

Fall 2021

The Magazine of the  
North Country Trail Association

Volume 40, No. 4

# north star



## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

2021 NCTA Awards

Parity Act

Trail Progress in  
Vermont





## ABOUT THE COVER:

"As summer turned to fall I found that hitting the Trail provided a much needed release of stress and a clearing of my mind. My young Aussie, Mesa, and I hiked the entire 100 miles together - throwing in his first two backpacking experiences in the process."

Photo: Stacey Ancans

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## STAFF

**Andrea Ketchmark**  
Executive Director  
aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org

**Valerie Bader**  
Director of Trail Operations  
vbader@northcountrytrail.org

**Nancy Brozek**  
Director of Development and Communications  
nbrozek@northcountrytrail.org

**Stephanie Campbell**  
Regional Trail Coordinator: New York and Vermont  
scampbell@northcountrytrail.org

**Matt Davis**  
Regional Trail Coordinator: North Dakota,  
Minnesota and Wisconsin  
mdavis@northcountrytrail.org

**Heather Ertle**  
Database and Membership Administrator  
hertle@northcountrytrail.org

**Kate Lemon**  
Marketing and Communications Coordinator  
klemon@northcountrytrail.org

**Tom Moutsos**  
Regional Trail Coordinator: Ohio and Pennsylvania  
tmoutsos@northcountrytrail.org

**Alison Myers**  
Administrative Assistant  
amyers@northcountrytrail.org

**Matt Rowbotham**  
GIS Program Manager  
mrowbotham@northcountrytrail.org

**Kenny Wawsczyk**  
Regional Trail Coordinator: Michigan  
kwawsczyk@northcountrytrail.org

**Abby Whittington**  
Annual Events Coordinator  
awhittington@northcountrytrail.org



## NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jaron Nyhof**, President  
jnyhof1@gmail.com

**Mike Chapple**, Vice President  
mike@chapple.org

**Mark VanHornweder**, Treasurer  
mvanhorn74@yahoo.com

**Dennis Garrett**, Secretary  
dcgcag@gmail.com

**Tim Mowbray**, Immediate Past President  
tmowbray@earthlink.net

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joshberlo@gmail.com

**Jerry Fennell**, At-Large  
jeroldvfennell@hotmail.com

**Duane Lawton**, At-Large  
delawton@torchlake.com

**Derrick Passe**, Minnesota  
derrickpasse@gmail.com

**Larry Pio**, At-Large  
nalcoman1@aol.com

**Sharon Ray**, At-Large  
sharon.ray@sni.org

**Kevin Russell**, At-Large  
kevinrussell@gmavt.net

**Jo Swanson**, At-Large  
joannamswanson@gmail.com

**Jan Ulferts Stewart**, North Dakota  
janustewart@gmail.com

**Jeff VanWinkle**, Michigan  
rvanwink@gmail.com

**Steve Walker**, Ohio  
nilesprinting@gmail.com

**Quinn Wright**, New York  
wrightquinn4@gmail.com

## NORTH STAR STAFF

**Kate Lemon**, Editor, northstar@northcountrytrail.org

**Kelly O'Hara**, Graphic Designer

**Irene Szabo, Lorana Jinkerson, Becky Heise, Joan Young, Tom Gilbert, Duane Lawton, Kate Lemon, Eileen Fairbrother, Jeff Van Winkle**  
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# TRAILHEAD

Jaron Nyhof,  
President



Photo: Vicki Nyhof

Thank you, please, please, and thank you! That may sound a bit repetitive or even nonsensical, but it's the outline for my article in this issue, and my mother taught me to use my manners. A lot.

The first "thank you" is really thousands of thank yous to each of you that make the longest National Scenic Trail and our North Country Trail Community

possible. From the big and obvious accomplishments like building new Trail, bridges and improvements, or making or raising donations, to the largely unnoticed things like writing thank you notes and cleaning up garbage at a trailhead. I'm tempted to try to list as many of the things that advance our mission as I can think of, but I suspect that would take several pages (which would violate my allotted word limit for this space and put me in serious hot water with our editor), and no matter how much time and thought I put into it, I know I would still miss dozens - if not hundreds - of the things that you all do to make this big, audacious idea possible. The myriad of things that are necessary to accomplish our mission is truly astounding. "...Develop, maintain, protect, and promote 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..., partner[ing] with the National Park Service to unite individuals, affiliated trail groups, local Chapters, corporate sponsors and others linked in support of building and maintaining the North Country Trail and telling its story." I can't even get my head around it. You all are **amazing**!

The first "please" is to ask you to please protect yourself while you're doing all of those amazing things by submitting a Volunteer Service Agreement, which is available on our website at [northcountrytrail.org/nps-vip-form](https://northcountrytrail.org/nps-vip-form). This gives you National Park Service (NPS) Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) insurance coverage. VIPs are entitled to the same injury coverage that NPS employees receive, are recognized for their contributions and earn annual recognition items from the NPS based on hours

of service, and are eligible to attend special skills and leadership training. If you or anyone you're working with in your volunteer activities has not completed and submitted a Volunteer Service Agreement, you or they may not be covered if something bad happens, which puts both you and the Association at risk. The insurance coverage is free if you take the brief administrative step of completing and submitting the form. If a significant number of you don't take that step, the Association will be forced, for the sake of prudent management, to use more of the hard earned and donated dollars that you all raise each year to buy commercial insurance in order to protect our volunteers and to protect the assets of the Association from claims. My mother taught me good manners, yes, but she also taught me sound financial management. Please take the freely available insurance option that provides federal government insurance coverage at no additional charge, for both your sake and ours.

The second "please" is to notice a number of opportunities you'll be seeing to support the Association's work with your financial contributions, as the end of the year approaches. Over 65% of our annual budget comes from \*donated funds and grants, and we simply could not do what we do without them. Every gift matters, big and small. Seriously. All contributions are tax deductible, and for those of you that itemize your tax deductions, a significant portion of your donation will offset income taxes that you would otherwise have to pay, so you'll be helping us a great deal while reducing your taxes. All contributions are also guaranteed to make you feel good, because my mom was right when she taught me that it feels better to give than to receive.

**What you do for  
or give to the Trail,  
whatever that is,  
is significant.**

The final "thank you" is for reading this far and for considering the above two requests. I'm so thrilled to be a part of such an amazing collection of volunteers, and to be working shoulder to shoulder with you in the building of our collective legacy. What you do for or give to the Trail, whatever that is, is significant. It matters, and it contributes to something larger than yourself that will last far beyond your and my days on this earth. Thank you for being wonderful! Thank you for loving the Trail. ✨

*\*2020 NCTA Annual Report, Income by Source: 57% donations including membership + 9% grants.*

**Andrea Ketchmark,**  
Executive Director



Photo: Andrea Ketchmark

On the road again! After a year and a half of staying close to home and all meetings over Zoom, I headed out on the road for some much needed time with our volunteers and partners. I knew I had missed traveling, but I was surprised at how much these trips would bring me back to life.

Later in this issue you'll read about our trip to Vermont to

meet with important partners to move the route forward and get more Trail miles on the ground. So I will spend my space here with a few thoughts from my trip to Wisconsin and the upper peninsula (UP) of Michigan: a seven-day road trip that took me to 11 waterfalls, allowed me to connect with five NCTA Chapters, attend a bridge dedication, and celebrate the retirement of one of our beloved leaders. There are too many moments of this trip to share in one page, but I do have two major takeaways from my trip:

Enjoy what we have. It's easy to get lost in all that we have yet to do, and there is a lot, but we have an incredible Trail that is ready to be explored today. On my trip to Wisconsin and the UP, I was able to visit a few locations I had never visited before, like Wren Falls, the Black River Harbor on Lake Superior, Canyon Falls, and Lake of the Clouds in the Porcupine Mountains (which is soon to be on the route of the Trail thanks to NCTA). I'd been to each of these areas before, but spent my time visiting "bad" sections of the Trail that needed a reroute, or wandering in the woods to help plan the route that didn't exist at all. Although that's an important part of the job as NCTA staff, so is experiencing the joy of hiking our best sections and celebrating the result of our hard work. One favorite moment on this trip was visiting O Kun de Kun



Photo: Andrea Ketchmark

Falls. Seven years ago, this location was one of those bad sections. Now it's a beautifully designed route that has been made accessible for all. That's the work we do and it's important to take the time to enjoy it.

There is hope. A few years ago, I was hearing from many of our Chapter leaders that they were worried about whether or not there would be others to step up into their roles when the time comes. It's a concern not unique to us. Nonprofits everywhere have been thinking about what will happen when our leadership decides they can no longer put in the hours or no longer carry those tools out into the field. But what I saw on my trip was encouraging. At every single event, I saw new and younger faces. I heard their voices tell me how excited they are to be involved, and I watched as the weight lifted off those that have held too much on their shoulders for too long. Our collective efforts in recruitment and outreach and support for our volunteers and leaders is paying off, and this should give us great hope for a bright future. My other favorite moment on this trip was being present to celebrate longtime leader Lorana Jinkerson, as she stepped down from the Presidency of our North Country Trail Hikers Chapter and nine new leaders of all ages stepped up into leadership. Our future is bright.

Although seven days on the road can wear you down, I found myself driving back energized. On this trip, I was able to spend my week hiking in beautiful places and spending time with the people that are passionate about making a difference. Our places and their passion make me proud to be part of this community. ✨

## EDITOR'S CORRECTIONS

By Kate Lemon

In the Summer 2021 issue, two articles contained incorrect statements.

- In *Measuring the North Country Trail* by Matt Rowbotham, a key word was left out of a sentence about Michigan's NCT mileage. "Michigan's big miles carry over to the on-road side as well: It has the **second** largest number of on-road miles at nearly 300." As indicated in the chart on the same page, Ohio has the most on-road miles of NCT. (*North Star*, Summer 2021, Page 26.)
- In *Privilege of a Lifetime* by Lucie Biddinger, Ohio's Buckeye Trail was referenced as being 900 miles long. Approximately 900 miles of the Buckeye Trail are congruent with the North Country National Scenic Trail, but the Buckeye Trail itself is over 1,400 miles long. (*North Star*, Summer 2021, Page 29.)



# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CORNER

## Chris Loudenslager

Superintendent, North Country National Scenic Trail



Photo: Mick Hawkins

October 1 marks the end of the fiscal year for the National Park Service, and just like any New Year's celebration, there is great excitement and anticipation of what the coming year will bring. But there is also a good deal of reflection on what was experienced and achieved over the course of the year that has come to its fruition.

One of the most compelling ways for me to reflect on what was experienced and achieved is my annual performance review with my supervisor, where I have the opportunity to share and describe all that was accomplished and give credit to all those who have contributed to the Trail's success. I knew it had been a busy and demanding year with lots of challenges, changes, and new initiatives, but the scope of all we achieved truly revealed itself as I put it all down in writing as a part of my annual report. And I know this document only scratched the surface. Fiscal Year 2021 was an incredible year for the North Country Trail, and the National Park Service (NPS) has **you** to thank for it!

As Jaron Nyhof noted in his article, "the myriad of things that are necessary to accomplish our mission is truly astounding." This is a powerful statement worth repeating, and it is without question that it is your hard work, dedication, and contributions that make the astounding not only possible, but almost routine. Please know that your accomplishments are recognized and sincerely appreciated by my supervisor and at all levels of our organization. We couldn't do it without you, and we can't thank you enough. I would be remiss if I did not also take this opportunity to recognize and thank the staff and leadership of all our partner organizations, as well as my own staff, for their astounding work, support, and accomplishments. The Trail is very fortunate to have such a talented and committed team working as one, and each member contributes greatly in very important and meaningful ways. I am very proud, and very grateful, to be a member of such an amazing team.

Looking ahead to the new year, one of the things I'm most excited about and looking forward to is building on all that we already have in place. In other words, it's my hopeful intent that there will be no big new changes in store for any of us to have to wrestle with this year. I will acknowledge that minor tweaks to existing programs or processes may still be needed, and that improvements to what we're doing or how we're doing it will still be important to pursue. But by and large, strengthening what we now have in place is where the bulk of NPS's time and energy will be spent.

To that end, let me again quote Jaron (thank you very much) and ask you to please protect yourself while you are doing all the amazing things you do. Make good plans, work safely, take precautions, and look out for each other. As Jaron indicated, signing up as an NPS Volunteer-in-Parks (VIP) volunteer is an excellent and easy way to protect yourself and each other. Having signed volunteer agreements in place also protects many of the programs and functions that we take for granted. The NPS is able to provide volunteer service awards and recognition, training, protective equipment, and other supplies to individuals because we are providing these to official NPS VIPs. Similarly, a significant portion of the annual funding that we receive is specifically provided to support these programs. It is very important to understand that to be considered an official NPS VIP, a person must now be signed up under an individual volunteer agreement with the NPS to receive these protections, benefits, and opportunities. Simply volunteering to work on the NCT or being a member of one of our partner organizations is not an alternative pathway to become a VIP. To date, we have already received hundreds of individual volunteer agreements, but to ensure that everyone is protected, our goal is for 100% coverage. If you are out there doing work on behalf of the North Country National Scenic Trail, please do not hesitate to enroll in the program. For more information or assistance about the program, please contact Nic Loiseau, Volunteer Program Manager, at (616) 302-9842 or [nicole\\_loiseau@nps.gov](mailto:nicole_loiseau@nps.gov).

Thank you again for all you do, all you accomplish day in and day out, and all the incredibly important and valuable support you provide to the people who love the Trail or are just discovering it for the first time. You make hikers happen! ✨



# Fundraising Q&A

By Nancy Brozek

## Is the North Country Trail Association a cause based organization?

Yes, the mission is cause related as it is dedicated to protecting, building, and maintaining the North Country National Scenic Trail. This is accomplished through the mobilization of volunteers, the development of Partners, Affiliates, land owners, and government relationships, and numerous projects along the Trail. All actions lead to one outcome: the betterment of our Trail as a whole.

## How does the North Country Trail Association fund its programs and operations?

As a membership based nonprofit, our revenue comes in the form of grants, corporate support, and individual giving. Individual giving includes memberships and philanthropic gifts.

## What is the Association's individual giving goal?

Our goal is to have 80% of our annual budget generated through individual giving.

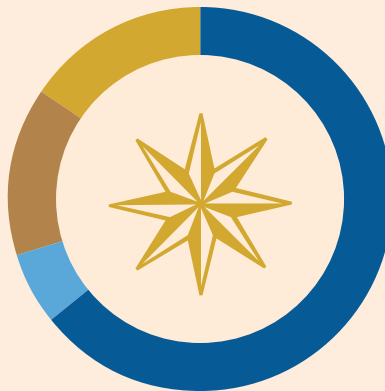
## Why is this important?

Consider your personal experience and the strong bond you have with the Trail. This structure helps us withstand funding challenges outside our control - challenges that may cause corporate and foundation support to temporarily suspend or waver. For example, in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic created financial uncertainty and instability in those areas, creating a projected decrease of annual support. However, individuals, including you, continued to support the cause. The NCTA came out of 2020 a stronger community.

## What does the Association's raised income from individuals look like?

*This data is based on a 2020 audit for the NCTA.*

## 2020 Individual Donor Giving Total \$614,725.26



● **Founders Circle (\$500+):**  
**\$390,271.96**

● **Trail Angels (\$250-499):** \$40,503

● **Trail Scouts (\$100-240):** \$89,286.24

● **Friends (\$1-99):**  
**\$94,664.06**

## If I can't make a large gift, does my gift even matter?

Absolutely! You are a part of this Community because of your commitment to the Trail, and that matters. Give, join, or renew at a level that feels right for you. Gifts

and memberships should come from a place of joy, and all of them are received in that same way. Every gift makes an impact for our mission.

## What's the truth behind unrestricted gifts?

A new study, commissioned by Bank of America and the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy shared 2020 giving trends of surveyed, affluent American households. The good news for many organizations, including the North Country Trail Association, showed donors are moving past project based funding to cause related focuses, allowing nonprofit leaders to direct money to what is most needed. The crises of 2020 provided donors with opportunity to release restrictions on previous gifts and continue support through unrestricted giving.

For the Association, unrestricted funds are crucial. The annual budget is set based on trends and projections for this type of gift. Unrestricted gifts are cause driven, and provide support to everything the NCTA does. These funds keep maps free, offer Field Grants to NCTA Chapters four times a year, and support programs like the Hike 100 Challenge, Next Generation Collection, and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI). By keeping your annual support unrestricted, you are actually making a larger contribution and impact to the whole of the Trail.

## How can I be a part of this?

Make a gift, become a member, or renew your membership:  
[northcountrytrail.org/ways-to-give](https://northcountrytrail.org/ways-to-give).

## WAYS TO GIVE

1

### Join

as a member or renew your membership.

2

### Give

a philanthropic donation.

3

### Become

a monthly donor.

4

### Request

the NCTA through your Donor Advised Fund, IRA Charitable Rollover, or Closely Held Stock.

5

### Plan

to become a member of the Legacy Society by naming NCTA in your will, trust, life insurance policy, or retirement plans.

6

### Ask

your friends and family to join you on a hike, and share your love for the NCT.

## Senator Baldwin Introduces the National Scenic Trails Parity Act

On October 7, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin reintroduced the bipartisan National Scenic Trails Parity Act: Legislation seeking to bring equity to the National Trails System.

Previously introduced in the 116th Congress, the Parity Act seeks to clarify the status of the North Country, Ice Age, and New England National Scenic Trails as units of the National Park System, a move that is critical in ensuring equity across National Trails managed by the National Park Service.

“The National Scenic Trails Parity Act is simple and common sense legislation that corrects an inequity in the management of National Scenic Trails by the National Park Service,” said Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director of the North Country Trail Association.

“The NCTA, representing thousands of partners and volunteers along one of these forgotten trails, is so grateful for Senator Baldwin’s leadership. Her support will help ensure the agency does its part to see that these national treasures get managed properly and in line with the National Trails System Act.”

This bill does not mandate more funding or resources, but rather provides access to the existing funding, programs, and publicity within the agency, putting these national treasures on equal footing for consideration.

The bipartisan legislation is cosponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ron Johnson (R-WI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Ed Markey (D-MA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Gary Peters (D-MI), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

Call your Senators today to ask them to sign on. Learn more about NCTA efforts at [northcountrytrail.org/advocacy](https://northcountrytrail.org/advocacy). ✨

# 2021 Fall Leadership Summit

By Andrea Ketchmark

Supporting the current network of leaders within the North Country Trail Community and creating space for new leaders are critical to ensuring a strong future for the Trail. NCTA's 2021 Fall Leadership Summit, a series of online workshops held in October, aimed to bring together those in a leadership role in NCTA Chapters and Affiliate organizations, staff, board members, and our Next Generation Coalition to learn from experts that can help us connect with new communities, the next generation, and have stronger working relationships with each other.

Dr. Katherine Jeffery is a generational researcher and practitioner who is passionate about guiding companies and organizations through the massive leadership transition that is happening in the world right now. She helped us understand what motivates the different generations - where we diverge, but also what can bring us together.

Dr. Carolyn Finney is a storyteller, author, and cultural geographer. The aim of her work is to develop greater cultural competency within environmental organizations and institutions, challenge media outlets on their representation of difference, and increase awareness of how privilege shapes who gets to speak to environmental issues and determine policy and action. Understanding these issues is important when we speak on behalf of the Trail and those who use it.

Amy Stork is a consultant and coach and spends her career bringing real tools to help leaders, teams, and organizations develop even deeper and more effective ways to work. Her session helped us explore ideas around leadership, governance, recruitment, and succession planning.

Together, these three sessions helped us explore how we will navigate a shift in generations and demographics, and the importance of listening to each other in the process. Stay tuned in 2022 for more workshops and exciting speakers. ✨

Learn more about our speakers at [northcountrytrail.org/leadership-summit](https://northcountrytrail.org/leadership-summit). This program was made possible in part by a grant from the National Park Foundation.



Learn.  
Reflect.  
Implement.

## New NCTA Events Calendar Coming Soon

In early 2022, the NCTA will launch a custom, interactive, online events calendar at [northcountrytrail.org/events](https://northcountrytrail.org/events).

At present, the online events calendar is populated using multiple Google Calendar accounts, managed by each NCTA Chapter. While this allows Chapter volunteers to add events at their convenience to a publicly viewed platform, there are sorting and searching restrictions. For example, it is not currently possible to search by event type, like group hikes or trail workdays. As our Trail Community continues to grow and offer more workshops, trainings, and other events, we want to ensure everyone is able to easily access these opportunities.

The next generation of this calendar will include three separate ways to view NCTA events: a map (that includes the NCT line), a list, or a calendar. All events will be searchable by date, state, Chapter, and event type: Hike, Trail Project, Training, Meeting, or Event (tabled functions, festivals, etc.). Ultimately, it will be more user friendly, and it will highlight events trailwide more effectively and consistently.

NCTA staff will work with Chapters this fall to fine tune details of event submission, RSVP options, sharing on social media platforms, and more. Visit [northcountrytrail.org/events](https://northcountrytrail.org/events) in January 2022 to get involved and see the new calendar in action.

The NCTA extends many thanks to Bell's Brewery for their support of this project, and to Lake Effect Digital for their web development work.



# Support the Mission

By Nancy Brozek

As the NCTA Director of Development and Communications, you expect me to talk about fundraising, and I confess, I am always up for the conversation. I enjoy sharing your stories and connecting the work that is being done for the Trail because of your support.

Now I would like to speak with you in that role, but also as a fellow NCTA member and donor to the mission. Giving is a choice, and my role is to present you with opportunities to choose. These come in the form of appeals (spring and end-of-year), a membership dDrive (fall), and in monthly membership renewals.

As a fellow member and donor, I make the choice to personally give to the mission. I believe in everything the Trail stands for and know firsthand what it gives back to people. Annually, I renew my membership to support my local Chapter. I give in appreciation of our volunteers' hard work. I want to protect the North Country Trail, just as you do. I chose to become a monthly donor because it allows me to join the Founders Circle in a way that works within my budget. A small gift on a monthly basis truly adds up!

Throughout November and December, you will be given a choice to participate in our End-of-Year Appeal. As in past years, this appeal will include a sizable challenge match gift on **#GivingTuesday: November 30**. There are so many ways to be a part of the Trail Community, and I hope you will consider this option as one of them. ✨



## #GivingTuesday 2021

Challenge gift match coming November 30. Can you help us meet the challenge? 24 hours. One gift. Twice the impact. Give or join at [northcountrytrail.org](http://northcountrytrail.org).

GIVINGTUESDAY



## Hike It. Build It. Love It.

When you buy gear from the North Country Trail Association Trail Shop, you are making a direct and positive impact on the development, maintenance, protection, and promotion of the North Country National Scenic Trail. Thank you!

[shop.northcountrytrail.org](http://shop.northcountrytrail.org)



# Everyone Will Have a Voice

By Sr. Lyn Szymkiewicz

*This is the third installment of an NCTA Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) series by Sr. Lyn Szymkiewicz and it includes references to the first and second installments. Read the first in the Spring 2021 issue of the North Star, and the second in the Summer 2021 issue.*

In May 2021, the four NCTA Chapters in Pennsylvania offered a third online session addressing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) within the North Country Trail Community, specifically. The national NCTA JEDI statement encourages all volunteer Chapters to educate and raise consciousness of its trail community members locally.

The first session focused on biases and reactions, vocabulary of JEDI, and personal stories of experiences many of us may never have had on a public trail. The second session addressed representation of and barriers for race, gender, ability, and age, and examined ways of welcoming and inviting transformation within a club or group like an NCTA Chapter.

This session's focus was: "Everyone will have a voice regarding identity, classifications and demographics." It was again led by Kimberly Refosco, of both KEC Consultants and the Pittsburgh network for Outdoor Afro. The conclusion of the session addressed both short-term and long-term goals for North Country Trail Chapters.

As has been Kim's practice at each session, she begins the group's time together by acknowledging those peoples who have stewarded the land before us: the Onondaga (Seneca), the Haudenosaunee, and Susquehannock from the New York section of the North Country Trail.

The group next looked at demographics from the Beaver County area. This Pennsylvania county is 90% white with few black, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Latino groups. Then the group looked at McLean County, North Dakota. McClean County has similar demographics but the Native American population is greater than the black population. What does that have to do with the Trail? When you see the groups represented in your area's demographics, especially those of lesser numbers, the NCTA Chapters learn who they should begin forming relationships with. Kim encouraged the group to find ways to get these groups out on the Trail.

Demographics like these are easy to find, and they can help direct local Chapters to uncharted territory for folks unfamiliar with the Trail or potential new memberships.

Before we know anything about a person, the first thing we see is skin color. Kim relayed a story of her studies in Argentina, which has a long history of Italian descendants. She noted that her blackness stood out and she definitely experienced some harassment as a result of it. Having a particular skin color and experiencing negative impacts in a social setting, or in our case on the trails, means that black, Latino, or Asian faces have not been "normalized" in a hiking situation outdoors for these groups.

In emphasizing that point, Kim shared that she was seeking an image of teens to place onto a promotional poster for an outdoor activity. Her search yielded images of wholesome white youth playing basketball or casually talking with each other, while most of the images of black youth showed full-frame faces and gave the sense of what might appear as line-up images for your local police station. How conscious are we of the images and graphics we use in our trail photos that we use to promote our hikes or our membership? Do they show the real make-up of our groups and the people involved in our activities?

***Having a particular skin color and experiencing negative impacts in a social setting, or in our case on the trails, means that black, Latino, or Asian faces have not been "normalized" in a hiking situation outdoors for these groups.***

When you invite those from different groups onto the Trail, do you think about offering activities that might help people feel more comfortable? This question for Kim addressed multiple areas of diversity:

- **Do you do land acknowledgements?**
- **Have you asked someone from your roster to pronounce their name or did you attempt to try pronouncing it yourself?**
- **Did you introduce yourself with your preferred pronoun?**
- **Did you pack feminine hygiene products that might be needed in an emergency on a hike?**
- **Did you pack extra water?**

- Did you ask why they decided to join you for the day?
- When you come to a private property sign, did you discuss if that is a part of the Trail?
- If you offer a snack or meal, do you include vegan or nut-free options?
- Before you started the hike, did you mention if it was hunting season?
- Did you ask if there were any medical issues that might be relevant for this activity?
- Do you have planned stopping areas to allow for a break or allow for multiple levels of hiking ability?
- Do you identify benches or resting areas on your trail maps?
- Do you consider your hike “children friendly?”

All of these questions simply call local Chapters to a greater awareness and consciousness of who may be using the National Trails System, of which even local segments of the North Country Trail are a part, and how a local group might best keep the Trail safe and accessible to everyone. ✨

Visit [outdoorafro.com](https://outdoorafro.com) to learn more about the organization, and [pnts.org/new/resources/diversity-and-inclusion-resources](https://pnts.org/new/resources/diversity-and-inclusion-resources) for a robust resource library curated by the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS).

As part of the North Country Trail Association’s commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) on the North Country Trail, the NCTA now offers **JEDI Mini-Grants**. These mini-grants of up to \$1,000 are awarded on a rolling basis, and are intended to support JEDI-focused affinity groups or individuals leading experiences on the North Country Trail. Learn more at [northcountrytrail.org/grant-and-financial-management](https://northcountrytrail.org/grant-and-financial-management) or contact [jedigrants@northcountrytrail.org](mailto:jedigrants@northcountrytrail.org).

## Celebration 2021 Recap

By Andrea Ketchmark and Abby Whittington

We had another successful Annual Celebration this year with a total of 349 participants registered. On average, there were 30-40 participants for each live event and 26 people said this was their first Celebration. We are so happy you could join us.

Kicking off with a social hour, this year’s event was a celebration of the strength of our community even when we can’t be together in person. For two weeks we connected online, but also encouraged hiking locally and sharing your stories on social media. It was fun to see so many photos of hikers in green t-shirts connecting to the Trail and each other, and then sharing your experiences back with the group.

A wide variation of topics across the 17 separate events this year helped keep participants refreshed in the virtual environment. Topics included hike planning, cultural resources, trail ethics, map tools, and trail planning. There was a Next Generation Coalition panel, a writer’s workshop, and our time to honor our volunteer leaders in our National Park Service and NCTA Award ceremonies. Keynote speaker Heather “Anish” Anderson read from her newest book, *Mud, Rocks, Blazes: Letting Go on the Appalachian Trail*, and we heard from Jo Swanson about her 94 nights on the Superior Hiking Trail. Our favorite moments were simply connecting with each other during the discussion times and breakout sessions.

One benefit of the virtual environment was the ability to record events and offer them to Trail Community members who were unable to attend the live events. All recordings from 2021 Celebration can be found at [northcountrytrail.org/celebration/schedule](https://northcountrytrail.org/celebration/schedule) until Spring 2022. They will remain on YouTube after that: [youtube.com/northcountrytrail](https://youtube.com/northcountrytrail).

Thank you to Susan Giering and the Clarion County Chapter for your work helping us pull together a great event. And thank you, everyone, for showing up online and for proving once again how resilient we are as a community.

We hope you’ll join us in October 2022 - in person! - in Walker, Minnesota. Event details will be posted at [northcountrytrail.org/celebration](https://northcountrytrail.org/celebration) throughout 2022 as plans solidify.





Representatives from Green Mountain Club, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) met at the GMNF Rochester Ranger Station to discuss the expansion of the NCNST in Vermont.

Photo: NCTA

## Trail Progress in Vermont

By Stephanie Campbell and Valerie Bader

Since the eastward extension of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) into Vermont in 2019, NCTA has been working to build partnerships with local land managers, land owners, volunteers, and partner organizations in the Green Mountain State. In 2019, a team of stakeholders from nonprofits and land management agencies met virtually, but Covid-19 halted travel plans to meet in person until recently.

In August 2021, Stephanie Campbell, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator for New York and Vermont, organized an in-person stakeholder meeting. NCTA staff eagerly traveled to Vermont and were joined by partners from the Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT), Green



Middlebury Area Land Trust staff and volunteers showcase the newly constructed boardwalk on the Trail Around Middlebury.

Photo: Stephanie Campbell

Mountain Club (GMC), and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Agency partners from the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) also joined in a meeting hosted by the Green Mountain National Forest.

The partners discussed roles and responsibilities in how the North Country Trail is managed. We considered current trail routing and potential new trail segments across the National Forest, easements and private lands. The group also discussed plans for the Eastern Terminus at Maine Junction where the North Country Trail, Appalachian Trail, and Long Trail meet.

Chris Loudenslager, NPS Superintendent for the NCNST, shared, "I am so impressed and appreciative of the level of energy, interest, and expertise that each person and each organization brought into our discussions. I'm very grateful that the future of the North Country National Scenic Trail in Vermont is so well assured with all these great partners."

The following day, the group spent a productive field day hiking prospective segments of the NCT. MALT showcased a possible route from East Middlebury where the NCT could connect across private land to the National Forest's Moosalamoo National Recreation Area. GMC and the USFS staff guided the team on the Forest's Sucker Brook Trail, which connects to the famed Vermont Long Trail and will serve as the future route of the NCT. The lush forested landscape offers many opportunities for an incredible hiking experience, one sure to be enjoyed by many future NCT hikers.

To close out the time in Vermont, NCTA staff were fortunate to visit



NCTA, Green Mountain Club and Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) staff scout a potential NCT route where the dam is being rebuilt at the Sugar Hill Reservoir in the Moosamaloo National Recreation Area, GMNF.

Photo: Stephanie Campbell

the Trail around Middlebury (TAM), the first certified segment of the North Country Trail in Vermont. MALT volunteers and staff highlighted a boardwalk project that was recently funded by an NCTA Field Grant: The 96-foot boardwalk was improved by MALT staff with the help of local youth volunteers. This new boardwalk

is now safer and more user friendly, and better protects the surrounding wetland environment.

Ken Hendrickson, NPS Trail Manager for the NCNST, commented, “We all know that National Scenic Trails are built on partnership and collaboration. Our meeting in Vermont was an important next step in building the foundation that will complete the NCT.”

The true progress of the trip was being able to build relationships and to lay the groundwork for future conversation. Hopefully, with this new foundation, we will have more on-the-ground progress to share soon! ✨



View from Mt. Moosamaloo summit on the NCT in the Moosamaloo National Recreation Area, Green Mountain National Forest.

Photo: Stephanie Campbell



NCTA's Valerie Bader and Stephanie Campbell visit the Don and Peggy Arnold Bridge over Otter Creek on the Trail Around Middlebury/ NCT with Middlebury Area Land Trust staff and volunteers.

Photo: John Derick

## Partnership

The National Trails System Act, which paved the way for our nation's National Scenic and Historic Trails, specifically recognizes the importance of local volunteers and communities in ensuring these nationally significant treasures are created with local input and cared for in perpetuity. This local-level focus and cooperative spirit calls for a slower paced approach to build the relationships and trust between partners. This is necessary to ensure the correct parties are included and feel heard.

In implementing the North Country Trail extension into Vermont, NCTA's collaborative approach is echoing the intent of the National Trails System Act: Respecting local knowledge and leadership, while providing the guidance and support necessary to produce an outdoor experience that will be enjoyed by trail users near and far for generations to come.



# National Park Service Awards 2021

By Nic Loiseau, NPS Volunteer Program Manager



In 1970, the Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program started with a few hundred volunteers. Today, hundreds of thousands of volunteers donate their time, skills, and talents to the National Park Service every year. Volunteers with the North Country National Scenic Trail are included in this amazing group of individuals. Whether you have contributed an hour, 100 hours, or thousands of hours, we thank you for your contributions!

“When a VIP agrees to share his talents, skills, and interests with the National Park Service, he is paying us one of the highest compliments possible by offering a most valued possession - his time.” (George B. Hartzog, Jr. Director, National Park Service, 1964–1972)

**We’d like to recognize the volunteers who have reached cumulative hour milestones this year.**

## 10,000 hours

Lorana Jinkerson

## 4000 hours

Jacob Detrie  
Dennis Garrett  
Joe Hardisky  
Harlan Liljequist  
Bill Menke  
Peter Nordgren

## 2500 hours

Carol Detrie  
Deb Koepplin  
Mary Ann Rebert  
Mike Toole

## 1000 hours

Tom Dahle  
Dennis Fay  
Ed Gruchalla  
Eric Gustafson  
Steve Hatting  
Barbara Jauquet-Kalinoski  
Jane Leedle  
David Miller  
Richard Ostheimer  
Debby Page  
Allan Schroden  
William Schultz  
Jan Ulferts Stewart  
Patty Warner

## 400 hours

Danny Austin  
Jan Berg  
Terry Bernhardt  
Laura DeGolier  
Grant Fenner  
Fred Gewirtz  
Michael Loscheider

Brian Hanson  
Tena Hop  
Neil Kirby  
Marjorie Krumm  
John LaFond  
Ken Mattson  
Tom Melnik  
Jaron Nyhof  
Doug Seaney  
Brad Slagle  
Susan Stover

## 200 hours

Peter Bennett  
Ryan Bowles  
Hope Bradley  
Dan Caviston  
Richard Chamberlain  
Brian Charleson  
Michael Daly  
Richard Eiler  
Don Feola  
Duane Gebhard  
Connie Geinert  
John Gerty  
Nicole Halgrimson  
Stephanie Hogan  
Don Hoppe  
John Larch  
Jim Lindberg  
Annie Matz  
Glee Mayer  
James Mellen  
Marcia Mellen  
Keith Myrmel  
Trana Rogne  
Sandi Sanderson  
George Schmit  
Michael Sekely  
Connie Sherry  
Bill Smith  
Brad Stewart  
Heather Turner  
Jim Waters

## 100 hours

Carole Bard  
Bob Berg  
Carol Bertucci  
Karen Campbell  
Sarah Collier  
Jake Deal  
Jim DeKett  
Daniel Geiger  
Kristin Dahl  
John Diebel  
Rick Duemling  
Cathy Flory  
Jim Fogarty  
Paul Foley  
Theresa Hirkakis  
Ralph Horvath  
James Howell  
Jonathan Hughlett  
Paul Ignatowski  
Steve Kickert  
Nancy Kreft  
Michelle Lackey Olsen  
Cal Lamoreaux  
Pat Leary  
Matt Long  
Doug Mangold  
Dave Matz  
Donna Menke  
Heather Moyer  
Teresa Nelson  
Mary Lee Nielson  
Dennis Olsen  
David Peterson  
Jerry Pio  
John Pitale  
Tom Podlesny  
Ethel Resh  
Thomas Rossberger  
James Smart  
Arlene Steimle  
Nate Thompson  
Jeanne Sekely  
Robert Traczyk  
Shawn Weishaar  
Jacqui Wensich



## 2021 NCTA Awards

Let us recognize our volunteers, members, and friends who contribute above and beyond to the growth of our North Country Trail. The Awards Committee is pleased to recognize the following award recipients, as nominated by those who work with them.



### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

#### Mike Stafford

Mike joined the Heritage Chapter in 1999 and has been an active member since, despite living in the Milwaukee area, over 300 miles from the Heritage Chapter's Trail section. For 22 years he has traveled this distance, while maintaining his interest, enthusiasm, and energy to fulfill his volunteer responsibilities to the Chapter. He served as Treasurer from 1999-2011, and President from 2008-2020. A true jack-of-all-trades, Mike has organized hikes, coordinated media and outreach efforts, built and maintained trail, recorded GPS data, provided financial guidance, and so much more.

Iron County is one of the least populated in Wisconsin, and a very difficult place to find trail volunteers. But because of Mike, Chapter membership has sustained and has grown locally. He also partnered with Northland College to establish an intern program for students to volunteer. Thanks to his planning and financial prowess, many miles of new Trail have been built and permanent easements have been acquired. He has been a Chapter pillar and mainstay.



### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

#### Richard Naperala

Dick Naperala joined the Grand Traverse Hiking Club (GTHC) Chapter in 1994 and immediately became very active in Chapter activities. He has served as Chapter President then Trail Coordinator. During his time in the latter position, he spearheaded numerous Trail relocations that eliminated roadwalks, separated the NCT from the Michigan Shore-to-Shore State Horse Trail, and moved the Trail away from pipelines.

Of the Chapter's 107 miles of NCT, about 70 are on new routes different from those we originally maintained in 1994. Dick coordinated large-scale outreach efforts around the Traverse City area, approached land managers, scouted new routes, created many crucial partnerships, and directed Trail construction. He also identified and collaborated with community leaders in Fife Lake and Kalkaska, working the towns' (current) NCTA Trail Town designations. Dick Naperala has been the heart and soul of the GTHC Chapter, and it would be difficult to imagine what this section of NCT would be like without his efforts.



### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

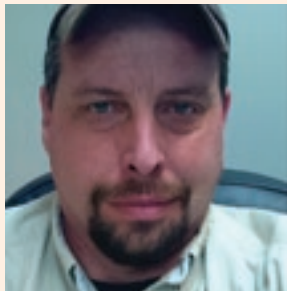
#### Mick Hawkins

Mick was recruited to the Chief Noonday Chapter by his brother Larry in 2002 because "he needed to get out more and meet new people." Though he lived nearly an hour away from the Chapter area, he participated in many activities. He became Chapter Webmaster in 2005, creating the Chapter's online presence and developing email communications for members and friends of the Chapter. These major efforts won him an NCTA Communicator of the Year Award in 2007. He has also served as Chapter Secretary, Trail Adopter program lead, and unofficial liaison to the Michigan DNR, and he has received a number of NPS awards for his thousands of service hours.

Mick put in endless miles on the Trail to collect GPS data - much of the early NCT mapping work in Barry County was done by him. His high-quality maps were often featured (and maintained by him) at trailhead kiosks in three counties. He has been a prolific photographer for both the Chapter and NCTA at a national level, and continues to put much effort into training, coordinating, and celebrating other Trail Adopters.



## FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

**Eric Peterson, Iron County Forest**

Approximately 30 miles of Wisconsin NCT passes through or is planned in the Iron County Forest. In his role as Forest Administrator for the county, Eric has approved new Trail segments and multiple campsites, and applied for DNR water permits. But perhaps most significantly, he helped

the NCTA complete the 112-foot Bill Thomas Bridge in 2020 - a structure desired since 1992. This bridge has opened up isolated territory, creating new Trail and eliminating 10 miles of roadwalk. Eric tracked finances, managed permits, and oversaw construction.

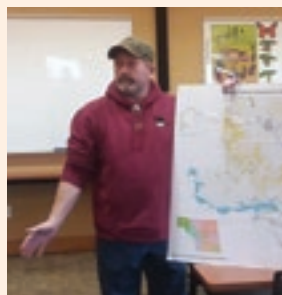
## FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

**Greg Bernu, Carlton County**

Efforts to move Trail off-road near the Minnesota-Wisconsin state line were stalled for 10 years until 2020. When a Brule-St. Croix Chapter leader noticed a strategic parcel for sale, they approached Greg, Carlton County (Minn.) Land Commissioner. Greg then collaborated with Eran

Sandquist of Pheasants Forever, and through a grant and a match, Pheasants Forever acquired the property. Greg agreed to manage the area long-term as non-motorized, and gave the NCTA an easement for the Trail to cross the property. He is currently developing a formal agreement between the county and NCTA to ensure continued cooperation. Without Greg's efforts, this would have remained a roadwalk with little prospect for an off-road connection.

## FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

**Kathy Baer and Todd Frerichs, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff at the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota, primarily Kathy Baer and Todd Frerichs, were instrumental in the development of a new 12-mile segment of the NCT within the Refuge between 2018 and 2020. Through three Eagle Scout projects, 52 volunteers contributed over 400 hours. Kathy and Todd let volunteers use the visitor center and maintenance shop during non-work hours for equipment storage and Carsonite post preparation, accommodating even during the pandemic.

Kathy and Todd have gone above and beyond with outreach efforts, as well. The NCTA anticipates a long-term relationship with them that benefits the NCT, the Refuge, and the American public.

## TRAILBLAZER

**Andrew Schlegel, Great Miami Outfitters**

Great Miami Outfitters of Dayton, Ohio has been a huge supporter of the Trail and adventure sports in the Miami Valley for years. Whenever we have requested donations or sponsorships for various events, the answer has always been "sure, how much?" They have consistently donated

merchandise and held fundraising events for the Buckeye Trail Association (BTA) on their own, without asking. It is not unusual to receive a call from them, stating they raised money from a promotion and asking where to send the check. They always offer meeting space and assistance, and keep NCT maps handy for the local hiking community.

## **SWEEP**

### **Bob Cooley**



Bob is the Chief Noontday Chapter's tool "Quartermaster," attending a majority of Chapter workdays, outreach events, and meetings, and regularly serving as group hike sweep. He was also a Trail Adopter for two public parks in Calhoun County (Mich.) and for years, mowed trail

and serviced the DR mower as needed. He tirelessly uses his own time to work on specific projects, like building benches in his home garage or using his pickup truck to deliver trail supplies. Bob doesn't ever seem to frown or raise his voice or even appear frustrated. He is always an upbeat inspiration to those who meet and work with him.

## **SWEEP**

### **Darleen Warren**



Darlene and her husband joined the Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter in 2006. They became Trail Adopters at that time and continue to maintain the same section 14 years later. Darlene became a Board member; Chapter Treasurer in May 2008 and has held that position for 12

years now. She has organized the Chapter's biggest fundraiser for the past five years at the Bay Shore Marathon in Traverse City: She schedules about 12 volunteers to staff the parking lots at the event every Memorial Day weekend.

## **SWEEP**

### **John Fomusa**



John is the Chief Noontday Chapter Vice President of Trail Management (as of 2020), as well as a Trail Adopter and often, group hike sweep. With coordinated efforts, John organized sawyer certification classes for volunteers, communicated with work crews, led construction of a

new puncheon walk, and assisted the NPS in managing invasive species in Augusta, Mich. - all during a pandemic that caused widespread restrictions. John spearheaded updating and expanding the Chapter's outreach efforts to include social media promotion and attendance at unique events. He is dedicated to trail construction, maintenance and building, and his fellow Chapter members.

## **TRAIL BUILDER**

### **Duane Lawton**



Duane has been a catalyst for much of the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter's trail building efforts for well over a decade. From route identification and planning, to scouting, to pursuing landowner agreements, to trail construction, he has been integral. Duane is an

inspiration with his dedication, willingness, enthusiasm, engineering know-how, and construction experience. All of that has fostered the creation of many miles of amazing Trail. He is capable, thoughtful, and methodical. He is the Chapter's "Trail Builder Extraordinaire!"





### TRAIL BUILDER

#### Jamie Guy



Jamie was instrumental in planning the Old Man's Cave section of the Buckeye Trail (BT)/NCT to be moved completely off-road. As the property steward for the Pretty Run Preserve in Vinton County, Ohio, Jamie single handedly built the first ever moldering privy on the BT/

NCT and constructed, by himself, a new backpacking shelter. Most recently, he helped develop and lay out the new BT/NCT route through two state nature preserves and state forest in Hocking Hills, getting more Trail off-road. His impact on the Trail in this region will be felt and seen for the next 60 years of the Buckeye Trail's existence.

### TRAIL BUILDER

#### Jack Miller



Jack has been an active member of the Central New York Chapter for more than 22 years. He has served faithfully, with distinction, and without reservation in several capacities: Chapter President, Treasurer, and voting board member/director. He is currently a director-at-large.

He participated in nearly all work hikes that created the Chapter's section of NCT in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and continues to do so with skill and motivating attitude. He serves on multiple Chapter committees, and played a critical role in Canastota, N.Y. becoming an NCTA Trail Town. He has been an active steward since the Chapter's chartering, monitoring and maintaining numerous sections with diligence and willingness. Jack shares his love for the environment and the outdoors with spirit and zeal that is an inspiration to all who join him.

### TRAIL BUILDER

#### Bob and Jane Leedle



In 2007, Jane signed Bob up for a Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew event, at which the crew built a large, two-log bridge in the Rainbow Lakes Wilderness and used primitive trail skills. Soon after, Jane joined too. Most often, they choose to participate when the construction of a large,

complex structure is on the schedule: They've helped build six large, A-truss bridges and several stretches of puncheon, hundreds of feet in length. Together, they've accumulated over 2,500 volunteer hours. Bob is a crosscut saw aficionado and has advertised trailwide to perform sharpening services. One recent winter, the Leedles stored a crew trailer at their home and spent many hours repairing and upgrading it at their own expense. They have also made a number of generous donations to the NCTA, and have supplied the Roving Trail Crew with many tools, enabling them to function more efficiently.

### TRAIL MAINTAINER

#### Chuck Church



This 82-year-old gets the crew out every week, first visiting the Trail on his own to prioritize work. When returning from a day of hot, muggy, bug-infested trail maintenance with chainsaws, mowers and clippers, Chuck spends a couple more hours sharpening chains and blades.

During the winter, he uses a snowblower to maintain access and parking at trailheads. He speaks with local county commissioners about funding and ensures all kiosks are maintained with literature. Volunteer safety and wellbeing are his priorities, and he takes his role seriously.

#### TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Brian and Deb Charleson



Together, Brian and Deb coordinate trail maintenance across the Wampus Chapter's NCT range. They recruit and equip maintainers, communicate with them throughout projects, and even take on maintenance tasks themselves on un-adopted miles - sometimes spending

entire weekends ensuring the Trail is in great shape. Brian maintains the Chapter's equipment. Deb is the lead for the PA Hike 50 program for the entire state, tracking completion sheets and ensuring patches and certificates are delivered. The Charlesons also implemented the Chapter's Mile Marker program, installing Carsonite posts along the Trail in Beaver County to aid navigation and maintenance efforts. They have been consistent contributors to Chapter outreach activities, as well.

#### TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Jerry Marek



Jerry joined the Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter about 24 years ago. For 22 years he has been a sector coordinator overseeing Trail Adopters for 15.5 miles of the NCT north of the Manistee River, and a Trail Adopter himself for 2.5 of those miles. He is the trail

crew coordinator, scheduling work sessions along the Chapter's 100 miles of Trail. He leads the Chapter's mowing crew and schedules the use of the three mowers. As if that's not enough organizing, Jerry is also the contact for Scouts seeking projects on the Trail. Jerry is currently on the Chapter board, and keeps track of volunteer hours at the local nature center to "pay" for the use of the facility for Chapter meetings. He is a regular at the Chapter's Michigan Department of Transportation Highway Clean-Up project and the Chapter's annual fundraiser at the Bayshore Marathon in Traverse City, Mich.

#### TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Lawrence Eisinger



Lawrence was first a member of the Minnesota Waters and Prairie Chapter and now, the Itasca Moraine Chapter. For many years, Lawrence has been maintaining and relocating Trail, chainsawing, and building bridges and puncheon. Since 2018 he has been mowing and maintaining

almost 10 miles of Trail. His ingenuity is deeply appreciated: In 2015 while helping the Star of the North Chapter maintain trail, one mower broke down. With no tools to fix it, Lawrence solved the problem by mowing a couple miles pulling the mower backwards. In addition, Lawrence purchased his own DR string trimmer/mower for trail maintenance and provides his own fuel. He's always willing to mow when another adopter is unable to. Last year he said he loved being out on the Trail so much that he would pay for the privilege.

#### TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Joe Kravetz



Joe has been a trail maintaining dynamo for the Heritage Chapter for 15+ years but he really impressed us in May 2020 when the pandemic caused travel restrictions. Joe is one of the Chapter's few volunteers that lives close to the Trail. He spent 14 days on the Trail, accompanied by

Bethany Thomas for 12 of those days. They managed to maintain the entire Chapter's NCT section. Joe attends nearly every Chapter work weekend, except once when he had surgery. Sometimes he will finish off projects that the Chapter starts: A couple years ago, they ran out of time to complete a reroute during a scheduled work weekend. Joe hiked over a mile in and completed the section on his own over several different days. The Chapter was then able to start a different project the next work weekend.



## VANGUARD

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Bureau of Parks and Recreation Management**

The NCT was designated a State Trail in Wisconsin in 2000 by its Natural Resources Board. Because of this, the Wisconsin DNR has a vested interest in seeing the Trail completed within the state and has taken significant action to benefit the Trail. The Wisconsin DNR has purchased lands and created easements for the NCT from approximately 25 different landowners. It has secured funding for bridges, provided grant guidance, and coordinated compliance work and property acquisition. Not only are they working on this joint trail, but they are doing it in a way that makes it obvious they truly value the NCT as a resource for Wisconsinites. Special thanks to Brigit Brown, Drew Hanson, and Dan Yankowiak!



## VANGUARD

**M. Benois Walton**

Benois is a Darlington Borough [Pa.] Council member and has served her community for many years. When the Wampum Chapter expressed interest in making Darlington an NCTA Trail Town, Benois saw its potential. She attended Chapter meetings, and helped in many ways to further the

Trail and its relationship with the town. She projects a warm and cheerful attitude, and always visits and lends a hand at the annual Darlington Days event. She worked to put on a Trail Town extravaganza that brought locals to the Wampum Chapter. She also worked with Brian and Tracy Hager to form the Darlington Road and Trail 5K and together, raised over \$5,000 for the Wampum Chapter. She is currently working on grants to put an overnight, enclosed shelter and camping area in the heart of town.

## BLUE BLAZES BENEFACTOR

**Jerry and Nancy Fennell**

As longtime members and volunteers of the NCTA, the Fennells are recognized as champions in supporting charitable causes. Jerry is a six-year member of the Board of Directors, having served with distinction and full participation on multiple committees. Jerry and Nancy

joined the Founders Circle giving level in 2014 and have never wavered in their support. Ever conscious of how they might increase awareness and support of the Trail, in lieu of gifts, the Fennells requested contributions be made to the NCTA to honor their 50th wedding anniversary. They are passionate leaders who are always eager to tell the story of the Trail and they serve as ambassadors for the NCTA's mission.



## BLUE BLAZES BENEFACTOR

### Larry Bell



A pioneer in the craft beer industry, Larry has found a spot as one of the most successful craft breweries in America. He began Bell's Brewery in 1985 as a family-owned business, committed to community and the environment. He became an NCTA member in 2013 and has

consistently been in the Founders Circle giving level. A public influencer, he has used his social media platforms to share the NCTA's story and successfully challenge friends to make an annual gift. In late 2020, Larry publicly endorsed the NCTA as one of three charities he personally supported, and he committed to hiking the Trail throughout Michigan. At this same time, Bell's Brewery began a multi-layer, multi-year collaboration with the NCTA to bring increased awareness, financial support, and new volunteers and members. Larry's personal commitment of support was elevated in 2021 as he joined a Michigan Chapter and began "boots on the Trail" advocacy work.

## BLUE BLAZES BENEFACTOR

### Jan Ulferts Stewart and Jim Stewart



Grateful, respectful, and thoughtful, Jan came onto the NCTA Board of Directors ready and willing to lend her talents to advancing the mission. She is deeply involved with the Dakota Prairie Chapter and as co-chair for the Development Committee, leads by example when it comes to donor

cultivation and stewardship. She is frequently writing notes and making calls to donors to thank them for their support and to share stories about the Trail. Her kindness extends well beyond NCTA supporters to include members of the staff and volunteers. Always ready with an encouraging word and a supportive ear, she listens without judgment and offers solutions. Jan and her husband Jim are long-standing members of the Founders Circle giving level, donating time, talent, and treasure toward advancing the NCTA's strategic plan. Jan brings fresh ideas to the table in an enthusiastic and supportive manner, and serves as a mentor to many.

## RISING STAR

### Trevan and Connor Pfennig



Trevan and Connor joined the Sheyenne River Valley Chapter over three years ago, and have since recruited their parents. Both completed their Eagle Scout projects within the Chapter's NCT section. Trevan organized and led a five-mile urban signage installation throughout Valley City, N.D. He taught fellow Scouts how to blaze and install signs, was responsible for locating and inventorying supplies, and conducted safety training with the Troop. He and his Troop also assisted with a 30-foot boardwalk installation along Lake Ashtabula. He has hiked



much of the NCT in southeastern North Dakota and attended other Chapter workdays. Connor scouted 14.5 miles of Trail along Lake Ashtabula. He used GPS to note problem areas, fence crossings, and potential boardwalk locations. He then worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, his Scout Troop, and the Chapter to arrange a workday: They built fence stiles, installed signage, pruned trees, and repaired boardwalk. Connor did all this while following proper Covid-19 procedures.

## RISING STAR

### Chase Gregory



Chase, a recent college graduate, came to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) through the NCTA Next Generation Coalition program. He had initially worked with the FLTC's IT Committee - and still does - having created a custom database for the Conference. Chase's degree in

software development and willingness to undertake the task awarded him a contract. When the new database is fully operational, trail management information and reports from the NCT in New York will be readily available to the NCTA. Chase has also participated in advocacy efforts for the Trail, including Hike the Hill in Washington D.C. "That was life changing. I can't wait to go again."



## AWARDS

### RISING STAR Jake Deal



Jake has been a member of the Wampum Chapter since 2019. He started volunteering by partnering with a trail maintainer to work on a section of Trail near his home. In 2020 he joined the bridge building crew in the Enon Valley section of NCT. His attention to detail

and willingness to learn made him an asset relied upon during every build. He's courteous, friendly, and especially respectful to members of the work crew. One never has to point out that something needs to be done - he's already helping. Aside from trail maintenance, Jake participates in the Chapter's fundraisers - in particular, willing to take on the role of dressing up as the Chapter's Sasquatch for community events and hikes. He sets a good example to follow and has made a lasting impression on all who have been involved with him.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE Bruce Johnson



A retired science teacher, Bruce joined the Itasca Moraine Chapter in 2006. Not afraid of heavy work, he eventually celebrated with his Chapter the completion of the NCT from Itasca State Park to the Chippewa National Forest in 2009. Bruce was then up to the task of maintaining this

new Trail. He stores and maintains the trailers, mowers, chainsaws, and other tools on his property. He preps tools for whoever is using them next and often delivers them to the trailheads. Each spring, he demonstrates the mowers, hand tools, and blaze painting. He has led the way in developing campsites along the Trail, complete with a campfire ring, tents sites, a latrine, and his homemade "table bench." He builds and installs benches and registration boxes. Bruce attends and leads Chapter hikes, maintains relationships with local land managers, and is involved in Chapter leadership. He also helped develop the *Guide to Hiking the North Country Trail in Minnesota*, authored by his wife Linda Johnson, and Susan Carol Hauser.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE Richard Lutz



Richard joined the NCTA in 1996 and has been a most devoted and active member. He was instrumental in organizing the Wampum Chapter in 1997, and served as its first President for at least five years. The Trail had such an influence on his life, he earned a degree in Park and

Resource Management from Slippery Rock University. He has negotiated agreements with landowners - both individuals and corporations - for the Trail to traverse their properties. He has scouted, mapped, and built trail for many years. In 2011, Richard began working with the Buckeye Trail Association via AmeriCorps, and was eventually hired as their Trail Preservation Coordinator. He is now the Director of Trail Development and continues to volunteer.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE Connie Julien



Previously serving as the Peter Wolfe Chapter's Trail Manager and Vice President, Connie Julien became Chapter President in 2014. Her passion and commitment for the NCT is obvious. Connie does it all. She organizes Chapter meetings, promotes group hikes, checks in with adopters,

contacts interested volunteers, facilitates outside crews, and communicates often with the NCTA and NPS. Connie was instrumental in keeping an impressive and scenic off-road reroute project moving forward in Baraga County - scouting, flagging, organizing, communicating. Providing hikers a premier footpath that offers a superb experience is something that Connie takes great pride in. She is a gem that will be hard to replace, if not impossible, whenever that day arrives.

## COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR

### Janice Kessler



Jan was the Chief Baw Beese Chapter Communication Specialist from 2016-2019. She started the Chapter's Facebook page and kept it relevant with updates and loads of pictures. She wasn't seen with a chainsaw or spotted hauling logs, but she was often at workdays with a smile and

encouragement. She was always at Chapter meetings and gatherings, often bringing food for the group. The Chapter has Jan to thank for bringing a younger crowd into the group as active members.

## LEADERSHIP

### Brad Slagle



Brad Slagle joined the NCTA in 2014, when he was working for the State of Michigan Veteran's Affairs Office. He began attending the North Country Trail Hikers Chapter general membership meetings, often with questions and comments. Within a couple years he started working

with the Chapter's Trail Crew, volunteered to adopt a couple remote segments, and became a certified sawyer. He was elected to the Chapter Board in 2019 and serves as Chair of the NCTA Advocacy Committee. Brad has aided other committees with various tasks and projects, providing frequent and helpful insight and suggestions. He is a fantastic liaison between his Chapter and the surrounding community. He and his wife Lynn have participated in the Chapter's Softies Hike Series and have completed several Hike 100 Challenges. On multiple occasions, when thanked for volunteering, Brad was heard stating "the Trail is a labor of love." He demonstrates all the qualities that make a leader.

## LEADERSHIP

### Michael Sekely



Michael and his wife Jeanne joined the North Country Trail Hikers Chapter in 2014. They have both been active members, adopting two Trail segments and working regularly on the Trail Crew, as well as participating in meetings, group hikes, and volunteering to work events.

He and Jeanne spent hours planning and scouting a hike that brought 20 hikers from multiple Chapters to the western end of the Upper Peninsula, all with the extra precautions needed in the Covid-19 era. Michael was recently elected to an open Board Trustee position and soon thereafter, the new National Park Service (NPS) Project Planning Process was announced. Michael, alongside three other members, formed a committee to collect, organize, and submit projects on behalf of the Chapter. Michael was lead/chair. He attended NPS training, solicited proposed projects, and kept up with a slew of communications. In total, seven projects (spread over four years) were identified by the time the NPS opened the submission window. Michael's organizational skills were professional and empowering.

## LEADERSHIP

### Carol Wright



Carol serves as both the Wampum Chapter's Vice President and Secretary. She keeps the Chapter organized with accurate meeting minutes and communicates the Chapter's scheduled commitments. Carol is the Chair of the Membership Committee and leads the

Community Outreach Committee, working with other groups in the Chapter's region to arrange participation in community events to promote the NCT. She can be found covering the information tables for entire weekends during the spring, summer, and fall, answering questions and sharing information about the Trail. Carol is the lead planner when it comes to Chapter social events. She also frequents the Trail, attending trail work events, often with a paintbrush in hand, making sure the blue blazes can be followed from one end of the Wampum Chapter range to the other.





## AWARDS

### OUTREACH

#### Eric Longman



Eric has been an NCTA member for 18 years, and has held various leadership positions within the Chief Noonday Chapter. He continues to be a Trail Adopter and sawyer. His barn has been the location for building materials and workdays for many years. Eric

can be counted on to help with guided hikes, both as a leader or sweep, and coming up with ideas for themed hikes. Outreach events are also on his busy volunteer schedule, and in 2020 he came up with the Hike the County Challenge. The NCT through the Chief Noonday Chapter's section spans three counties: Barry, Calhoun, and Kalamazoo. After each county is completed, a patch, certificate, and information about the area hiked is sent to each hiker. Over 150 hikers have signed up from all over Michigan and neighboring states. A fantastic outreach event during a pandemic!

### OUTREACH

#### Julie Fromm



Julie had a great idea in 2015: For every kid in the Solon Springs (Wisc.) School District to hike on the North Country Trail. Julie, a school district aide, accomplished this by planning a schedule of 13 hikes held over a week in late spring: One for each grade level in the K-12 school, each on a separate

section of Trail in the Solon Springs area. She arranged bus transportation to and from trailheads, and for an expert trail guide to hike with each class group. Most were volunteers from the Brule-St. Croix Chapter, some Wisconsin DNR or St. Croix National Scenic Riverway staff. This program has now been held six times, though schools were closed in 2020. Kindergarteners in 2015 are now sixth graders, and each year they've seen a different section of Trail. This program can be a model for any Trail Town like Solon Springs, or any school district with nearby access to the NCT. She's now given more than 350 young people a personal experience on the Trail.

### OUTREACH

#### JoEllen Sokoloski



JoEllen joined the NCTA in 2005 and immediately took on the duties of Wampum Chapter Treasurer, a job she has now done for the past 16 years. She tracks funds, handles recurring expenses, and keeps the membership informed of the Chapter's financial status and

capabilities. The Chapter's account can be complicated and require much time, attention, and follow-up to keep organized. JoEllen has done a tremendous job of doing so. She has also been the Chapter's liaison with the Wampum Business Association and the Wampum Historical Society, and was one of the main drivers of the initiative to make her hometown the first NCTA Trail Town in Pennsylvania. She is a consistent participant in community outreach activities and can always be found in the thick of the planning Chapter social functions. JoEllen has painted her fair share of blue blazes along the Chapter's NCT range over the years, too. Her steadfastness and commitment have been invaluable.

### OUTSTANDING PRIVATE LANDOWNER

#### David and Geraldine Wregge



The Wregges enthusiastically allow the Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew to camp on their land whenever the crew project is within Iron or eastern Ashland County. They own an isolated 40-acres, surrounded for miles by Iron County Forest. When the crew first arrived, the

access road and open area in front of the campsite was freshly mowed. Later that week, Dave stopped in to see if our needs were met. After this first trip, the crew named it the Quiet Pines Campsite. It has become the crews' favorite because of its roominess, ease of access, heavy bed of pine needles for tents, and its quietness. Every couple of trips, Dave stops by to say hello. He has informed us that we are always welcome there. The use of the Wregge property is the main factor that provides the crew with a comfortable and convenient spot to work on the Trail in this entire part of Iron County. From this campsite, the crew has access to over 30 miles of NCT, all within a 10-mile drive.



## OUTSTANDING PRIVATE LANDOWNER

### Marlys Groff



Access to a 100-mile segment of NCT in southeastern North Dakota, maintained by the Dakota Prairie Chapter, was once only possible by crossing a remarkably busy, rural county road, and a mile-long roadwalk. But in 2014, Marlys Groff and her late husband Orrin generously provided an

easement on their land, making it possible for a seven-mile, off-road connection to the Sheyenne National Grasslands. The Groffs' property is a beautiful gateway to the Grasslands. Their generosity includes a 20-year, renewable easement guaranteeing the continuity of the Trail through a very historic and scenic part of North Dakota. This is among the first easements from private landowners for the Dakota Prairie Chapter. While ranching, farming and raising a family, the Groffs lived on and genuinely cared for their land. Now after more than six years of Trail usage, Marlys remains steadfast in her commitment to the Trail and is proud to be a part of the Trail Community.

## BOOTS ON THE TRAIL

### Sara Balbin and Jackie Kruse



The Chequamegon Chapter has been blessed since 2016 with the women's group, the NCT Navigators. They have acted as ambassadors for the NCT by inviting women from all over to hike the Trail on almost a weekly basis most

of the year. Their activity has expanded local interest in the Trail, facilitating new members to join. By 2018, the Navigators became more involved with stewardship, including enthusiastically adopting one of the more labor-intensive sections in the Rainbow Lake Wilderness. Sara Balbin and Jackie Kruse have been the main organizers/leaders that have brought so much success to this group and the Chapter. Sara manages Navigators outreach, providing photos and information for social media. Jackie organizes events and emails members, and attends many Chequamegon Chapter events and meetings. Through their outreach and organizational efforts, they are significantly responsible for the Chapter's very large boot print.

## BOOTS ON THE TRAIL

### Teresa Nelson



Teresa has been guiding hikes with the Brule-St. Croix Chapter for more than six years. Four years ago, she became coordinator of the Chapter's hiking program. This requires schedule organization of 10 group hikes from May to October across the Chapter's 54 miles of off-road Trail. She

then recruits from the Chapter to guide the groups, and focuses on ensuring each hiker has a quality experience. She also oversees coordination of the Chapter's annual National Trails Day and North Country Trail Day/National Public Lands Day events. Teresa has done an exceptional job of managing this substantial program, and even maintains participation data for comparison with past years - she is a professional statistician). She has engaged in research about historical and natural features along the Trail, and has served on the Chapter's Executive Committee. Teresa truly stepped up to continue the Chapter's most visible program that has been essential for introducing more people to the NCT.

## BOOTS ON THE TRAIL

### Robert Courtois



Bob has been the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter Hike Coordinator since 2018. He leads monthly hikes, and brings enthusiasm and energy through detailed announcements and post-hike summaries with photos. He typically offers both long and short hike options to accommodate varying

leg lengths, interests, ages, abilities, and schedules. Since Bob can only lead one hike at a time, he always coordinates for another Chapter member to lead the other. His friendly and welcoming demeanor promotes a fun trail experience, regardless of the weather, and is largely responsible for attracting many participants from near and far - which over time has increased Chapter membership. "If you don't bring a friend, at least one will be provided." He frequently distributes "nippers" to hikers as well, encouraging simple trail maintenance along the way. He also always carries a trash bag, just in case. Bob is an outstanding Trail ambassador for the NCT.



## NCT Long Distance Hiker Recognition and Essays

Compiled and edited by Joan Young



In 2012, a program was developed to provide a modest award and incentive to people who hike a large number of unique miles on the North Country Trail. To see the complete list of NCT Long Distance Hikers and find out how to apply for recognition, visit **explorenct.info/NoCoLo**.

There are also links to known essays, journals, and more by these hikers.

Here are the partial essays of individuals who have recently been awarded patches, though not all of their accomplishments are recent. To read their full essays, visit **northcountrytrail.org/blog** and stay tuned to **@northcountrytrail** social media.

**Lisa Snook, Findlay, Ohio**  
**and Barb Whittington, Grand Marais, Mich.**  
Central patch + Michigan, Wisconsin, Mackinac Bridge, and 1,000-Mile rockers



Photo: Barb Whittington

The North Country Trail has been an almost obsession for me for a number of years. Some unfortunate souls who have asked casually about my adventures on the Trail, expecting a few words, get much more than they bargain for with plenty of stories, a full-out passion for the Trail, and recruitment to join in the fun.



Photo: Lisa Snook

My hiking partner Barb Whittington and I completed our hike of the entire state of Michigan from the Ohio line to the Wisconsin border in October of 2020 with the goal of hiking the NCT in

Wisconsin in 2021. This fall we completed that beautiful section making our "unique mile" total over 1,371. To be

able to put our energy toward the beautiful outdoors, physical activity and a connection with others who share our love of the Trail has been a welcome departure from the world events of the year that has just passed.

This spring, while enjoying the beauty of the remote Trail near Copper Falls State Park, we came upon several NCTA Heritage Chapter volunteers going home from a day of trail maintenance. We shared a few words and realized that we were talking to the author of a wonderful brochure we had been using to help identify all of the lovely spring wildflowers we had been seeing. As I sit here reminiscing about how we so appreciated meeting the crew who had helped us enjoy our trek more by clearing the fallen trees that had obscured the Trail and by preparing a guide to the local flora, I am reminded of what the North Country Trail has brought to me and my hiking partner. Today's mental health experts extoll the importance of mindfulness, of showing gratitude, of connecting with nature and of friendships. The North Country Trail checks all those boxes.

Adding another 210 unique miles to the trek was our goal and we accomplished that, but we got so much more. As was our experience in Michigan, the North Country Trail in Wisconsin must be experienced to be fully appreciated. Each NCT experience for us has been wonderfully unique and I encourage others to enjoy their own unique miles.

Read Lisa and Barb's full essay with additional photos at **northcountrytrail.org/ldh-snook-whittington**.

**Glee Mayer, Minot, North Dakota**  
Mackinac Bridge rocker



Photo: Rennae Gruchalla

Glee recently received her central patch and North Dakota rocker, and has now added the Mackinac Bridge rocker. Read Glee's full essay from her North Dakota adventures at **northcountrytrail.org/ldh-mayer**.





## Heather Werderman, Rochester Hills, Mich.

Central patch + all state and mileage rockers, including Mackinac Bridge, and the End-to-End Hike rocker and certificate



Photo: Brian Tanzman

I did not grow up in a hiking or particularly outdoorsy family. Until I was an adult I'm not sure that I had ever been for a day hike, let alone on a backpacking trip.

In 2006 I was living in the upper peninsula of Michigan when I heard about this thing called geocaching. I started hiking so I could get to more remote caches. A few caches required short hikes on the NCT to reach, and thus I learned of the Trail.

In 2010 I met a man obsessed with the Appalachian Trail (AT), and by 2011 I was off to thru-hike it, starting my long distance backpacking career.

I'd never really considered doing the entire NCT, primarily due to its length, rumored long road walks, etc. However, after a decade of hiking I started branching out, and the NCT sounded like a fun option. I started my hike in May 2020 in North Dakota and was able to reach Defiance, Ohio by early November. I picked up again from Defiance in late April 2021 and reached the [eastern] terminus in Vermont by late August.

North Dakota had some of the most amazing bird life I've even seen. In Minnesota I got to complete the Superior Hiking Trail, something I'd always hoped to hike. Wisconsin was short, but with lots of lovely miles of well-maintained trail. I loved revisiting the UP, especially all the miles near the Lake Superior shoreline. Ohio had some nice bike paths and some interesting canal history. The Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania were a pleasant surprise, tons of off-road miles and shelters to sleep in. New York had beautiful gorges and pleasant canal walking. Though short, Vermont had some nice trails, and it was really cool to connect to the Appalachian Trail.

Of course there were challenges. The mosquitoes of western Minnesota were some of the worst I've ever seen in my life. It rained on me for a good portion of my hike through Michigan. I got hit by storm after storm

as I traversed New York. I saw many days with very warm temperatures and very high humidity. The unleashed dogs of southern Ohio resulted in some scary moments. Some sections of Trail are overgrown, or thorny, or exceedingly muddy. Finding camping was a logistical challenge in some segments.

The North Country Trail is improving every year. Even over the two years I hiked there were several map updates due to new sections of Trail being built. Someday I'm sure it'll be totally complete with many more miles of off-road trail. Still, I'm happy that I got to hike the Trail as it is now. I like the eclectic mix of trail types. The NCT has a bit of something for everyone.

Read Heather's full essay at [northcountrytrail.org/ldh-werderman](https://northcountrytrail.org/ldh-werderman).

She is the  
20<sup>th</sup> person to  
complete the  
North Country  
Trail on foot.

## Glen VanAntwerp, Tustin, Mich. and Steve Breithaupt, Cadillac, Mich.

Central patch + Michigan, Mackinac Bridge, and 1,000-Mile rockers



Glen left, Steve right.  
Photo: Diana VanAntwerp

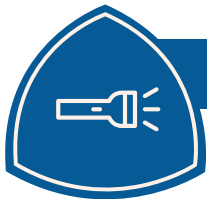
On July 1, 2021, Steve and I finished hiking all of the NCT in Michigan, some 1,160 total miles. It took us more than seven years, but we did every mile together and overcame many obstacles.

We discovered the NCT in 2014 and began occasional day hikes, starting at the Freesoil (Mich.) trailhead and

working north 150 miles that year. We always took two vehicles and positioned them for maximum trail miles with no backtracking.

The next year we added 230+ unique new miles, reaching Mackinaw City and doing the Bridge Walk before returning to Freesoil and bagging many miles

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



# Remembering Doug Welker

By Connie Julien



Doug received the Thomas L. Gilbert Lifetime Achievement Award from the NCTA in 2015.

Photo: Peter Wolfe Chapter

NCTA Peter Wolfe Chapter members are sad to announce the passing of their first Chapter President, Doug Welker.

Doug was instrumental in getting the Trail scouted and built in the western upper peninsula (UP) of Michigan in the 1980s. He organized the Peter Wolfe Chapter in the 1990s, which at the time, maintained the Trail from near Craig Lake State Park west to the Wisconsin border. He also organized NCT Volunteer Adventures over the years and was responsible for the Chapter getting three screened-in shelters with privies built on the NCT. Doug was a member of the NCTA board from 1990-96, and Vice President of Trail Management and Trail Coordinator for the UP of Michigan.

"Doug Welker was an iconic and completely committed leader in the North Country Trail Association, and a dedicated advocate for the North Country National Scenic Trail," stated Bruce Matthews, former NCTA Executive Director. "His efforts were focused, effective, and relentless in pursuit of wilderness stewardship. He loved being part of enabling people to safely and appropriately use and experience his beloved Western UP. While Doug and I didn't always agree on various NCTA policies and Chapter management concerns, I never once doubted his heart for the woods and the people that use them. Doug made a difference."

Marj Krumm, one of the first four people Doug recruited to join the Peter Wolfe Chapter, shared, "Doug was kind, humble, knowledgeable, and nonjudgmental, which helped when working with volunteers."

"What always impressed me about Doug was his ability to work with such a variety of ages of people, from Scouts to older folks doing trail maintenance," shared Connie Sherry of the Peter Wolfe Chapter. "He was so patient! A good teacher."

Dan Schneider, Chapter President after Doug, wrote an article in 2013 in the local newspaper: "...A well-made hiking trail, meandering through the woods, will look like it has always been there, so people don't always think about the hard work and stewardship that goes into building and maintaining our favorite trails. But if you are on the North Country Trail in Baraga, Houghton, or Ontonagon County, there is a good chance you are walking on ground where Doug Welker has swung a Pulaski, or a McLeod, or a fire rake..."

"Doug was one of the first people I met when I joined the NCTA," wrote Andrea Ketchmark, current NCTA Executive Director. "He had such passion and knowledge, and was such a champion for the Trail."

Danielle Foertsch ran into Doug and his wife Marjory while hiking in the Peter Wolfe Chapter's section last fall. Danielle's recollection of the encounter says so much about Doug:

"On the section of the NCT north of the falls, I happened to hike up on Marjory and Doug. Well, it was just Marjory because we all know Doug hikes super fast, so he was already yards ahead. I was immediately welcomed to join them on their hike (or Doug talked my ear off and I couldn't very well out-hike him). When we reached the road near a bridge over the Sturgeon River, we chatted for at least a half-hour I bet. Eventually, I said I thought I should turn around and hike back up the Trail to get home in time for an online yoga class. But as you can guess, Doug was having none of that, and convinced me I had time to join them in hiking a loop up the forest roads back to our cars near Silver Mountain. They shared stories of their adventures in life prior to the UP, and so did I. Marjory said she'd walked or hiked every day since 1999. I believe it! I hope I'm hiking every day when I'm their age. My heart was so full to have spent a happy, short time with them hiking in the Ottawa [National Forest]. They really made my day, and I thought I'd run into them again. But alas, Doug has left us far too soon. His passion for nature, the Trail, and people was contagious, and I am saddened to not have the opportunity to unexpectedly hike with him again. I've never felt so much loss about meeting someone I'd met only once, but you can't help but feel love for Doug and Marjory and their kind, welcoming energy."

Doug was the Chapter President until 2013 and a year later, retired from the Chapter board. He stepped away from several other organization boards and committees around the same time. In his resignation letter to the Chapter board, Doug wrote:

"At my age (68), I am looking at how I want to primarily spend the rest of my life, and I do not look forward to



Doug and Happy monitor the Trail in heavy, UP snow. His wife Marjory said, "Here is a picture that I think says a lot."

Photo: Marjory Johnston

a future of major commitments. I feel that there are plenty of things I can do now (backpacking, multi-day hikes, paddle trips) but may not be able to 10 years from now, so now is the time I am putting those fun activities largely ahead of volunteer commitments."

In a similar letter to another board he resigned from, Jon Saari, Past President of UP Environmental Coalition, quotes Doug as saying, "I don't want to die slumped over my computer!"

In 2015, Doug was awarded the NCTA's Thomas L. Gilbert Lifetime Achievement Award being cited for extensively working with private landowners, Ottawa National Forest, and the State of Michigan to get the Trail built and then maintained in the western UP. He developed the Peter Wolfe Chapter's website with the detailed maps and mile-by-mile descriptions of the Chapter's trail segment. He also developed the first Chapter brochure, manned tables and presented at many events over the years promoting the NCT. Connie Julien, current Chapter President,

shows a NCTA membership card dated September 1989 that she got when signing up for the NCTA at a table Doug set up at a Michigan Tech University event.

"Doug loved the outdoors and living and working in it," said Connie. "He passed on that excitement and love for the outdoors

and the environment not only to his family, but to his friends and the many volunteers he taught how to maintain the NCT."

At the time of his death, Doug was doing what he loved. He was hiking in the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness, where he slipped off a cliff and fatally hit his head. Being in a designated Wilderness area, the responders are to be greatly credited for their help by manpower alone. This Wilderness area is across the road and to the west of the NCT. Doug worked for decades to get more Wilderness designations in the western UP. The proposed Wilderness in the Trap Hills would include over 25 miles of the North Country Trail. If these proposed Wilderness areas in the western UP are authorized by Congress, it would be another of Doug's lasting legacies.



Doug's obituary can be read at [oneildennisfh.com/obituary/doug-welker](http://oneildennisfh.com/obituary/doug-welker).

## Glen and Steve's essay continued

south. In 2016 we again walked more than 230 new miles by August. We reached the Ohio border, but our plans to start the UP gave way to Steve suffering heart trouble (atrial fibrillation) and hiking was set aside as he received treatment.

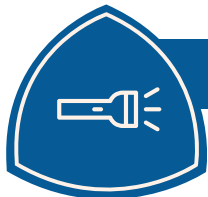
2017 brought a healthy Steve and we started hiking strong. We went north and west from the Straits of Mackinac, attended the NCTA Celebration in Marquette, and were into the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore by August. Then I was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer and hiking plans were thrown aside for surgeries and treatments.

The next two years, 2018 and 2019, we only added 110 new miles each year, slowly creeping west between treatments. We loved the beautiful country and great hiking anyway. As 2020 approached, we had high hopes of finishing the remaining 139 miles but once again, I experienced medical emergencies and we had to stop 50 miles short.

In 2021, we finally finished this journey that started more than seven years ago. We are so grateful that we are both hiking strong and have walked every single mile together. We are delighted that we have experienced Michigan at its best, from highways to rugged backroads (finding trailheads) and of course the amazing NCT itself.

Find this essay at [northcountrytrail.org/ldh-vanantwerp-breithaupt](http://northcountrytrail.org/ldh-vanantwerp-breithaupt).





## Fresh Trail and Boardwalks in the Jordan River Valley

By Duane Lawton



A portion of the new half-mile of Trail.

Photo: Duane Lawton

To celebrate North Country National Scenic Trail Day in September 2021, a large volunteer crew gathered in northern Michigan for a three-day work weekend. Over 20 members of the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter, as well as some guest volunteers,

built a half-mile of new Trail, and four boardwalks totaling 120 feet in length at O'Brien Pond.

With a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit in hand, we camped at the worksite and worked hard. We enjoyed scrumptious meals prepared by Chapter members, and relished the outdoors with campfires and two overnights of rain.

The old Trail segment here was on a historic railroad grade that has since turned into a mud hole, and the area is destined to become access for a logging operation. The new Trail bypasses this.

The former boardwalk - 70 feet long, installed in 2014 - was quite worn out. The four new ones replaced this and three other eroded ditches. For the longer stretches of the new boardwalk, we used the \*Menke Boardwalk Box Technology, supported by posts with swamp pans from Custom Manufacturing, Inc.. Swamp pans are made from galvanized steel and sit atop the ground's surface, creating a type of suction. They're less intrusive, as you

don't need to put posts in the ground and the structure can be readjusted as needed after years of frost heave.

Project materials were funded by an Iron Belle Trail Fund grant and Chapter funds. Our access to the campsite via the mud hole was aided by the loan of a Gator four-wheeler from North by Nature Landscaping owner Bret Huntman.

No longer will hikers have to traverse a sometimes "floating bridge" when passing through here in the spring! Research hiking opportunities in this area at [northcountrytrail.org/northwest-lower-michigan](http://northcountrytrail.org/northwest-lower-michigan).

In 2022, we plan to remove the old boardwalk and add approximately 200 feet of puncheon. If you're interested in joining the effort, please submit a Volunteer Interest Form at [northcountrytrail.org/volunteer-interest-form](http://northcountrytrail.org/volunteer-interest-form) or contact the Chapter directly at [j45@northcountrytrail.org](mailto:j45@northcountrytrail.org).

The Chapter extends special thanks to Kenny Wawsczyk, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator for Michigan, who pitched in during the project and was a big help with planning. He helped scout the Trail route and negotiated permits from Michigan's environmental and natural resources authorities. We also appreciate the several volunteers who traveled from downstate to work with us, including Geoff and Chad from Grand Rapids, Rick from Battle Creek, Cheryl from Clarkston, and Pam and Tom

from Ann Arbor. ✨

*\*Bill Menke is a retired NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator whose ingenuity remains useful to and appreciated by today's volunteers.*



Two of the four new boardwalks.

Photo: Duane Lawton

# Designated Camping in Chequamegon

By Marty Swank

The NCTA Chequamegon Chapter (Wisc.) held a trail event in August 2021 in the Chequamegon National Forest that attracted more volunteers than the Chapter has ever hosted for a single event: 29, including Katie LeMoine from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). We broke into two groups with two goals:



Ty Martin and Katie LeMoine use a two-man crosscut saw.

Photo: Kris Wegerson

Chapter's second designated campsite. The first was built near Whiskey Creek in July 2021, and more are planned. These volunteers built a connector trail from the NCT to this new backpacker campsite. They built a campfire/cooking area and tent pads. They installed benches and a registration box (including a notepad and maps) made by Rick Pomerleau, a metal fire ring

One group went west into the Porcupine Lake Wilderness, focused on preparing this section for a new Trail Adopter, Ty Martin. Volunteers removed downed trees and cleared the Trail with loppers. A very large aspen tree took the whole team's effort to remove, as no chainsaws are allowed in the Wilderness.

The second group went to East Davis Lake to build the



Chapter President Kevin Schram and Co-Secretary Ellie Williams show off the new campsite sign. Kevin has spent many hours working toward making these designated campsites a reality.

Photo: Mary Stenberg

provided by the USFS, and a campsite sign on the NCT at the new connector trail junction.

Camping along the North Country Trail in the Chequamegon National Forest had previously been non-designated camping. Thanks to this large and dedicated volunteer turnout, we were able to complete so much work in one day. Thank you!



Learn more about the NCTA Chequamegon Chapter at [northcountrytrail.org/che](https://northcountrytrail.org/che).



## Share your adventures like Emily!

In 2021, she completed a traditional thru-hike of the Superior Hiking Trail, which shares pathway with the NCNST. The Hike 100 Challenge completion form includes space to share your stories and photos, which could up in a future **North Star** issue or on the NCTA Instagram.

Learn more, sign up, and share your adventures at [northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge](https://northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge).





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Grand Rapids, MI  
Permit 340



A blue blaze contrasts oh so nicely with fall colors. Share your adventures with us by tagging [@northcountrytrail](#) and [#hike100nct](#) on social media, or by attaching images to your Hike 100 Challenge completion form.

Photo: Abby Stromquist



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

## Reach Out!

The NCTA headquarters office and Trail Shop are located at **229 E. Main St. in Lowell, Mich.** Find more information at [northcountrytrail.org/contact](#).  
(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.