country Trail in one role or another, I have demonstrated that the Trail and everything it is intended to provide is very important to me, and that I am here because this is truly where I want to be. But even more important to me is each and every volunteer, partner, and coworker who work so hard and gives so much for the Trail. Please know that I value and appreciate your dedication to the Trail, and I recognize that you are out there busting your butt no matter how hot it is, how cold it is, or how bad the bugs might be. It is my job, and my personal mission and commitment to you, to help you do what you love, provide what you need to be successful, and make sure you come home safe at the end of the day. You and your safety comes first, no matter what. Please remember that...and tell a friend.

Thank you to all of you for all the great work you do, for looking out for each other, and for making the North Country Trail not only the longest, but the greatest, National Scenic Trail our proud nation has to offer. It's an honor to be here, and I look forward to enjoying many years and many miles with you. ✨



Calvin Kangas

Photo: Karl Jensen

Remembering Calvin Kangas

The following is a collection of memories written about Calvin Kangas, former President of the Ni-Miikanaake Chapter who passed away this July while working on the reroute for the NCT in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. — Editor

From his obituary: “Spending his entire working career in the hardwood lumber industry in the UP and Northern Wisconsin, he loved the smell of new lumber and felt right at home with sawdust on his clothing.”

Karl Jensen, Ni-Miikanaake Chapter Vice President shared with us: “Calvin did a tremendous amount for our Chapter. He brought a vast store of woods-knowledge, and a friendly, approachable mien to the task. He brought many new contacts into our NMC family. Calvin also did volunteer work for other organizations such as the Gogebic Range Trail Authority. To quote a few words from their tribute: ‘He would breathe dignity, compassion and logic into every situation we encountered, coaching me all the way subliminally to make the right call. He always did 120% of what was asked and did it with the biggest Upper Peninsula smile you ever saw.’

I first came to know Calvin in the spring of 2017, when he took the mantle of Chapter President and I became Vice President. We started by hiking some areas of our North Country Trail segment near Conglomerate Falls, photographing and noting damage to various trail bridges. One of our adventures came in the fall of 2017, when we went to blaze and maintain the Trail between Bobolink Creek and Highway 519 (Presque Isle Road). The copper mining company, which owns the land to the north of the Trail, gave us permission to drive to the middle of the Trail, leaving an access gate open. We had a nice fall day and blazed as needed. When we got back to the road gate, we found that it was locked, due to a misunderstanding. We were able to hitch to the company office and liberate Cal’s Ford pickup, but we had some anxious moments.”



Left to right: Ric Olson (Chapter Treasurer), Calvin Kangas, and Karl Jensen (Chapter Vice President)

Photo: Ric Olson (self-timer)

Kenny Wawsczyk, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator for Michigan: “In the spring of 2017 Calvin became Chapter President and dove right in. Discussions about improving signage, structures, reroutes, getting more and younger people involved, and much more became regular. These weren’t just ideas; they were things that were going to get done. Over the span of just a couple years Calvin, along with the Chapter, worked with the Ironwood School’s shop class to build waypoint signage, built, removed and repaired boardwalk near Conglomerate Falls, cleared remote sections of trail, worked with private landowners in hopes of minimizing the current 28.5-mile road walk to the Michigan/Wisconsin border, and started teaming up with “Young Professionals” to start monthly hikes and hopefully recruit new members. The Chapter also just completed a reroute from County Road 519 to Lepisto Falls and Calvin will always be a part of the new route within the Porkies and Ottawa National Forest.

I’m honored to have known Calvin and I’ll always remember the first time I met him, when I realized he was one of those crazy guys I saw on a PBS show that highlighted their annual winter camping trip to O Kun de Kun Falls. The NCTA is one huge family and it hurts to lose someone special like Calvin. Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to his entire family but we can take solace in what his wife, Susan shared with us, ‘I’m just happy that he died doing what he loved - being in the woods.’”

American Trails Staff: “The Ottawa National Forest has been working with the NCTA and the DNR on this reroute for several years and it’s finally moving forward. Calvin was instrumental in securing funding and support from public and private landowners to get the NCT rerouted through the heart of the Porkies and back onto the Ottawa. The Ottawa has 110 miles of NCT within our boundaries and the Ni-Miikanaake Chapter maintains the Trail in Gogebic and western Ontonagon counties. Calvin was a great leader for this volunteer group.”

Introducing Nancy Brozek: Director of Development and Communications



Photo: Kate Lemon

We are excited to welcome Nancy Brozek to NCTA as our Director of Development and Communications, bringing together two important departments for the first time. Nancy has a rich and diverse nonprofit career spanning more than 20 years. An avid storyteller, she enjoys sharing the countless adventures found on the North Country Trail. When not striving to protect and promote the Trail, she spends time with her ever growing family, and friends. She loves the arts, football, and travel – preferably travel that includes exploring sites by bike or foot. NCTA will soar to new heights in public awareness and financial support under her leadership.

“The North Country Trail is a public space none of us can afford to take for granted,” said Nancy. “It is humbling to be a part of an association that is making such a lasting positive impact for our nation. The small contribution I can give toward the promotion, development and protection of this National Scenic Trail becomes significant through the joining of thousands of other stewards of this land. It is awe inspiring!” ✱



Fall colors near Buckley, Michigan

Photo: Jenn Hicks

Paying Tribute to Elizabeth “Libby” Wheatley and Paying It Forward

By Nancy Brozek

Elizabeth (Libby) Wheatley understood the importance of leaving a legacy. Libby was an enthusiastic backpacker, trekker, kayaker and bicyclist. She especially enjoyed solo backpacking and kayaking adventures in the wilderness. In March the NCTA received notice of Libby’s untimely passing. We were also notified she made arrangements to support the Trail’s future by naming NCTA in her will. We honor and thank Elizabeth, and express our sincere gratitude for her thoughtfulness and generosity, an inspiration to us all. We take comfort in knowing she found enjoyment in the Trail.

Our shared affinity for the beauty and spirit of the North Country National Scenic Trail fosters a united commitment to ensure our collective passion for the Trail endures beyond our lifetime. Chances are you vividly remember the first time you experienced the Trail. You can recall the weather, the sounds, and the feelings your hike evoked. It unearthed a zeal within, one that you would eagerly pass on to others given the opportunity.

When you make a legacy gift to NCTA, it’s like paying the trail experience forward. *Bequests can be made in a will or trust, through designations in a retirement fund, life insurance policy or an outright gift of life insurance cash value on a policy that is no longer needed. All it takes is a quick phone call to your financial advisor or lawyer to add NCTA as a beneficiary. And please let us know if you have established a bequest to NCTA so we can recognize you as a member of the Association’s Legacy Society. ✱

**Bequests made to the North Country Trail Association support the Endowment unless otherwise designated or directed.*

NCTA to Launch Updated Website

By Kate Lemon

With a smartphone in nearly every pocket and a computer in most homes and workplaces, an online presence is crucial for an organization like the North Country Trail Association. Our mission statement includes promotion of the Trail, not only to encourage people to use it, but to inspire volunteerism and philanthropy so the Trail can continue to be built, maintained and protected. With 4600 miles of Trail across eight states, our website is a vital and efficient form of communication to connect with thousands of volunteers, trail users, supporters and Affiliates – both current and potential.

The NCTA website – northcountrytrail.org – is home to engaging stories and important resources like free maps, Chapter and membership information, and guidance for volunteers. In late 2016 with input from surveys, webinars and market research, the website was completely restructured by NCTA staff to update content and to host new Chapter web pages. (Previously, many Chapters had freestanding websites of their own. This content was transferred to northcountrytrail.org for easier and more centralized management, and improved branding consistency.) Intensive editing and reorganization enhanced both the website experience for visitors and the management process for staff and Chapter Leadership.

However, over time, updates to WordPress – the content management system that our website was created within – began to cause limitations to the layout and design of the site, as well as technical support and updates for it. Maintenance became much more difficult and overall function of the website suffered.

In early 2019, NCTA hired the web development company Lake Effect Digital of Traverse City, Michigan, to redesign the website to upgrade functionality, polish the look-and-feel and ensure higher quality technical support. After many months of planning and effort, we are anxious to unveil the final product soon. It is considerably more interactive and aligned with our brand standards, more photos, more color, and even a video feature on the home page. This fresh look will allow visitors to locate information and education more efficiently, better visualize their North Country experience, gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Association's work, and recognize the incredible efforts of our volunteers. Thus, awareness will be greatly elevated for the North Country Trail within our National Scenic Trails System. ✨



The Board of Directors celebrates Andrea Ketchmark's tenth anniversary with the NCTA!

Photo: Jan Ulferts Stewart

Where In The Blue Blazes?

In this regular feature of North Star, we challenge your knowledge in a friendly competition to name the location of a detail or point of interest along the 4600+ mile North Country Trail. Any of our readers can submit a photo for consideration for the next puzzle, or play our game by answering the question: Where in the Blue Blazes can this location be found?



These aren't so uncommon, but do you know where THIS one is? Meanwhile, we've heard the first grumblings about people building these in streams or along the Trail. You just can't please everybody.

Can you tell our editor where on the NCT it is?

Irene Szabo, treeweenie@aol.com,
(585) 494-0307

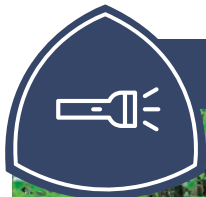


Photo: Emily Rodriguez

Inaugural Next Generation Coalition Summit

By Emily Rodriguez

Picture this: Nine young adults, all relative strangers to one another, converge in a remote area of Michigan's upper peninsula for a weekend of trail building and discussion about the future of the North Country Trail. Dazed from hours spent in a car, everyone slowly trickles into camp and gladly devours a fresh pasta, a delicious Yooper meal, while introducing themselves to the rest of the group. Eager to get on the trail the following day, everyone sets up their tent or hammock and is lulled to sleep by the tranquility of the Porkies.

From August 15th through 18th, members of the NCTA's Next Generation Coalition met in Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park for the first-ever Next Generation Coalition ("Next Gen") Summit. Led by Kenny Wawczyk, NCTA's Regional Trail Coordinator for Michigan, and Emily Rodriguez, NCTA's Next Generation Outreach Intern, members spent two days building a section of trail as part of the new reroute within the park, and an evening discussing the future of the Coalition and the Trail as a whole. In their free time, the group visited Lake Superior, Lake of the Clouds, and of course, hiked the Trail.

"I really enjoyed actually building the trail and using the tools," commented Dennis Olson, who traveled to the Summit from Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. Coalition members not only built nearly one mile of new trail, but also cultivated a deep appreciation for the vast network of volunteers who build and maintain the NCT. "I've hiked a lot of miles in my area and didn't know how much work it really was to make a trail this long," Dennis added.

To cap off the event, the Next Gen cohort gathered around the campfire on Saturday to examine the future of the Coalition and the NCTA and to share ideas on how to get more young people involved. When asked about the resources provided by the NCTA, Lynnae Branham from Marquette, Michigan, suggested more guidance

on projects young people can do in collaboration with the Chapters. "We should encourage Next Gen "reps" at Chapter meetings throughout the Trail," added Lacie Tryan from Grand Rapids, Michigan. Overall, the general consensus was to "bridge the gap" within the Chapters and increase involvement from more diverse groups.

Equipped with the knowledge of trail building techniques and how to use the tools necessary to build and maintain trail, many members expressed their eagerness to return home and adopt a section of trail. Other members left the event inspired to connect with their local Chapter and to take more action to promote the North Country Trail.

Launched in the summer of 2018, the Next Generation Coalition started as an initiative to help build a network of younger trail supporters. It has rapidly grown to include members from six of our eight Trail states. Prospective members, who are ages 18 to 28 at the time of application, are required to apply via NCTA's website. Once accepted into the Coalition, they participate in a variety of advocacy, outreach and volunteer opportunities. Coalition members can often be found actively promoting the Trail in their communities and volunteering with their local Chapter.

The NCTA would like to thank the National Park Foundation for their financial support and Michigan DNR for their collaboration. Additionally, we would like to extend a special thank you to the Friends of the Porkies, a local nonprofit dedicated to the support and enhancement of Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, for generously providing wholesome meals for the crew each night. And finally, a huge thank you to our Coalition members for participating in the first of many Next Gen Summits: Anna Johnson (23, Lowell, Michigan), Avantika D'Cruz-Wigren (18, Ashland, Wisconsin), Chase Gregory (24, Buffalo, New York), Dennis Olson (29, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota), Emily Rodriguez (26, Grand Rapids, Michigan), Keeley Sisson (26,



Photo: Emily Rodriguez



Photo: Emily Rodriguez

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota), Lacie Tryan (23, Grand Rapids, Michigan), Lynnae Branham (22, Marquette, Michigan), and Matt Scheffler (25, Grand Rapids, Michigan). ✱

To join the Coalition or for more information, please visit northcountrytrail.org.

North Country Trail National Scenic Trail Day, 28 September

By Mary Coffin

The Onondaga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club planned two work trips to celebrate Public Lands Day and NCNST Day. The one on a concurrent section of the Finger Lakes Trail in central NY state was cancelled due to forecast of rain but the one scheduled for the Adirondacks took place and we experienced good weather.

We had seven participants who hiked two miles into the interior to an Adirondack NCNST section (Little Woodhull Lake Trail) neglected for over 10 years. It was formerly a snowmobile trail but no longer are snowmobiles permitted and it is now designated as NCNST. Our volunteer group cut through 18 blowdowns on this neglected trail and posted trail markers on about one mile of trail so others would be able to follow. We had scouted and GPSed it earlier this summer. The tread is obscured by much blowdown, understory growth and saplings up to our earlobes. It reminded me of Border Route sections growing back after a fire.

Next spring we will do extensive sidecutting, if permitted by NYS DEC. At this time small tree or sapling removal was not permitted due to pending litigation regarding excessive tree removal for snowmobile trails. Our crew uses only cross cut saws and the two person saw came in handy.

Our Crew: Peg Whaley, Kathy Chillemi, Stephen Hayes, Richard Slaski, Ed O'Shea, Chuck Mitchell and yours truly, Mary Coffin ✱

Only this one group reported on their day. — Editor



A clearly untended part of the Little Woodhull Lake Trail, an Adirondack section of the NCNST, now being restored.

Photo: Kathy Chillemi



GIVING TRAIL DAY

Giving Trail Day is a 24-hour celebration of the North Country Trail's first 40 years. From hikers to volunteers and everyone in between, this is your chance to say, "Thank you, here's to 40 more!" with an end-of-year gift on December 3, Giving Tuesday, our Giving Trail Day!

PS: Double your impact. Gifts made on Giving Tuesday will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$20,000.

#GIVINGTUESDAY



Teenaged boys and young men came from nearby Camp Dudley to help us for several days.

Photo: Mary Coffin

ADK/NCT Volunteer Work Week Hoffman Notch Wilderness BLTs at Work

By Mary Coffin

The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) / NCT Blue Line Team (BLTs) is a group of volunteers who work to scout off trail, GPS, advocate for, build and maintain the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) in the Adirondack Park from “blue line” to “blue line.” The NCNST is the only east-west long distance foot trail in the Adirondacks and when completed will stretch about 160 miles. On maps a “blue line” defines the boundary of the six-million-acre Adirondack Park in New York State.

As a continuation of the 2018 work completed to construct new Trail (NCNST) on the west side of Jones Hill (elevation 1882 feet) we planned a 2019 Volunteer Work Week to construct new Trail on the east side. Jones Hill is a small mountain in Hoffman Notch Wilderness with views of Gore Mountain, Severance Mountain and the Hoffman Ridge, as well as other peaks. Members of five ADK Chapters volunteered. NYS DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) provided free camping for six volunteers at Eagle Point DEC Campground on Schroon Lake. It was only a 20-minute drive to the trailhead each day followed by a mile hike up to the flagged future trail. We BLTs spent a week on the project, benching and developing the new tread.

ADK members with summer homes or camps in the area joined us for a few days here and there during the week. DEC sent two interns for two days and Camp Dudley sent eight teenaged boys and young men for a couple of days. The youth effort and camaraderie were uplifting. They did a really great job.

Our primary job was to establish a trail tread along the flagged route established by DEC Forester (land manager) Rob Ripp. The tricky restriction was to leave every sapling and shrub even if it was right in the tread. Due to ongoing litigation regarding the number of trees removed to construct a snowmobile connector trail,

no saplings, even if under three inches in diameter, breast height or several inches tall, could be cut or removed. The area was predominately a deciduous beech-birch-maple forest with a few conifers mixed in. Fortunately, there was very little understory.

Andrew Hamlin, ADK Trails Coordinator, spent the first morning with us demonstrating benching/side hilling and explaining the criteria for a sustainable, well-drained trail. He set up a white board on his truck tailgate to review benching criteria before demonstrating in the field. He also provided tools such as saws, pick mattocks, Pulaskis, root cutters and

hazel hoes. DEC Forester Rob Ripp also shared tips on flush, collared side cutting and the restrictions on cutting saplings.

Benching was difficult as this wilderness had 100 years of organic mat over the mineral soil. The organic mat, sometimes eight to 10 inches thick and intertwined with a mesh of tiny roots, was difficult to remove. The tangled roots of this thick mat caught in every tool we tried! And there were lots of boulders and big rocks left by the glacier. I now have a better understanding why the strong, young, college-aged ADK Pro Crew plans only one mile or so a week of finished trail in the difficult Adirondack mountainous terrain.

During the week our group of volunteers established tread and initial benching for over a mile of trail and when added to existing trail on an old “road” up from the Dirgylot trailhead, yields about 2.3 miles of hikeable trail. We walked uphill each morning on the remains of an 1800s town “road” before starting work on the new trail. An interesting element of the existing trail is that it ducks under Interstate 87, the Northway’s four lanes and median



Kathy Chillemi from the Onondaga ADK Chapter raked newly benched trail through the dense mat of forest duff.

Photo: Mary Coffin

via a huge culvert big enough to drive a vehicle through. Each afternoon on the way out we walked over and admired our work and returned tired and satisfied and fortunately downhill to the trailhead.

Next year we will continue to clear trail on the flagged route to the summit (800-foot climb) which will be a more challenging task. Hopefully we will then be able to remove saplings left in the tread, mostly beech, yellow birch, maple and hemlock. We also hope one of the grants for which we have applied will provide funding for part of the work.

This was truly a group effort and volunteers actually enjoyed the work. Hey, when you are outdoors life can't get any better. I am very appreciative of the support of the North Country National Scenic Trail Adirondack route by ADK staff, DEC Forester Ripp and all the volunteers. ✧

Think about joining a future project. Check the website or the *North Star* "You're Invited" column for a Volunteer Work Week next summer. You too can join the ADK/NCT BLTs.

If you have any interest in future projects or adopting a trail as a trail steward, contact maryccoffin@gmail.com.

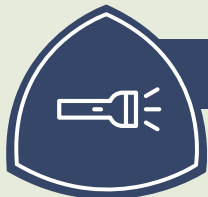
IMAGES FROM THE TRAIL



Connie Julien of the Peter Wolfe Chapter in Wisconsin took this picture of volunteer Constance Sherry who was blazing trees and other things.



Rich Glasgow just liked this sign he saw, while driving through the Clarion Chapter section in Pennsylvania on his way to do trail work for the Allegheny National Forest Chapter.



Reinforced By Response From *North Star* "You're Invited" Posting!

Petoskey Trail Building Extravaganza

By Duane Lawton, Jordan Valley 45° Chapter

Over the weekend of North Country National Scenic Trail Day, the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter hosted a trail-building event near Petoskey, Michigan. Over the four-day event, more than 35 workers were active at one time or another. With Dove and John Day's barn as headquarters, we spread out and cleared over a mile of new Trail, built six boardwalks totaling almost 350 feet and a 550 foot fence.

We had several participants from downstate Michigan, including our perennial helper Jeff Fleming from Augusta. Mike, Mary, Tom, Pam and Mark hail from southeast Michigan, and Lori Luken is from Berea, Ohio, but the distance winner is Dave King from Baltimore, Maryland. Dave said he saw the posting for the event, and being a frequent visitor to the Petoskey area, he jumped at the chance to come and help. All in all, we will put our future events on "You're Invited" in this magazine!

We also had a four-person crew from SEEDS, a nonprofit based in Northern Michigan that specializes in a youth conservation corps. They brought a power auger and were able to set the fence in two days, in addition to helping out with other activities.

Everybody had a good time; many out-of-towners want to come back. We had breakfast, dinner and campfires at the barn, and much fellowship. Even though it rained Friday, the rest of the weekend was nice and we finished Monday before the thunderstorms. When we were done, a large group hiked the whole new Trail.

Today the North Country Trail is routed on roads for over 3 miles between the Petoskey Skyline Trail and the North Central Michigan College (NCMC) Natural Area trail. The reroute will take us from the NCMC trail across the Bear River into and through the Petoskey River Road Sports Complex, across vacant township land, through the Petoskey Youth Soccer Association fields to private parcels that connect to Skyline.

We have for several years been seeking—in cooperation with the City of Petoskey and the NCMC—funding for a pedestrian bridge over the Bear River. We now have the funding in place, and enough access agreements so we could build about 2/3 of the reroute. The bridge project, led by Petoskey Department of Parks and Recreation, should be completed in 2020, when we expect the partial reroute to become official.

Funding for this event (material, food, SEEDS) was provided by the NCTA using grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service, thanks to Kenny Wawczyk! ✨



One landowner gave permission to route the Trail inside his cattle pasture, along the edge, so this crew built a fence 10 feet inside.

Photo: Duane Lawton



Trail clearing crew #2

Photo: Bob Courtois



Petoskey clearing crew 1

Photo: Annie Matz



Petoskey trail clearing reaches Bear River

Photo: Duane Lawton



Petoskey boardwalks

Photo: Duane Lawton



Some of the volunteers at Days' barn

Photo: Duane Lawton



You're Invited!

Shoe Year's Day Hike – Yankee Springs Recreation Area January 1, 2020

Start the year with a little exercise and fresh air at the Shoe Year's Day Hike, sponsored by the Yankee Springs Recreation Area DNR, and with Chief Noonday Chapter partnering as hike leaders for the 9th year. Hike leaders will meet at 10:15 a.m. at the Long Lake Outdoor Center, 10370 Gun Lake Rd, Middleville, Michigan, near the old Manager's residence (about 1.6 miles west of Yankee Springs Road, on the north side of Gun Lake Road). The hike will begin at 11:00 a.m. at the location, but you may want to get there a bit early to sign in, and for refreshments. Our long hike route will depend on weather and snow conditions, but will probably be about 4 miles. Our short hike will be about 2 miles.

Contact Jane Norton for more details.
jane_a_norton@yahoo.com.

Ninth Annual Shoe Year's Hike

By Jane Norton, President of CND Chapter

The Shoe Year's Day Hike has become an Annual tradition for the Chief Noonday Chapter. It began as a program through the DNR at State Parks in Michigan to start the New Year. Chief Noonday was asked that first year to help with guided hikes on New Year's Day at Yankee Springs State Park. After that first year it has become a Chapter Hike. On January 1, 2020, the Shoe Year's Day Hike will be the 9th year of the hike. The DNR helps publicize the hike and the rest is history. Hikers come from many of the surrounding counties; some families have now made it a family tradition hiking every year, while for others it is their first time on the NCTA. Dogs are also part of this tradition. There were over 100 hikers at last year's Hike.

A park building is used as a meeting place before and after the hikes to mingle over a warm fire. This day is used to promote the Hike 100 Challenge, Chief Noonday's section, and the benefits of membership in the NCTA. Refreshments are available. Two different hikes are offered, one longer than the other. Over the years there has been sun, extreme cold and snow-covered trails, but always a good time. ✧



Hikers enjoying socializing in the warmth after a cold, snowy Shoe Year's Day Hike.

Photo: Tom Norton



Hikers ready to hike the Trail.

Photo: Jane Norton



Surprise Thru-Hiker

The Central NY Chapter was having its annual meeting in Chittenango, N.Y., a nice little village along the Old Erie Canal State Park (as opposed to the active full-size Canal nearby). Here the route of the North Country Trail follows the state-wide Canalway Trail, along a section of the Old Erie Canal State Park which follows an earlier route of that famous canal, so it wasn't far to the meeting site in the village.

As Ruth Dorrrough reported, "The meeting was in progress. I heard the door open and saw an unknown young man with hiking sticks and a full backpack walk in. His arrival shot a bolt of energy through a rather routine annual meeting. It was a dramatic punctuation to why we do what we do."

He was Ben Truesdale, "Corrupted" for a trail name, and had recently completed the Continental Divide Trail out west. So he decided to do the North Country Trail next, and came from New England to New York, and plans to keep going all winter to complete the NCT next year. ✨



Ron as he stopped by Dove & John Day's Barn. Our Trail certainly is gaining more users from farther away all the time!

Photo: Dove Day

A Visit by a TRULY Long-Distance Hiker.

By Mary Campbell, JV 45° Chapter President

In September a delightful individual travelled the length of the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter segment of the NCT. Ron Dobra (trail name "zen quake") is 72 years old and has backpacked over 15,000 miles! Ron is from Maine where he has been an AT volunteer for 30 years. So when he joined us for dinner and a night off the trail, we had much to talk about, including comparing and contrasting the well-established AT with the young NCT, where we are still working to move trail off the roads. Ron started in North Dakota last summer, and then picked up at the Border Route Trail (Minnesota) in June this year. Amazingly last season, Ron did not see another hiker until his last week before he stopped for the season. When we hiked the AT in 2017, we couldn't go a day without seeing others. As of his last email, (4 Oct 2019), Ron had made it to Rockford with only 211 miles to the Ohio border and had already travelled 1,574 miles this season. We wish him safe travels and hope our paths cross again! ✨

This article was used with permission from the JV 45° Fall Newsletter.



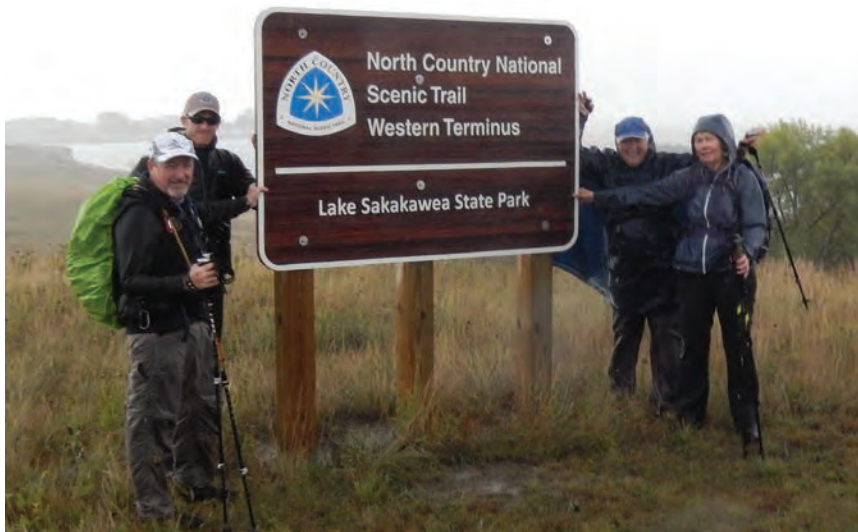
Long distance hiker Ben with Ruth Dorrrough, end-to-ender on the NCT with her husband Dan.

Photo: Andrea Ketchmark, NCTA Executive Director



From the Trail: The Dakota Challenge

By Rennae Gruchalla, Dakota Prairie Chapter



The first four to finish in pouring rain. Gail Rogne (from Kindred), Jerry Warner (Fort Ransom), Cory Enger (Lisbon), and Rennae Gruchalla (Fargo)

Photo: Tom Moberg

Grit, determination, perseverance, stamina, and spirit. This is what it took to finish the Dakota Challenge. The first four hikers of the 22 who took on the challenge of hiking all 438 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail in North Dakota finished their quest on Saturday, September 21, at the Western Terminus in Lake Sakakawea State Park. It was pouring down rain, but nevertheless, their spirits were soaring. Eight other hikers joined them for the final two miles to the terminus.

After hiking in all four seasons, this group encountered all kinds of North Dakota weather conditions. They hiked in a variety of conditions, including horizontal wind-driven sleet cutting their faces, or days that started out with beautiful weather that later ended in torrential downpours. Sometimes the heat, humidity and mosquitos tested their desire to keep going, and post-holing in deep snow for miles was truly a winter treat. Most of the days, however, were sunny, with clear skies, mild temperatures and low humidity. As we look back, hiking in a variety of weather conditions made us stronger and secured in us many memories.

Dogs seem to love to hike too. As we tromped down the path, many times we would have canine companions join us, sometimes walking beside us on lone hikes, as if thinking we needed companionship along the way. The four of us developed other maladies, such as lost toenails, sore knees, backs and hips, all of which improved after a few days of rest.

Breaking through ice, which accumulated on the Trail, caused me to drop my car fob and phone in the water. They were soaked! Consequently, I had to hold these articles up in the air to dry as I hiked the last two miles back to my car. Since I was on a trail a long distance from anything or anyone, I was very glad they worked when I got back to my car.

A moose and her calf were supposed to be in the vicinity of the McClusky Canal where we were hiking. None of us spotted the beasts, but one hiker heard a loud moo coming from behind her. Needless to say, she got out of there quickly to join the rest of the group. When she caught up and told us about the noise, we turned around to see if we could see them. No one did. Were the moose hiding in the reeds or was it all our imagination? No one will ever know.

There were so many “Best Parts” of this experience, it’s difficult to express all of them. When beginning this challenge, I personally thought of it as a physical challenge and a goal I set out to complete. It turned out to be so much more.

Here are some personal favorites from the four finishers:

1. Viewing scenic and historical places in North Dakota on foot
2. Talking to and educating folks along the way about the North Country Trail
3. Being outdoors in nature
4. Making new friends and really getting to know old friends (of the 438 miles, two of us hiked 372 miles of it together)
5. Help from the wonderful people who helped shuttle us from trailhead to trailhead
6. Cows (love them) and bulls (not so much)
7. Becoming more knowledgeable about the geography of the land, cities, and towns of North Dakota
8. Joining citizens at their towns’ celebrations
9. Exploring new areas of the state
10. Planning and executing group hikes
11. The peacefulness and scenery of walking through rural North Dakota
12. The friendliness of people along the way

As you can see, completing the Dakota Challenge was a life changing experience. Maybe everyone should try it! ✨

The Dakota Challenge

By Rennae Gruchalla

These are my personal comments about hiking the Dakota Challenge made at the celebration after reaching the western terminus in the visitors center at Lake Sakakawea State Park.

The Dakota Challenge started out as a personal challenge and a goal of finishing the entire 438 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail from Abercrombie, North Dakota to Lake Sakakawea State Park. But it ended up being so much more!

The number-one reason for taking on this challenge ended up being to educate folks along the Trail; that is, to help folks become aware of a National Scenic Trail, the North Country National Scenic Trail, passing through or near their communities. As I traveled on foot through my state, I stopped more and more to talk to the people about the Trail and where it starts and finishes. At the bar in Binford and at the café, which used to be an elementary school in Grace City, I had every customer and staff listening to me expound about the NCT. I impressed upon them how lucky they are to have a National Scenic Trail right in their own backyard. A group of 14 hikers, all working on hiking the Dakota Challenge stayed in McClusky on two different occasions while adding up miles. We stayed in the motels, we camped, we ate in their restaurants. The second time we stayed there, Laura, the owner at the motor motel, expounded about how she is now hiking regularly on the Trail.

McClusky just happened to be having their city celebration when we were there the second time. All of us enjoyed participating in their town's activities including attending the Sunday morning brunch. Of course we brought brochures to hand out



Readers with good memories will recall that you've seen this one before. In the summer issue in 2018, Rennae sent this mystery thing before, forty-feet tall on a hilltop, but declined to explain it before more of her compatriots had hiked that far. It's still a mystery WHY the local farmer built it, but it was originally an owl, whose head has come off.

Photo: Rennae Gruchalla

and talked about the Trail, hoping they would get excited, go hiking, and spread the word to others. This kind of outreach happened in communities all along the Trail! I love this grassroots approach.

I value the close bonds that were made with those I've hiked with. You can't hike with someone and not get to know them well. Gail and I hiked 372 miles out of the 438 miles together! We probably know all of each other's secrets. We call each other "sis." Jerry is our "bro." He hiked many miles with me too, but we did not calculate how many.

I truly enjoyed viewing the scenic and historical places on foot. North Dakota is stereotyped for being flat, treeless, and nothing but wide open

fields. This is not true! There is so much more! It is a very beautiful state! The Trail passes through Valley City, the place of my birth, childhood, and young adult years. I walked in the neighborhood I lived in, through the hills I hiked and played in. It was so satisfying viewing it again close up. You can certainly see everything better on foot than in a vehicle or even on a bicycle.

Last but not least, my fourth reason for hiking the 438 miles of the NCT in North Dakota was, as I previously mentioned, was that I love challenges and goals. It was great fun. I loved it and I finished it! ✨



Allegheny 100 Hiking Challenge Part I: A Speed Dating Version of a Thru-Hike

By Lynda Chudy a.k.a. Muddy Sneakers

As the author of this commentary and an A-100 participant I am unofficially changing the name of this event to the Allegheny 100 **ENDURANCE** Hiking Challenge, with endurance written in huge, bold capital letters.

The official description of the Allegheny 100 Hiking Challenge is "... an unsupported endurance hiking challenge with no timekeepers, no aid stations, and no finish line other than the one hikers set for themselves. The event challenges hikers to traverse 25, 50, 75, or 100 miles along the North Country Trail (NCT) through the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) in 50 hours, beginning at 6 p.m. on Friday and ending at 8 p.m. on Sunday."

This description doesn't even come close to explaining the level of physical and mental stamina required to participate to your personal level of maximum effort and distance.

Kyle Robb, Allegheny National Forest Supervisor of non-motorized trails, in his opening remarks for this year's Challenge, commented on the insanity of traveling the 3.8 marathons in 50 hours. Heck you don't have to travel the entire 100 miles to feel like you just ran three plus marathons. Depending on your pack weight, experience level and probably 100 other factors, just making it 17.9 miles can feel like the full 100.

With this said and the thought in mind that this is the 10th anniversary of the A-100, questions start flying. Who would take part? Why would they do this and certainly why does anyone do it more than once. The

stories are as varied as the number of participants.

Mike and Sharon Rosenthal from Arlington, Vermont, are retired scientists and outdoor enthusiasts. Mike is a speed hiker and Sharon enjoys the longer, slower paced hikes. She is Mike's SAG (support and gear crew) for the A-100. He will be hers later this summer as she travels the Long Trail from Vermont to Canada. Mike's plan is to hike straight through the 100 miles with Sharon supplying needed provisions at pre-determined road/trail crossings. Mike participated in 2018 and ran into difficulty following the Trail around the 50-mile mark. After circling back to Henry's Mills twice he called it quits with a vow to return and finish the A-100 in 2019. Mike was the first official event starter to cross the 10.7-mile mark at Sugar Bay. He was slightly slower than planned, but mud and slippery trail conditions along with higher water crossings slowed his pace. After quick bites of sandwich and water away he went into the night. It should be noted that Mike is 87 years old.

For Reed Renshaw, this was his first A-100. Last year he was SAG for his mom and said that was an adventure in itself. Reed was always active outdoors from grade school through high school with the Great Race in Pittsburgh, yearly cycling trips on rail-trails and downhill skiing in the winter. Unfortunately, life got in the way and outdoor recreation took more than a back seat. Reed decided this year to change that by joining his mom for the first 25 miles of the A-100 and then working as SAG the remaining distance. Unfortunately, roles reversed this year. Mom was not able to participate, but worked as SAG. Reed made it to his first planned stopping point at midnight. After crashing in his hammock for a few hours he made the decision to leave the event and try again next year. Equipment failures and wet feet got the better of this adventurer.

Preston VanCuren of Portville, New York, is out to complete the A-100 for



Mike and Sharon Rosenthal

Photo: Lynda Chudy



Reed Renshaw and mother

Photo: Lynda Chudy

a second time. Last year he finished the northbound route and said he was finished with no need to do it again. He changed his mind after the event registration notices went out, saying, “The trail is different going the other direction.”

Two women from Virginia Beach participated for the first time this year. Both are retired military. One is a long-distance hiker with section hikes of the Appalachian Trail under her belt and the other a marathon runner with runs that include the New York City Marathon. These women planned to use a steady even pace to complete a straight thru-100-mile-hike. They were in good spirits at Sugar Bay, but ran out of steam at Chappel Bay, the 25-mile mark. Muddy conditions and changing elevations were issues for this pair. A trail angel came along at just the right time to offer this pair transport back to their car which was parked 75 miles away. They both will be back. They came early to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Allegheny National Forest and want to spend more time exploring. They also have not ruled out trying the A-100 again after changing up their training and equipment.

Diana Hurd and her boyfriend, Ian Toole, completed about 28 miles of the A-100 last year. They traveled with their two dogs, Henry and Jack. They signed up for 50 miles this year with no great expectations. Two days before the start Diana made the snap decision to “do it on my own” when Ian was not well enough to participate. She and Tina Toole hiked and camped together the first night. Ian and Henry hiked with her on Saturday morning and then again on Sunday morning.

According to Diana, her biggest challenges were recovering from “sleepwalking” off the trail onto an oil road along with the time it took to sort out that situation. Coping with feelings of loneliness and nervousness early Sunday morning went away with the use of headphones and after encounters with other hikers.

Were the best parts the fact she kept her cool and clear thinking through the challenges and finished the 50 miles with plenty of time to spare? That’s a question for when we meet again next year.

Reflecting on the meetings with and stories offered by the other A-100 adventurers, all of a sudden it brings about a change in mindset. The emphasis on and size of the words “stamina” and “endurance” diminish and the new words rising to the top are “fun” and “adventure.”

If you have that recurring fleeting twinge of interest and slight hint of fear in taking part in a thru-hike, or maybe it is just the amount of time it takes to complete one, the A-100 may be your answer. It has all the elements of a thru-hike packed into your choice of distance. It takes training, equipment analysis, packing and planning for weather, sleep, food and water. There are decisions on how much of anything/everything to carry, as well as, where, when and how you will resupply. There are occasional trail angel sightings during this event and bits of trail magic, too. You can develop a support team and share the experience or pair up with a hiking partner or you can go it alone. The key is to try it. It just might be insanely fun.

Until next time: *Happy Trails* ✨



Preston VanCuren

Photo: Lynda Chudy



left to right: Diana Hurd with Luna, Ian Toole with Jack at his feet, and Tina Toole with Henry. All three dogs belong to Diana and Ian. So how far can dogs go on the A-100?

Photo: Lynda Chudy



Two of those who walked the Mackinac Bridge BOTH ways!

Photo: Bill Garlinghouse

Harbor Springs Chapter Doings

By Judy Conrad

The Harbor Springs Chapter of the NCTA is the northernmost Chapter in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Our “Hike to the Bridge” campaign has attracted a number of new hikers to our monthly hikes. We often have in excess of 20 hikers a month making their way from our south trailhead just north of Petoskey to our final destination, the Mackinac Bridge, a distance of 46 miles.

In September one of our Chapter members, Bill Garlinghouse, volunteered to organize a Chapter hike across the Mackinac Bridge. This can happen only once a year on Labor Day. We have to hike with thousands of other hikers but it is our only chance to hike that particular five miles of the North Country Trail! Sixteen hikers arrived by 6:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. start. We had Melissa join us from Minnesota and Kurtis Kares from Mears, Michigan, who is thru-hiking the NCT in Michigan. (His dog Rebel was not allowed to join us for this event.)

The Mackinac Bridge Authority closes the bridge to vehicle traffic from 6:00 a.m. until noon and hikers can start in St. Ignace and walk south or start in Mackinaw City and walk north. If hikers are strong enough and can walk fast enough in the allotted time they can hike both ways. At least six people from our group “double crossed.” Our Chapter President Shari Sanderson, Dennis Schanski, organizer Bill Garlinghouse, Kurtis Kares, and Mike and Nancy Koda were among those in our group that we are aware of who did the double cross. For those of us who didn’t double cross, the option of hopping on a ferry and returning to the city of origin was available. Some also island hopped to Mackinac Island for lunch and fudge before returning to Mackinaw

City. An additional member of our Chapter started in St. Ignace and hiked south to Mackinaw City. We never saw her in the crowds.

Dennis Schanski completed his Hike 100 Challenge on the bridge just south of where the huge American flag hung from one of the bridge towers. Congratulations, Dennis!

Our Chapter has log boxes at the south end of each of our 11 sections. We have noticed an uptick in Trail usage. We see many more hikers who are thru-hiking parts of the Trail, for example, Kurtis Kares who hopes to hike all of Michigan and Annie Nelson on her quest to hike the western half of the North Country Trail. We are fortunate that much of our section of the Trail goes through state land where backpackers can camp for the night in our beautiful northern Michigan woods. We see trail names such as Trail Dale, Head-N-Out, Honeysuckle, MacGyver, zen quake, Goliath, 2 Hearted, O’Well and 2 Ray, and then there is Dare Devil, the blind hiker! It appears that the NCT is gaining recognition!

See you on the Trail! ✨



Long distance adventurer Kurtis Kares who walked the bridge with this Chapter. His dog wasn't allowed on the bridge walk (grump grump!) but is doing his all-Michigan walk with Kurtis.

Photo: Judy Conrad

LONG DISTANCE HIKER REPORT

Matt Smith from Mulliken, Michigan, Discovers the Trail

By Matt Smith



On April 21 2015, I started off on my first NCT adventure with nothing more than a map that I had found lying in the mud and an old pair of shoes on my feet. Having never really done anything like this before I didn't even stop to think till I hit 12 miles out that I had to turn around and return to my vehicle that same night, and it was already late! Despite being dried out, tired, and sore, my hike from the 76th Street trailhead [Lake County] in Michigan would be the start of an addiction that would last for years to come.

After returning home that night I rested my sore body on the couch, looking in disbelief at how many miles I had hiked. I realized that if I just drove north a couple more times I could complete the entire side of the map in hand. I was hooked--the excitement, the adventure, the peace and solitude, the idea that somehow this trail was so long it ran through this whole map. You can only imagine my excitement when I posted about my hike on Facebook and learned very quickly that the Trail ran through the entire state! I quickly did the math and decided that I was going to hike the entire North Country Trail in my home state of Michigan.

I couldn't wait to call and tell my friends and family what I was about to do. As I told my story and my plan to people, the response was less than excited and supportive. Most people had no interest in hiking, or the outdoors, in depth as I did. And almost none of the people in my life had ever heard of the North Country Trail. That wouldn't stop me. I would set off alone and solo hike, have my own adventures, and learn and experience so much along the way!

I decided I could hike all of the Manistee National Forest in the first year. Loaded with everything from bear spray to flashlights, and even entire bottles of sunscreen, I made my way north. It didn't take long before my feet and back taught me that

I don't really need that heavy can of soup or the pocket rocket stove for just a day hike. The more miles I hiked, the lighter and more advanced my gear got.

Before I knew it, I had made a hiking buddy. Someone from a hiking group on Facebook had been messaging me about backpacking Pictured Rocks with him. What a wonderful idea--such a beautiful area, multi-night trip, and all that planning involved. I was ecstatic. Since that first adventure together in the UP we have had many others. In fact we hiked the North Country Trail across the Upper Peninsula together and have achieved our Hike 100 patches together every year since.

The four-year-long hike across the state was more than just a hike. I got to see parts of the state that I never would have seen. I met a ton of great people on the Trail and joined the North Country Trail Association, and became a certified sawyer for the Chief Noonday Chapter. I am a trail adopter for a nice section through Middleville, and a go-to person for friends, family, and coworkers when it comes to outdoor adventures.

Many sections of the Trail will be revisited over the years and I hope to visit new sections in other states. My gratitude runs deep for all the fine folks who have devoted so much time and energy into maintaining this massive trail system. Without them I never would have had the best hike of my life!

Mike has now received the main patch, plus rockers for the state of Michigan, the Mackinac Bridge, and a thousand miles.



Trail Protection in Southeastern North Dakota

By Becky Heise

Since the Sheyenne River Valley Chapter (SRV) received its charter in March of 2000, we never really felt comfortable with the policy of the landowner “handshake agreement.” Granted, it showed trust and goodwill on the side of both the Chapter and its landowners but it meant that whole segments of the Trail could be built on mighty shaky ground. On a whim, or change of property ownership, whole segments of trail might have to be rerouted causing a lot of heartache and work for the volunteer members of the Chapter.

As a result, an easement template, which had been drawn up by the Ransom County State’s Attorney, was borrowed from the Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway. The template made the creation of an easement quick and easy, as you just had to drop in the name and address of the grantee along with the legal description of the segment and fill in the date. It also makes it a simple process to share between Chapters.

At first we obtained easements from public entities such as the City of Valley City, Valley City State University and Barnes County for Trail through Valley City. Easements from four private landowners were secured to fill in a couple of gaps to complete a nearly continuous 30 miles along the lake. Easements were also obtained from the City of Fort Ransom and Fort Ransom Township to develop Trail between Fort Ransom and Fort Ransom State Park, and from the City of Kathryn and North Dakota Game and Fish for Trail connecting Kathryn and the Clausen Springs Recreation Area. The Trail along Lake Ashabula, which was developed by the Corps of Engineers, was the only continuous trail we had of over 100 miles.

Beginning in 2008, it was decided a push was needed to develop Trail across private land to fill in major gaps between Fort Ransom State Park and Valley City, and from Valley City to Baldhill Dam. In 2009, the SRV Chapter was successful in obtaining a Recreational Trails Program grant to purchase easements for new trail and materials to improve existing trail. We thought a monetary incentive might be helpful in getting private landowners to sign easements.

We chose our preferred route and researched the names and addresses of all the landowners along that route. The prospective trail was mapped by Kadrmas, Lee and Jackson Engineers and large maps were printed out and attached to foam core for use in the group landowner

meetings. An individual packet was made up for each prospective landowner with a copy of the individual parcel map; the easement for that parcel; North Country National Scenic Trail and Sheyenne River Valley Chapter brochures; cost matrix for possible easement payments for each county by quarter-mile increments; anticipated construction schedule; information on the expected impact to agricultural operations; and photos of signage, fence and water crossing structures. We also included a valuable brochure distributed by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department which indicates, by North Dakota Century Code, that landowners who allow access to their lands for recreational purposes without charging a fee will have limited liability to visitors to their property.

We had hoped to include information on the availability of tax credit for landowners who agree to donate easements in each packet. Unfortunately, we found out that we could not offer a tax credit as the IRS demands a perpetual easement while the state of North Dakota allows only a 99-year easement which cannot be deemed perpetual.

Letters were sent to 78 landowners along an initial route plan to invite them to two landowner meetings, one in Fort Ransom and one in Kathryn. To our disappointment, only one landowner attended in Fort Ransom. We had better attendance at the Kathryn meeting but many had met previously at the bar and were very negative at the meeting.

We had some good success in getting our easements signed but only after meeting with the landowners individually. The landowners who would not sign gave a variety of reasons, which included concerns that hikers would scare away game during hunting season; problems in the past with snowmobilers on their

North Country National Scenic Trail Private Property

**This footpath exists because of the
courtesy of private landowners.
Please do not abuse it.**

Please preserve the trail by:

- ♦ Traveling only by foot
- ♦ Staying on the trail
- ♦ Not bringing pets on the trail
- ♦ Not hunting, fishing or trapping
- ♦ Not trespassing for other reasons
- ♦ Camping only in designated sites
- ♦ Building fires only at designated campsites
- ♦ Not damaging any vegetation
- ♦ Not walking on crops
- ♦ Closing any gates you open
- ♦ Packing out all trash
- ♦ Be aware and cautious of livestock

Trail maintained by volunteers

For information about the trail or to
report problems contact the
Sheyenne River Valley Chapter
North Country Trail Association at
1-701-845-1891 or
www.northcountrytrail.org/srv

**The sticker they add to a
Carsonite post when the Trail is
on private land, in an attempt
to keep users respectful.**



It's easy to see why DR Mowers are so vital to North Dakota Chapters! These are from new trail on private land north of Clausen Springs. For those of you who haven't had to use one, the orange metal thingum being carried by one volunteer is the tool needed to drive Carsonite posts into the ground.

Photo: Matt Davis



property cutting fence lines, cutting across pastures and fields, chasing game, and creating trails across haylands cutting down production for the following year; fears that the cattle in the pastures might attack hikers; the possibility that a hiker with a dog would chase cattle or scare them and cause them to run through fences; and many landowners have had snowmobilers, horseback riders, hunters and ATV riders abuse their privileges after they have been given permission to access the land and feared hikers would be the same way.

Not to be dissuaded, the Chapter offered many

Fortunately each of our states has a recreational usage liability policy, all of them close enough in intent that we can be comfortable when assuring all potential landowners that they will not be held to any extra level of liability by having a trail on their property. And that is critical, since EVERY landowner's first question is about liability!

What North Dakotans learned during this process about the importance of negotiating with local hikers and trail workers is absolutely true. In fact, there is one landowner of many years' duration in New York who said our trail built by local people was just fine, but he didn't want anything connected with the federal government on his land! So his trail isn't NCT, but features NCT stickers where the Trail leaves his place in each direction. To keep his long stretch of Trail intact, we're happy to comply.

Money is a delicate question. It probably does help, and Becky assures us that the Recreational Trails Program grant that the SRV Chapter applied for is available to any of us. On the other hand, some Trail hosts (Chapters and Affiliates) have decided to try first for donated easements, which has been pretty successful so far, but it must be admitted that each of them is far from any other, so they are scattered widely and do not contribute to continuous Trail except in a few wonderful instances, especially where private land abuts public segments.

Yes, it IS a long process that will possibly last a generation or more, but that's no reason not to start now.

— Irene Szabo, Editor

Continues on page 24



compromises in exchange for easement signatures. Private landowner stickers were designed for entrances to those lands to include additional rules set out by those landowners. We had special signs made up to indicate that a segment would be closed during deer hunting season which are posted on each end of that particular segment. We offered to build or repair fence lines and in one instance reburied a washed out culvert in order to access land to build trail. We also had a few landowners who were hesitant to sign the typical 99-year easement so we developed a 25-year easement for them with an automatic renewal clause, unless the landowner gives notice in advance.

Since we were not using all the funding for easement acquisition for our local segment, we gained permission to use some to acquire easements in Richland County to fill in the gap between the Sheyenne National Grassland and the North Dakota border for the Dakota Prairie Chapter. Richland County land values were added to the cost matrix sheet and seven easements developed. One easement was signed by the North Dakota State University Development Foundation for 3.5 miles of Trail across the Albert Ekre Grassland Preserve.

Over the course of this project there were many lessons learned. While it might be nice to hire a professional whose sole duty it is to acquire easements, many landowners would still rather talk to a local person who has worked with them in the past, who is familiar with the process and can tell them what they can expect in allowing hikers to cross their land. Local contacts are imperative with respect to trust. It is also a good idea to have a Notary along when you meet as the easement can be signed right there.

We learned that group landowner meetings do not work well. People tend not to show up for those meetings. Also, in a group, negative people feed off each other and things can end up in a shouting match. One-on-one meetings with individual landowners or families work so much better, although it takes a huge commitment of time and effort. Also, do not let too much time pass between the initial landowner meeting and the second contact.

Each state will have its own legal requirements that will have to be researched. The state's governing documents may not mesh with IRS tax code for deductibility, liability issues for recreational purposes and probably several other issues.

Enthusiasm for this project ran high in our Chapter at the beginning of this project even though we felt a little daunted by the size of the undertaking. It is important not to expect too much. It is just not possible to get 100% of the easements for which you aim. Over the course of this project a total of 93 easements were developed. However, we were successful in obtaining 24 easements for approximately 29 miles of Trail: 18 easements in Barnes, five in Ransom and one in Richland County. Two landowners in Barnes County donated their easements and several donated some of their easement

payments back to the Chapter. We were very appreciative of their support!

We were not successful in filling in all our gaps with this project as the property owners are located out of state. We continue to try to contact these landowners via phone or email but that makes it very difficult to negotiate routes and is a time-consuming process. However, we continue to strive for continuous Trail and we are sure we will make that goal one day soon! ✨

Working with landowners is a challenging task that not all volunteers feel comfortable taking on but we're here to help. NCTA does provide resources to guide you in the process like a Trail Protection Handbook, easement templates, Landowner Options brochure and a grant to fund easements and other trail protection costs. You'll find these resources on our website and can reach out to our trail management staff for more information.

— Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director





Maps for Trail Users Made by Trail Users

By Matt Rowbotham, NCTA GIS Coordinator and Mapmaker, and Randall Roberts, Buckeye Trail Association hiker



Taken from a high bridge along the Sandy Creek Trail, a side trail that departs the river trail eastward, and features great soaring trestles and a tunnel. Our Trail takes this route.

Photo: Matthew Patterson

With 4600 miles of trail weaving through eight states, free maps are one of the most valuable resources the North Country Trail Association can offer to NCT users. The NCTA's online map provides hikers with direct access into the data that drives all our maps. This access comes without the historical limitations to detail set by a traditional map's scale. Users can see the data at an extremely detailed view, as well as overlay it on a variety of base maps or satellite imagery. This, combined with the tools many hikers carry with them on the Trail such as GPS receivers and smartphones, makes the opportunity for crowdsourced corrections and updates to our map information more feasible than ever.

This summer as we were focused heavily on updating our maps in Pennsylvania, just such an opportunity came together. A couple of Buckeye Trail volunteers were section hiking their way across the NCT in Pennsylvania, and their next section hike happened to be in the exact area we were updating. We connected, and they agreed to ground truth our existing data and take GPS recordings during their hike. The NCTA employs only one GIS Coordinator, so this variety of volunteerism is terrifically helpful and deeply appreciated.

"Paper maps are great, but they're only as good as the information on them," wrote Randall Roberts, who generously collected GPS data in Pennsylvania for the NCTA. "Electronic mapping allows access to more data beyond what would otherwise go into simple paper maps and can be more useful in planning and navigating."

"Until recently, I've been more of a day hiker and my biggest challenge in planning hikes has been finding places to park and breaking up the hike into manageable section lengths," added Randall. "Gearing up for more backpacking



The Allegheny River Trail that goes for miles right along the river. Our Trail hops on it for a spell.

Photo: Matthew Patterson

adventures, the challenge grows. Where do I camp and how far is it between campsites? Dave Galbreath of the Clarion Chapter was very helpful by providing me with a mileage chart as to where parking and camping sites were located. This is a handy tool for planning hike distances between campsites but the shelters on the affiliated bike paths - Allegheny River Trail and the Sandy Creek Trail - were not located on the map and I was concerned about how obvious they would be. The mileage chart was in whole miles, so the actual location could be plus or minus a half-mile! What if I missed a shelter? On one hike, I entered the shelter's published coordinates into my Garmin GPS and proceeded to wander around in the woods looking in the wrong location because the information was incorrect. If I had simply stayed on the trail a quarter mile more, the shelter's location was obvious and well-marked."

Making the NCTA aware of inaccuracies in our maps, or even better, sending in GPS data of the correction, is a great way for everyone to contribute to furthering the mission of the NCTA and giving back to the Trail and community we're all a part of.

"As I hiked the Clarion section, I wanted to make sure that the information was available and correct for future trail users," wrote Randall. "I had set out to simply hike the Trail but if I can help by verifying information and taking some GPS readings, then I'm happy to do that."

All in all, Randall and his hiking partner Matthew Patterson ground truthed over 40 miles of trail for all of us. The now-updated Pennsylvania map series includes – for the first time – new maps that cover the Trail in Butler, Clarion and Venango Counties. These updates complete the section maps for the NCT in Pennsylvania, totaling just over 280 miles. All maps are available at northcountrytrail.org. ✨

While on the Trail, if you encounter something that doesn't look right or doesn't appear on a map, feel free to send it in. (GPS data is appreciated but not required.) Map questions and corrections can be sent to Matt Rowbotham at gis@northcountrytrail.org.



Arrowhead Reroute Update

By Matt Davis

The Arrowhead and Kekekabic Chapters are making progress in the Arrowhead Reroute gap area.

Volunteers of the Arrowhead Chapter have already been busy scouting new NCT route southwest of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, on lands owned by private landowners, UPM Blandin paper company, the State of Minnesota, and Itasca County. These forested lands contain glimpses of the iron mining history prevalent on the Mesabi Iron Range. All of the landowners are very supportive of the North Country Trail and the Chapter is working on growing its volunteer base to be able to tackle future trail construction and maintenance.

The Chapter is embarking on community outreach and volunteer recruitment events this fall. In early October, one event featured a Hikers' Social at a local brewpub and a guided hike at McCarthy Beach State Park. New partnerships have formed with like-minded organizations that are supportive of NCTA efforts including ReGen, Mesabi Outdoor Adventures, and the IRC Adventure Club.

Similarly, the Kekekabic Trail Chapter has begun meeting with groups and agency partners in the Ely, Minnesota, area to get started on the development of the NCT in between the Kekekabic Trail's western trailhead and Ely. A draft route has been identified and scouting will commence this fall or winter. There are existing portage trails and campsites on some of the lakes outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) that might be utilized. The Superior National Forest will not allow new trail



This new pedestrian bridge in Grand Rapids will take the NCT over the Mississippi River

Photo: Matt Davis



Volunteers gather on the flag line overlooking the Tioga Pit, an old iron mine

Photo: Matt Davis

to be built within the BWCAW.

The NCTA and National Park Service are also looking at ways to do more detailed route planning than what occurred in the Northeastern

Minnesota Route Assessment planning effort approximately 15 to 20 years ago. NCTA staff are also exploring grant funding options and talking with major partners about working together. ✨

Great Trail Sandy Beaver Chapter Merges with Wampum Chapter

By Andrea Ketchmark and Dave Brewer

This August the NCTA Board of Directors approved a proposal to merge the Great Trail Sandy Beaver Chapter in Ohio with the Wampum Chapter in Western Pennsylvania. As a result, the Wampum Chapter will now have the additional responsibility of building, maintaining, protecting and promoting the North Country National Trail from the Pennsylvania-Ohio state line to Zoar, Ohio. Previous to this, the Wampum Chapter was responsible for the Trail in Beaver and Lawrence Counties (Pennsylvania).

This is a result of much conversation with the leadership of both Chapters, NCTA staff and Board of Directors to find a way to rejuvenate the membership in Ohio and meet the needs of the Trail. The Wampum Chapter has a large volunteer base and strong leadership, and is ready to take on the challenge on both sides of the state line.

Dave Brewer, an Ohio resident of the Wampum Chapter, shares, "Taking on an additional 80 miles of trail is a huge responsibility, but our Chapter Leadership and members are ready for the challenge. We are aware of the current interest in the NCT among the outdoor enthusiasts of eastern Ohio, and look forward to joining in with like-minded individuals as we work to make the North Country Trail a premier hiking experience." ✨



"I have been hiking for many years at a different trail nearby. I have done a few walks with the North Country Trail Wampum Chapter in the past. Didn't realize you could do all local trails for the 100 mile Challenge, thought I had to travel to different sections. When I realized you didn't, I made my New Year's resolution to complete this challenge. I think I will go backwards now!"

Photo: Linda Mraovic from Beaver, Penna



The Wampum Chapter invites you to join them on their email distribution list, Meetup Group and Facebook page to stay informed about upcoming trail work, outreach events, hikes, and opportunities to socialize along the North Country Trail in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania. Reach out: wam@northcountrytrail.org.



North Country Trail Association

229 East Main Street
Lowell, Michigan 49331

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John Callahan: "I heard about the 2017 North Country Trail 100 Mile Challenge at an REI class on fall hiking and knew immediately I wanted to meet that challenge. So on October 11, 2017, I started hiking the Penna. segments of the NCT near home. Being retired and free, I completed 106 miles on October 27 of woods this rugged!"

Photo: John Callahan



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

Come Visit Us!

The Lowell office is open to the public Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
229 East Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331
(866) HikeNCT • (616) 897-5987 • Fax (616) 897-6605

The North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.

Our vision for the North Country National Scenic Trail is that of the premier footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience for hikers and backpackers in a permanently protected corridor, traversing and interpreting the richly diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.