



North Star

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2022

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Trailhead

JARON NYHOF, PRESIDENT



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Photo by Vicki Nyhof

As we embark on a new year, I find myself both reflecting on the past year and dreaming of what lies ahead. As my young adult children would phrase it, "I ain't gonna lie, 2021 was hard." The ongoing pandemic, now seemingly reinvigorated by a new variant; natural disasters; mass shootings; supply chain disruptions; social and political strife. It can all start to feel overwhelming and exhausting. But as you'll see in the pages that follow, the North Country

Trail Community was (and is) strong, was (and is) undeterred, and was (and is) the gritty, get'r done family they've repeatedly shown themselves to be. And that, my friends, is encouraging. Despite the challenges of 2021, the NCTA volunteers, Chapters, Affiliates, partners, staff, donors, and other supporters went above and beyond and did amazing things, with a smile on their faces and a pep in their step. And I'm grateful. Grateful not only for what they've accomplished and the ways that they did it, but also for the hope and inspiration that gives.

With that inspiration, I have renewed optimism for 2022 and am excited for a number of things we have in the hopper. As the year goes on, you'll hear about some fantastic development opportunities and successes. You'll see reinvigorated trail protection efforts. You'll witness, and hopefully participate in, continued JEDI growth and engagement. You'll be encouraged - and perhaps inspired - by renewed volunteer council activity. And that's just the "new" stuff! With our engaged boots-on-the-ground community, you'll also continue to see more Trail built and improvements made. Advocacy will continue to advance our mission. More stories of impact will happen and be told. More relationships will be built. Awareness of the Trail and our community will expand. We'll continue to grow, engage, make an impact, and leave a legacy. How can I be so confident? Because of you! I've seen you do it - I'm watching you do it! We're stronger now than I've ever seen, and I'm confident in our future as a result.

Thank you for all you've done to get us to this point, and all you'll undoubtedly do to keep us moving forward! Because of you, we'll advance our mission to develop, maintain, protect, and

“

I have renewed optimism for 2022 and am excited for a number of things we have in the hopper.”

Continued on page 5

Trailhead

ANDREA KETCHMARK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo by Andrea Ketchmark

"I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. For the trees have no tongues." (Dr. Seuss)

Why do you volunteer to maintain a section of the North Country National Scenic Trail? Why did you take on the Hike 100 Challenge last year and the year before? Why did you become a member or donate to support our programs? Why does our staff work for the North Country Trail Association and spend our off-work hours hiking it? The answer is that we all have a deep understanding of

the benefits of trails and outdoor recreation. We know what the Trail brings to our lives and we all want to bring that joy to others. We want to leave the world a better place than we found it.

Dr. Seuss' tale of the Lorax taught us about the interconnectedness in nature and that wilderness is a thing to treasure. It also taught us that it's not enough to know something is important - we must act on that knowledge and show its promise to the world. The Trail provides millions of people with solitude, quiet, adventure, and a release from everyday pressures. It provides a connection with nature, yourself, and others. The world needs this more than ever before and it's up to us to ensure we provide for them. We speak for the Trail and for the millions of people that need it.

We have big plans for 2022. We will build more miles of Trail; more bridges, boardwalks, and kiosks. We will be working with StoryCorps, which you may have heard on National Public Radio, to document the real stories of our people, and their connection to the Trail and each other. We will continue to nurture our leaders with leadership training and empower future leaders to step up through our Next Generation Coalition. We also aim to bring on a staff position to focus on Trail Protection to secure long-term access for what we've already built and to set a foundation to close our gaps. It's going to be an exciting year.

To do this work, we must advocate for the Trail and the resources we need with our communities, funders, agency partners, elected officials, and everyone we meet. We must assert that trails are important; they deserve funding and support. We must shout it from the mountain top, the river valley, the forest, the prairie, down Main Street, and everywhere in between - including the halls of Congress. We must speak for the Trail and for the millions of people that need it, now and tomorrow.

As you log your Hike 100 Challenge miles, make a donation, or volunteer on a trail project, know that you are speaking for the Trail and leaving the world better than you found it. The future will thank you. I thank you!

CHRIS LOUDENSLAGER, SUPERINTENDENT,
NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL



Photo by Mick Hawkins

Greetings and a warm welcome! It is great to share this latest North Star with you. In our last issue, you may recall I highlighted a quote from Jaron Nyhof that included "the myriad of things that are necessary to accomplish our mission is truly astounding." As we focus this issue on the State of the Trail and highlight many of your truly astounding accomplishments, I thought I

would similarly share the myriad of things National Park Service (NPS) staff have also recently accomplished - somewhat in the background - and what we are currently working on to help accomplish our collective mission.

With the exception of any new readers who may be joining us for the first time, most of you are familiar with the significant program restructuring the NPS has had to work through this past year to better protect our volunteers, the Trail, and all the natural, cultural, and historic resources that make the North Country National Scenic Trail such a remarkable resource. To give you a glimpse into the work we are doing to support you and your tremendous efforts:

We developed and implemented a new program to assess and evaluate potential effects proposed trail projects could have on resources. We conducted review and analysis of over 100 proposed projects on behalf of 19 NCTA Chapters and one Affiliate organization. We contracted five archeological surveys in support of seven trail projects. We prepared additional documents and analyses for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to facilitate routine maintenance projects. We completed the first of several agreements with state historic preservation offices to streamline future historic/cultural resource assessments.

In response to a Washington [D.C.] office review of our past volunteer program, we restructured our Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) process to ensure volunteers are better informed about the type of work they might do on behalf of the NPS, and are assured of the protections they are entitled to as VIPs. We revised volunteer position descriptions to more specifically describe the type of work involved, and potential demands and hazards that may exist. We produced a Job Hazard Analysis for each role, which include strategies to reduce risks and protect volunteers. We also began the process of collecting

individual volunteer agreements to ensure we have a documented record of their service. To date, we have received just over 400 agreements from folks in the field. This is a great start, and we'd love to see more volunteers taking advantage of these important protections and perks.

Following the rollout of the new NPS chainsaw policy in early 2021, we worked very hard and very successfully with the Washington D.C. office to gain several exceptions to the policy. These exceptions allow greater flexibility for volunteers working on all National Trails. One is a memorandum of reciprocity for chainsaw training and certification between the NPS and U.S. Forest Service. Another allows for volunteers to utilize the online Trail Safe! safety training in lieu of the two-day, in-person, NPS Operational Leadership Course. Following this Reciprocity Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, we expanded our chainsaw training program to include all NCTA Chapters and Affiliates to meet the new policy requirements for training. We also provided 10 chainsaw training courses across the Trail.

Of course, there is much more going on behind the scenes on a daily basis. We purchase maintenance and protective equipment for our volunteers. We work with our partners and other organizations to respond to proposed utility and land management projects that might affect the Trail. We assist Chapters and Affiliates with trail planning. We manage our properties and associated resources. We even build and maintain (and fix, admittedly) some trail of our own. The list goes on and on.

It is my 2022 goal to make things easier for everyone and avoid too many "new initiatives," at least to the extent that I am able, so we can all focus more of our time and attention on the Trail itself. As Jaron alluded to with his quote, there is already plenty to do. For myself, I am very much looking forward to spending more time in the field this year, working side by side with you on projects, doing a little chainsaw work where it's needed, and providing some extra help in building and maintaining the premier hiking and backpacking experience to which we are all so committed. Thank you, as always, for your tremendous efforts. I hope to see you soon!

JARON NYHOF (CONTINUED)

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, as we join hands 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. Our future is bright, thanks to you! I'm already looking forward to next year's State of the Trail report, in which we'll recount the amazing things you're all about to do! So, both for what you've done in the years done by, and what you'll be doing this year and in the years that follow, thank you, thank you, thank you!

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



PARTNERSHIP

Awareness of Perspective

BY SR. LYN SZYMKIEWICZ

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

Since March 2021, the Pennsylvania NCTA Chapters and some NCTA board members have been engaged in diversity training sessions. June brought some easing of Covid event restrictions, so we finally got to meet in person. Our last session was held at the Kildoo Pavilion in McConnells Mill State Park. Participants were mostly local folks, but we also welcomed Valerie Bader, NCTA Director of Trail Operations and Pittsburgh resident.

This was Kimberly Refosco's first experience in McConnells Mill State Park. Kimberly led all four of these training sessions for us. She is a consultant and a leader for the Pittsburgh network of Outdoor Afro. She had been hoping for some time to visit this state park for a possible group hike, and this training session offered her that opportunity.

The focus of this final training was directed on perspectives and broadening participants' scopes of thinking; listening and actions related to various individuals and groups, and the perspective they bring to engaging the outdoors via the North Country Trail. Kimberly started the session to revere those who stewarded the land prior to those of us who now have access to it. The Indigenous peoples of the Lenape, Shawnee, and Iroquois tribes would have most likely been in this western Pennsylvania area.

Next, Kimberly shared a few stories that allowed the group to appreciate an awareness

of perspective. People with various experiences of one situation stretched the group's thinking and challenged participants to be mindful of how we might make any experience of the trails as inclusive as possible. These stories invited us as trail maintainers to become aware of groups not only using our trails, but groups we don't see on the trails. Is there a reason why they are not there? We might need to engage some of these local groups or individuals, and see what we can learn from them.

The training session ended with scenarios that groups of participants worked on then presented. Participants were invited to consider impacts of statements, policies, and environments when considering diverse groups. Chapter members and volunteers should be mindful of how these simple elements play out to the general public, to people of color, to those with differing capacity, and even to corporations or businesses. In the end, Kimberly suggested a few things to keep in mind when trying to improve accessibility on the trails:

- If your trail has people from various groups and backgrounds using it, make that visible through images [and videos] on your website or social media. If people from diverse groups are looking at you and see diversity of people at your activities, they are more likely to feel that space is safe for them to use, too.
- Communicate with other groups of hikers that do not usually experience challenges on the trails, and inform them of the challenges people from diverse groups might encounter. This lends itself to greater awareness within all groups.
- Post clear signage along property lines for private lands so trail users know that permission to access the Trail there has been granted. Many people of color have had negative experiences when accessing trails on private land.
- Get to know and participate in diverse groups in your own community. Building relationships off-trail adds to increased participation on-trail.

A group hike after our diversity training session at McConnells Mill State Park.

Photo by Sr. Lyn Szymkiewicz



When the session ended, we hiked down the Slippery Rock Creek Gorge to the old grist mill for a couple miles on the NCNST. We extend a special thank you to Kimberly Refosco and all of those who participated in this diversity training experience, initiated by the NCTA Wampum Chapter. We look forward to more experiences and opportunities like this in 2022.

JEDI MINI-GRANTS

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 or contact jedigrants@northcountrytrail.org.

ARTnership: Jordan Sundberg



Above: Jordan Sundberg on Hawk Ridge (Superior Hiking Trail), with Lake Superior in the distance.

Photo by Jordan Sundberg

Last summer, NCTA staff contacted artist Jordan Sundberg in search of a collaborative opportunity. Jordan is an illustrator in Duluth, Minnesota, trails enthusiast, and the owner and founder of Tin Cup Design Company. She has created artwork on a professional level for many years now, and has also created artwork with the Superior Hiking Trail Association.

"I work with a range of small and big organizations,

bookmakers, magazines, companies and people," wrote Jordan, "creating art that comes alongside and makes messages bloom, as well as prints of my own to share. It is my hope that the art I create will connect us with beauty, which then connects us with gratitude and celebration."

As a result, Jordan produced a simply lovely visual representation of the North Country Trail, which is now featured on many items available in the NCTA Trail Shop (shop.northcountrytrail.org), as well as Jordan's website (tincupdesignco.com).

"I had the most wonderful opportunity to create eight unique pieces illustrating an NCNST scene from each state on the Trail," Jordan said. "As I worked away, I imagined folks in each part of the NCNST country taking in the power and peace of nature. The rocks and soil changed throughout the Trail. Trees are different from state to state. And eventually, what was once wide open prairie turns to green mountains. Every part along the way, we are privileged to be guests in spaces that give us amazing gifts. May this be for many, many years to come."



When asked why she was interested in promoting the North Country Trail using her artistic talent, Jordan answered, "I want the NCNST to be here for a very long time and for folks all around to partake in the life-giving gifts the Trail offers. I believe we need time in nature to be well. The hospitable woods, rivers, mountains, prairies, and waterfalls inspire us, restore us, calm us, teach us, and seem to remind us we are loved. The NCNST makes this necessary connection possible, accessible, and free. And for many, it's as close as our own backyard."

The NCTA staff thank Jordan for her collaboration on this excellent project. If you're an artist interested in a similar opportunity, please contact us at hq@northcountrytrail.org.

Each NCNST state is illustrated from east to west. Top row, left to right: Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania. Middle row, left to right: Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin. Bottom row, left to right: Minnesota, North Dakota.

Artwork by
Jordan Sundberg



TRAIL
USE

Staff State of the Trail

“

There is so much to celebrate about 2021, but being back out on the Trail and with our volunteers and partners ranks highest for me. Here, our staff reflect on the year from their perspective and share their most loved experiences.”

— ANDREA KETCHMARK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Did you visit a new (to you) location on the NCNST this year? If so, where?

Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Operations:

“Yes, Vermont! It was such a fun trip full of partnerships, new opportunities, and really great trails. I can’t wait for everyone to experience the Trail there - it’s so green!”

Nancy Brozek, Director of Development and Communications:

“I was able to visit the NCNST in Vermont and North Dakota. It was pretty special to see both Trail ends in the same year, especially during my first opportunity to represent the Association (on the ground and outside of Michigan) since onboarding in 2019. These visits reinforced the appreciation I have for this Trail and its diverse landscape.”

Felicia Hokenstad, Next Generation

Coalition Lead: “2021 was the year of ‘Doing the Things,’ as far as hiking and

backpacking went. A friend and I completed the first 50(ish) miles of the Superior Hiking Trail from the Wisconsin-Minnesota state line through Duluth. I also backpacked with a few friends from Michigan: the Manistee River Loop, Jordan Valley Pathway, and a segment of the NCNST from Tahquamenon Falls State Park to the Mouth of the Two Hearted River! So many grand adventures. Looking forward to more in 2022.”

What’s one new thing you learned about the NCNST this year?

Becky VanDyke, Data Entry Specialist: “I learned about the existence of the NCTA! (I’m the newest staff member, hired at the end of 2021.) My family loves hiking, camping, and being outdoors, but for as much hiking we’ve done, it never really occurred to us that these beautiful trails don’t maintain themselves.



The amount of people who volunteer and work to keep amazing natural resources like this accessible for everyone blows my mind. I am so proud to work for such an amazing organization.”

Kenny Wawczyk, Regional Trail Coordinator

(Mich.): “They actually get to do rock work on the Trail in Pennsylvania. I guess I should have known because of the land features out there, but never really thought about it. I’m jealous.”

Matt Rowbotham, GIS Program Manager: “On a trip along the NCNST in the Manistee National Forest this [past] summer, I was surprised by the huge number of people (100+) we passed in some areas, only to not run into more than one or two people in other spots along the Trail. I’m excited to explore what we can do with our maps and trail information to help mitigate this issue.”

Describe new partnerships you built this year or existing ones that you strengthened.

Abby Whittington, Annual Events Coordinator:

“I am excited to be working with the Itasca Moraine Chapter for our 2022 Celebration. It is always a great opportunity for me to meet new individuals, and to learn a new area. I love building new relationships with Chapters as we plan an exciting event!”

Matt Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator (N.D., Minn., Wis.):

“We grew our partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by certifying the NCNST through Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery in North Dakota. They are fabulous partners and the NCNST has helped introduce many new people to that facility, just like at nearby Audubon National Wildlife Refuge.”

Alison Myers, Administrative Assistant: “I’m grateful for the new National Park Service (NPS) staff here in Lowell! The existing staff has always been great, but with the addition of more, it’s helped strengthen and tighten how we all work together to build, protect, and maintain the Trail.”

Opposite Page:
NCTA and NPS staff
at a work retreat in
the fall of 2021.

What are you most proud of this year?

Heather Ertle, Database and Membership

Administrator: “I am very proud of the successes of the Development and Marketing Department in 2021. Recognition is growing for the Trail and that is evident in increased membership numbers for our local Chapters. This means more people are connected to local events and volunteer opportunities, which helps the NCTA further the mission.”

Stephanie Campbell, Regional Trail Coordinator

(N.Y. and Vermont): “I’m proud I was able to assemble a partner meeting in Vermont to move forward on establishing the NCNST in the Green Mountain State.”

Kate Lemon, Marketing and Communications

Coordinator: “I’m thrilled with the direction our outreach and marketing efforts are moving. We’ve established so much consistency with our communications schedule, our branding, and our messaging. Our storytelling is improving. Awareness of the NCNST and NCTA is spreading farther, and thus, our Trail Community is growing and strengthening.”

What do you want for the future of the NCNST?

Tom Moutsos, Regional Trail Coordinator (Ohio and Penn.):

“A long-term goal for me is to help implement a consistent training program for our Chapters and volunteers.”

Felicia Hokenstad, Next Generation Coalition

Lead: “I would really like to see the Trail become more accessible to young and diverse individuals. We have a lot of work to do to make [the NCNST] a comfortable environment for historically excluded folks, but from what I can see, the NCTA is ready to take on that challenge.”

Nancy Brozek, Director of Development and

Communications: “There will be a day when people will know the North Country Trail is a National Scenic Trail and what a treasure it is. Our name will stand on its merit alone; we will no longer need to be identified with comparison to another big trail. We will be known and have equal status on every level.”



TRAIL
USE

"The remoteness and complexity of Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is pretty incredible. A true North Country experience and challenge."

— Kate Lemon

"My #1 favorite spot on the NCNST is most definitely Canyon Falls and Gorge, near L'Anse, Michigan."

— Alison Myers

"Our Western Terminus! I love trees, but the open views of North Dakota have always inspired me."

— Andrea Ketchmark

"Iron County Forest, Wisconsin. I had the opportunity to walk and flag future NCNST route here this year. Wren Falls, Foster Falls, the very scenic Potato River; many large white pine and hemlock trees. This will be a fantastic addition to the NCNST."

— Matt Davis

"Black River Harbor to Copper Peak trailhead. Just waterfall after waterfall."

— Kenny Wawsczyk

"I enjoy the Marquette area, as it weaves through the town to explore, but then you are back in nature."

— Abby Whittington

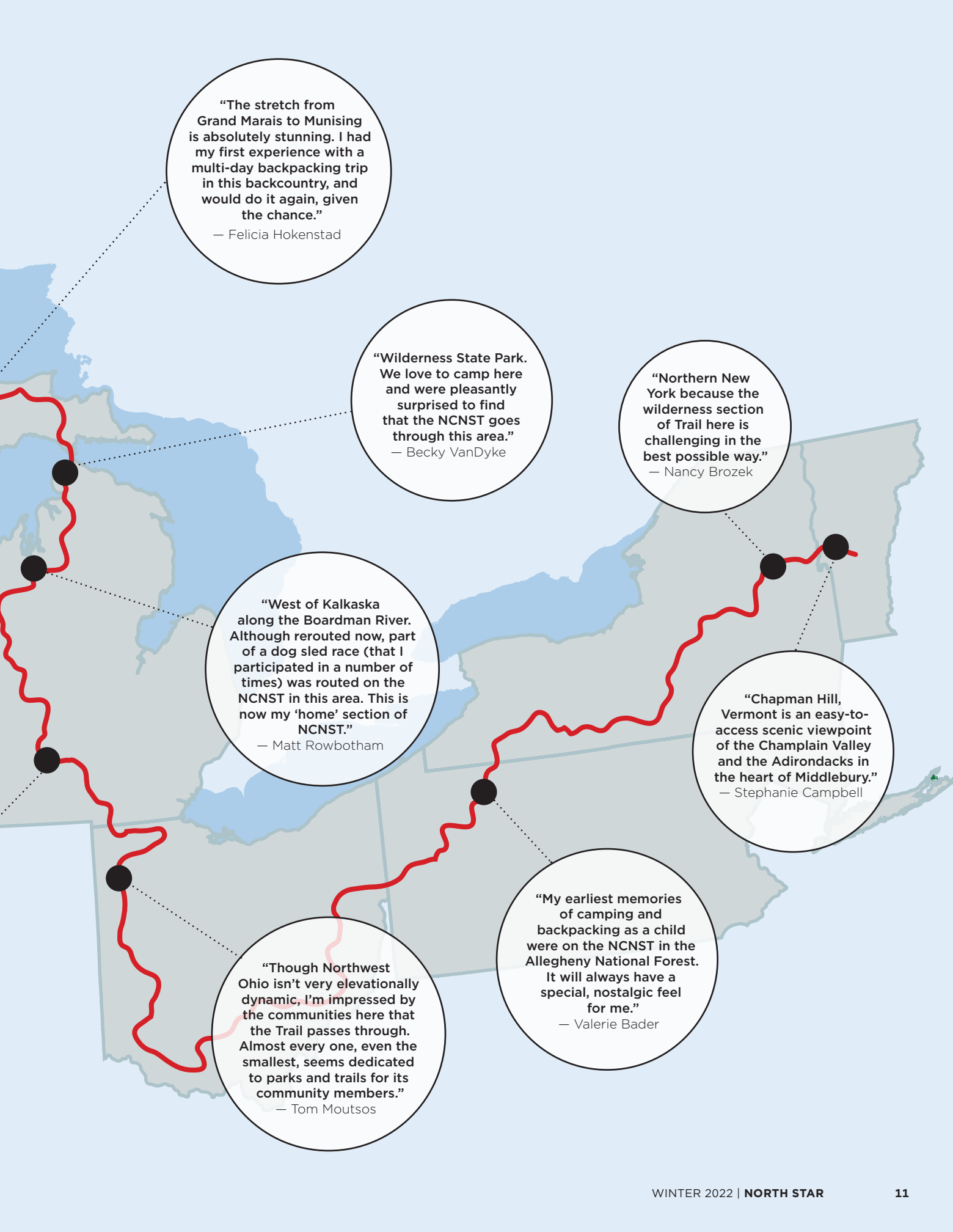
"I love the sections right here in West Michigan because they're so accessible to my family. Yankee Springs is a particular favorite, along with Seidman Park for quick hikes."

— Heather Ertle

STAFF PICKS:

Best NCNST Spots

NCTA staff members share some of their favorite spots along the Trail.

A map of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) route, shown as a red line with black dots at key points. The route starts in the northwest, near Lake Superior, and winds southeast through the Adirondacks and surrounding regions. Seven circular callouts are connected to specific points on the trail by dotted lines, each containing a quote from a hiker or local resident.

"The stretch from Grand Marais to Munising is absolutely stunning. I had my first experience with a multi-day backpacking trip in this backcountry, and would do it again, given the chance."

— Felicia Hokenstad

"Wilderness State Park. We love to camp here and were pleasantly surprised to find that the NCNST goes through this area."

— Becky VanDyke

"Northern New York because the wilderness section of Trail here is challenging in the best possible way."

— Nancy Brozek

"West of Kalkaska along the Boardman River. Although rerouted now, part of a dog sled race (that I participated in a number of times) was routed on the NCNST in this area. This is now my 'home' section of NCNST."

— Matt Rowbotham

"Chapman Hill, Vermont is an easy-to-access scenic viewpoint of the Champlain Valley and the Adirondacks in the heart of Middlebury."

— Stephanie Campbell

"Though Northwest Ohio isn't very elevationally dynamic, I'm impressed by the communities here that the Trail passes through. Almost every one, even the smallest, seems dedicated to parks and trails for its community members."

— Tom Moutsos

"My earliest memories of camping and backpacking as a child were on the NCNST in the Allegheny National Forest. It will always have a special, nostalgic feel for me."

— Valerie Bader



TRAIL
USE



On November 3, 2021, Ryan “Constantine” Bunting and Dana “Magpie” Burkett completed a thru-hike of the North Country National Scenic Trail. It took them just over 186 days to complete. Constantine has now thru-hiked all 11 National Scenic Trails in America—the North Country Trail was his last remaining. This is the first installment of their interview with the NCTA. Additional content will appear in following North Star issues and NCTA online communications.

Above: Day 1 of the NCNST thru-hike.

Photo by Ryan Bunting

NCTA: Please introduce yourselves!

Constantine: I was born in South Carolina. I am a hiker, rambler, Spam aficionado, rock collector, and owner and founder of ElevenSkys, an outdoor business. I don't like heights but I still climb mountains, I don't like the cold but I live in the deep north, and I don't like the internet and yet that is where I make my living. I think I am one giant contradiction. When I am not hiking, I still ramble quite a lot, but most of my time is spent running and managing ElevenSkys. We recently produced a podcast called “Off Trail,” as well. With the fractional time I have left available, I try to fit in snowboarding, cuddling with my partner, and planning the next adventure. But I am usually a workaholic off-trail to make thru-hiking happen year after year, so fitting a full year's worth of work into a few months is always a fun puzzle to handle.

Magpie: I'm originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, though I spent my early 20s bouncing around Canada. Constantine and I live in Pemberton, British Columbia, a sleepy little village just north of the Whistler-Blackcomb ski resort, where I work and ski in the off-trail season. I'm certainly the more relaxed of the two of us, and I spend a great deal of time reading, writing, and watching TV. I like to watch slow, snobby arthouse films that put Constantine to sleep. I also climb and although I'm not very good at it, it's still a lot of fun. My skiing ability is similar, though I'm willing, if not exactly enthusiastic, to flail my way down a double-black diamond if the mood and conditions are right. Fun facts: I'm an inveterate dabbler, a classically trained trumpet player, a certified bicycle mechanic, and a former champion go-kart racer. I also used to live in a van named Big Blue - may she rest in peace.

NCTA: When did you first learn of the North Country Trail and why did you choose to thru-hike it?

Constantine: I first learned of the NCNST probably somewhere in 2018 or 2019, but it was a very vague awareness. I simply knew its name and that it was a National Scenic Trail. I began familiarizing myself with it in 2020, knowing 2021 was going to be the year I would thru-hike it. The thru-hike of 2021 was my first time I had set foot upon it. Didn't really fully know what the Trail had in store for us, but was ready and willing to start the adventure.

Magpie: The first time I'd ever heard of the NCNST was when Constantine brought it up on the Pacific Northwest Trail in 2019. A nearly 5,000-mile trail through the Midwest? It didn't immediately grab my interest, but by the time he brought it up again on the Arizona Trail a few months later, Constantine had settled on his goal of hiking all 11 National Scenic Trails, and was set on hiking [the NCNST] in 2021. We were a new couple at that point and I hadn't yet made any plans for my 2021 hiking season, so I started looking into it.

Constantine: I chose the NCNST for many factors. It was the last National Scenic Trail I needed to hike to complete all 11. I also got really excited to test my mentality and physicality on a trail of this length. I had been ramping up my miles and growing my mental strength over the years prior with harder, longer, and faster hikes, and being able to test myself over the span of 4,800 miles felt like something I wanted to experience. I wrote a very in-depth piece on this subject titled *The North Country Trail* on my website (elevenskys.com/blog), in which I took a deep dive into the emotions that brought me to this hike. Mainly inspiration and excitement, but also fear - of myself, that I would lose my love for hiking or even worse, become indifferent to it because of the length. Instead I found deeper levels of myself, a strength in togetherness with my partner, and a sense of joy and love I would never have imagined possible. What this all boils down to is that the NCNST was the conduit for living a life to its fullest - physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Magpie: I got interested solely because Constantine decided to do it and I didn't have other plans. That said, when I started looking into it more, I got excited. I haven't really hiked out east a lot, as my southbound Appalachian Trail attempt got called off in New Hampshire due to a family emergency. I was looking forward to exploring a new environment

and a different style of hiking. The challenge of the NCNST's length also excited me. Like Constantine, my hiking ability has progressed over the years, and the sheer difficulty involved with a 4,800-mile trail seemed like the culmination of my experience. I already liked to hike hard and fast, and what could be better proof of my endurance than hiking 30+ miles, every day, for six months? I also spent some time in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP) on a bike trip in 2016, so I was looking forward to exploring that area on foot. Lastly, I enjoy doing weird things that nobody has done before, and the NCNST is certainly off the beaten path. Late in my research, I discovered that I would be the first woman to thru-hike the NCNST in the self-supported style, and so that achievement also drew me in.

NCTA: What does your thru-hiking resume look like?

Constantine: Appalachian Trail (2016); Pacific Crest Trail (2017); Continental Divide Trail (2018); Pinhoti Trail, Pacific Northwest Trail, Ice Age Trail, Arizona Trail (2019); Natchez Trace Trail, Great Divide Trail, Vancouver Island Trail, Sea to Sky Trail (2020); Florida Trail, Potomac Heritage Trail, New England Trail, North Country Trail (2021).

To offer some honest advice, the NCNST is a beautiful trail, and it may be a first thru-hike for some, but I would not recommend it. There are so many logistical, navigational, and emotional hurdles that you face. Going into it with seasoned skills of thru-hiking would be a giant benefit.

Many emotions near the Eastern Terminus of the Trail.

Photo by Ryan Bunting





TRAIL
USE

The former Eastern Terminus in Crown Point, New York.

Photo by Ryan Bunting

“

The excitement for the few years leading up to this was the best, knowing it was there waiting for us. All we had to do was start stepping.”

— RYAN “CONSTANTINE” BUNTING

Juan de Fuca Trail (2016); Continental Divide Trail (2017); Pacific Crest Trail (2018); Sunshine Coast Trail, Pacific Northwest Trail, Maine (southbound) on the Appalachian Trail, Arizona Trail (2019); Great Divide Trail, Vancouver Island Trail (née Vancouver Island Spine Trail) (2020); North Country Trail (2021).

NCTA: Can you summarize the timeline of your NCNST journey? Did you celebrate any special dates or occasions while on the Trail?

Constantine: We began westbound from Vermont on May 1, 2021 and finished on November 3, 2021, connecting every footstep, Mackinac Bridge included. We ended up averaging 25.8 miles a day continuously for that time span. If you subtract resupply and rest days in town and look at our moving time, we averaged about 33 miles a day. I celebrated my birthday, June 6, with severe side effects from a vaccine. But the benefits far outweighed the costs so it was still a birthday present. We celebrated Magpie’s birthday, October 29, on a North Dakota canal with a Hostess cupcake and a piece of grass for a candle, and a friendship bracelet. Wholesome, unique, sweet, and sharing love - couldn’t have asked for more. We also celebrated our first ElevenSkys production run, managed and produced on-trail. We built the company to be run from trail, and had previous productions, but never in the middle of a thru-hike.

Magpie: My hiking resume looks paltry compared to his, but I’m a serious hiker as well. In 2016, I rode my bike from Montreal to Vancouver Island and back, for a total of about 10,000 km, and I consider that part of my adventure-travel resume. So: Trans-Canada Trail bike trip,



NCTA: What were the best and most challenging moments of preparation for this adventure?

Constantine: The most challenging time was the two weeks leading up to the hike. I had just finished three pretty intense trail systems with the speed I was going, and Magpie was flying into Vermont from Canada while Covid restrictions were in place, so we needed to quarantine for two weeks. Stopping the forward momentum in any context is hard for us both. Waiting is not our strong suit. Knowing how long this trail is while not being able to start earlier was mentally difficult. We knew we would have to really push the miles out to have any hope of finishing it as a thru-hike. But the best moments are the emotions leading up to a hike. When you first learn about the trail, start purchasing maps, begin familiarizing yourself with the areas it will pass through. The excitement for the few years leading up to this was the best, knowing it was there waiting for us. All we had to do was start stepping.

Magpie: That two-week quarantine was really tough, for sure. It was also a challenge to find and piece together all the map systems necessary for this hike. We ended up pulling GPX data from the interactive map on the NCTA website, which gave us a good-enough guide. The best part for me, always, is shopping for gear. I love gear, and I work in the outdoor industry, so I spend days upon days hunting for deals and joyfully filling out spreadsheets. There are multiple spreadsheets. I might be a little bit obsessed.

Visit elevenskys.com to learn more about Constantine and Magpie’s adventures and business, and to read their blog of their NCNST thru-hike. Plan your next adventure today at northcountrytrail.org/plan-your-hike.

The Dahlbergs Take on Wisconsin

BY JULIE DAHLBERG

The Dahlbergs post frequently on the North Country Trail Community Facebook group, sharing photos and stories from the Trail in northern Wisconsin. Their photos radiate pure joy. This is an interview of their North Country Trail adventures.

NCTA: Please introduce yourselves!

Dahlberg Family: We're Mark and Julie Dahlberg, and our kids are Luke (20), Beth (18), and Anna (12). We hike often with our friend Hannah Burch, too. We're from Solon Springs, Wisconsin.

NCTA: Tell us about your relationship with the North Country Trail.

Julie: Though we live in a [NCTA] Trail Town, and have been on and around the North Country Trail many times, this is our first year [2021] doing the Hike 100 Challenge. Our current goal is to hike all of the Wisconsin miles. Since signing up for the Hike 100, we have been pondering a family vacation focused around hiking some more of those miles.

NCTA: Do you work on the Hike 100 Challenge together as a family unit or do individuals log miles of their own?

Julie: Hiking together as a family is our goal, but it's sometimes a challenge to coordinate with our adult children and their work schedules. As of early December 2021, four of us have passed the 100-mile mark, and two have hiked all North Country Trail miles in our home county!

NCTA: What have been some of the highest and lowest points of these adventures for everyone?

Julie: Any day our family can be together is a great day! We really love the Brule Bog Boardwalk and the St. Croix River section, including the historic Gibson House.

Mark: My favorite part of the Trail so far was from South Mail Road (WI 53) to Stuckey Road (WI 60), and the diversity this section offers. (See this section on the online map at arcg.is/1PTC590.)

Anna: I like that everyone in our family hikes together. I like all the different hikes. I don't like cobwebs!

Julie: Our Memorial Day weekend hikes were somewhat traumatic for her with all the tent caterpillars!



Mark, Julie, Beth, and Anna

Photo by Dahlberg Family



TRAIL
USE



Anna (above); Dahlberg Family (top center); Mark and Anna in Northern Wisconsin (top right); Anna (right)

Photos by Dahlberg Family



Hiking 100? Thank a Member.

To the hiker, the Hike 100 Challenge is pretty straightforward: Log 100 miles on the North Country Trail between January 1 and December 31, feel amazingly accomplished, and earn a collectable patch. But to the NCTA, your participation means much more. And if you're a member of the NCTA, too? You're making one heck of a difference.

Do you study our online map while you plan your adventures or download our printable options while gathering your gear? **Members keep those maps free.** Do you relish dry boots as you tromp across wooden boardwalks over wetlands or cross bridges over creeks? **Volunteers make that possible and membership funds that trail maintenance through the Field Grant program.** Do you appreciate having a dependable outdoor space to visit when you need? **Advocacy efforts for the Trail's protection are aided by members.**

Next time you see a blue blaze on the Trail, while you log your well-earned miles, think a thankful thought for the volunteers and members who help create your trail experience. This is one heck of a difference everyone can appreciate.

Want to meet members in your community? Drop into a Chapter's group hike for some miles and smiles. Visit northcountrytrail.org/events to find out what's happening near you.

Beth: I appreciated all of the colder spring day hikes. We all love winter, and it's been a tad too hot for us the last few weeks [of June].

NCTA: Which miles have been the most challenging, mentally and/or physically?

Julie: I'm still recovering from multiple surgeries on my left leg last fall, so there are definitely some physical and mental challenges associated with that. This was just what I needed to push myself.

Luke: The most challenging thing for me is actually carving out the time to hike.

NCTA: Do you have other outdoor goals aside from the Hike 100 Challenge? This year or in the future?

Julie: We don't have anything else planned, but we are aware that signing up for an event or challenge helps motivate us to make time for things we want to do. We're all still eager for more hiking opportunities and are excited about the 2022 Hike 100 Challenge!

Does signing up help keep you motivated, too? Plan your adventure using resources at northcountrytrail.org and sign up for the Hike 100 Challenge at northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge. Join the North Country Trail Community Facebook group: facebook.com/groups/nctcommunity.

2022 Allegheny 100 Challenge: June 10-12

The inaugural Allegheny 100 Hiking Challenge (A-100) was held in June 2010 with 19 participants. The event was conceived by Bert Nemcik, one of the founding members of the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) Chapter. Bert knew from thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail that the NCNST needed greater exposure to the hiking community in order to help improve the Trail. The ANF Chapter is saddened to report that Bert passed away in December 2021. This year's A-100 is being dedicated to him.

The A-100 challenges hikers to traverse 25, 50, 75, or 100 miles along the North Country Trail in the beautiful Allegheny National Forest within 50 hours. Hikers start on a Friday evening at 6:00 p.m. and have until Sunday at 8:00 p.m. to accomplish their mileage goal. The event is not a race but a personal challenge. It is a self-supported endurance event with no aid stations. Hikers are encouraged to "hike their own hike."

This year hikers will travel north to south in the National Forest. A participation lottery (to acquire a registration slot) will open on March 7 at 8:00 a.m. and will close March 14 at 8:00 a.m. Registration will cost \$80. Additional details about the lottery, registration, and the event can be found at northcountrytrail.org/a-100.



Bert Nemcik is the smiling man on the left side of the middle row.

Photo by ANF Chapter

The Importance and Impact of the VIP Program

Did you know the North Country Trail is technically part of the National Park System? Being a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail, it is administered on a federal level by the National Park Service (NPS). Volunteers on the NCNST have access to the same benefits as volunteers in any National Park, including the ability to participate in the NPS Volunteer-In-Parks (VIP) program. The VIP program provides important protection for volunteers who work to improve the North Country Trail. By simply submitting a bit of paperwork, VIPs are entitled to the same injury considerations that NPS employees receive. Signing up also helps with volunteer hour recognition - at specific hourly milestones, volunteers will be presented with awards such as an *America the Beautiful* National Parks pass.

NPS and NCTA staff have marketed the benefits of this program for years. But now, volunteers share their perspective on why signing up for VIP is so important.

"The VIP program brings you many benefits. It allows you to be part of an elite group that improves our great National Trails System. The VIP program provides information to perform your volunteer work safely, and the federal government offers insurance to protect you if injured during your volunteer work. Another perk is that the National Park Service will keep track of volunteer hours that have been submitted and award you with recognition like water bottles and fleece vests, as you accumulate volunteer hours.

"Not only does the VIP program benefit you personally, but it helps your Chapter, the NCTA, and the NPS. The program tracks the *huge* amount of time and incredible number of volunteers that our Trail Community dedicates to building, maintaining, and promoting the North Country Trail. This volunteerism helps the NCTA and its Chapters, along with the NPS, to advocate for funding and grants. The money then comes to our local trail in equipment, training, land acquisition, and support. (Tina Toole, Allegheny National Forest Chapter and NCTA Board Member)

"The VIP program also helps the volunteer choose the type of work that will match their interests, skills, and abilities. Because volunteers are protected in case of injury the same as NPS employees, it reinforces that safety is the highest priority. The position descriptions and job hazard analyses provide useful, detailed information and considerations that ensure a safe work environment. The VIP program is a great reminder to all volunteers that they are joined by hundreds of others in creating an outdoor opportunity for millions of people." (Bruce Dziadzio, Chief Baw Beese Chapter)

"The Volunteers-In-Parks program provides insight to the different ways you can contribute volunteer time to the Trail, and shares safety information pertaining to each volunteer position. It's a really important program for every volunteer to take advantage of. Not only do you get recognition for your time, but you're protected while you do the work!" (Felicia Hokenstad, Next Generation Coalition Lead)

Learn more, and if you're a volunteer, sign up today at northcountrytrail.org/nps-vip-form. As long as you report your volunteer hours at least once a year, you only need to submit this form *once, and you'll be all set!

**You may update your volunteer agreement in the event your personal information changes or if you wish to make any changes to the volunteer positions you intend to perform.*



VOLUNTEERS

2021 Overview

2021 was once again an impressive year on the North Country Trail.

North Country Trail Association (NCTA) Chapters and Affiliates across eight states hosted hikes and meetings, led trail projects and trainings, and encouraged thousands of people to spend time on the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). This overview showcases many highlights and accomplishments from 2021.

542 VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 54,236 HOURS OF TIME TO THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL IN 2021; A VALUE OF \$1,547,895

Photo: David Snoek

Building Relationships

- 151 virtual and in-person meetings were held with land managers, local governments, and other partners to plan and improve the Trail.
- Grants were awarded in Michigan and Pennsylvania to support Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) work on the Trail.
- 12 Next Generation Coalition members joined the cohort and participated in advocacy, promotion, and trail maintenance events throughout the year.



WE PARTNERED WITH 22 YOUTH PROGRAMS AND CORPS TO ASSIST IN BUILDING AND MAINTAINING THE TRAIL

Photo: Mark Wadopian

The mission of the North Country Trail Association is to 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.



Photo: Caleb Basa

In 2021, volunteers and partners helped to carry out the mission with these efforts:

Build and Maintain the Trail

- NCTA Chapters and Affiliates maintained 4,093* miles of the NCT.
- 44.75 miles of new Trail were constructed and we eliminated 45.13 miles of roadwalk.
- 171 new trail signs were installed, and 63 kiosks and interpretive panels were built or updated, welcoming and providing information for trail users.



Photo: Laurentian Lakes Chapter



Photo: Kevin Schram

- 6,048 linear feet of puncheon and boardwalk were built and maintained.
- 46 bridges were installed and/or repaired.
- 378.45 miles of trail were freshly blazed.



10 NEW SHELTERS AND CAMPSITES WERE CONSTRUCTED

Photo: Florence Hadeen

Promote the Trail

- Chapters and Affiliates hosted or attended 128 events to promote the North Country Trail and recruit new members and volunteers.



4,344 HIKERS PARTICIPATED IN 362 HIKES WITH NCTA HIKE LEADERS

Photo: Frank Pisano

Protect the Trail

- 16 new Trail Easements and Agreements were signed to protect the Trail corridor.
- Chapters and Affiliates met with dozens of landowners who host the Trail on their property, and built new relationships with over 30 more.



Photo: Mike Toole



Photo: Cavour Johnson

OVERVIEW REPORT BY:

Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Operations

See full Trail Progress Report at
northcountrytrail.org/trail-management

* Includes maintenance on some of the same mileage more than once



VOLUNTEERS

State of the Trail 2021

CHAPTERS, AFFILIATES,
PARTNERS

Latter Day Saints (LDS) volunteers maintain trail in the Lonetree Game Management Area.

Photo by Central Flyway Chapter



NORTH DAKOTA

Central Flyway Chapter

BY MARK ZIMMERMAN

Our major 2021

accomplishment was the number of guided and self-guided hikes we offered. The “12 Days of Christmas” in the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) drew over 200 participants. Over 150 hikers (and 10 dogs) participated in “Hike with the Eagles” at the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery. Other similar hikes, some with other North Dakota NCTA Chapters, saw participation of 25-70 hikers. Other outreach efforts included program presentations and community event attendance.

We met with many agency partners, including North Dakota State Parks and Recreation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon NWR, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. A section of trail within the hatchery is now NCNST, including a fabulous stretch along the Missouri River that shares pathway with the Lewis and Clark



Teal and her children enjoy a hike on the NCNST at Lake Sakakawea State Park during one of our Chapter’s sponsored hikes.

Photo by Central Flyway Chapter

National Historic Trail. Across North Dakota, the NCNST traverses land managed in a wide variety of ways, so these partnerships are crucial.

Our volunteers mowed 56 miles of trails within Audubon NWR and the Lonetree Wildlife Management Area. We hosted six missionaries for volunteer trail maintenance work: Mowing and signing over 30 miles, and maintaining trail and kiosks. We added trail mileage within the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery property, and hope to see much roadwalk eliminated in 2022, pending agreements. Several blazing projects were completed in 2021, including installing Carsonite posts along 32 miles of trail in Lonetree. We hope to finalize the design and installation of interpretive panels in the Audubon NWR in 2022.

Several of our members were trail angels for both thru-hikers and other long distance trail users, and we’ll continue to do so as the Trail grows in popularity. In 2022, we also hope to obtain certification for a reroute, keep all segments mowed, complete kiosk and sign installation, organize more themed hikes, and increase Chapter membership. We also plan to install a wooden archway over the NCNST by Highway 200, leading to the Western Terminus at the NCNST’s entrance of Lake Sakakawea State Park.



NORTH DAKOTA

Sheyenne River Valley Chapter

BY BECKY HEISE

We met with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help with their Strategic Plan, regarding the NCNST along Lake Ashtabula. They committed to annually improve seven miles for the next five years, with assistance from our volunteers. We also met with Michael Kangas of the North Dakota Forest Service about improvements to the Sheyenne River State Forest in Ransom County. We discussed installing privies at the trailhead and/or campsites, erosion repair and control, and gravel delivery access for trail armoring. Because of this segment’s popularity, we also discussed service access in case of emergencies.



Above: Modifying fence stiles for trail users with shorter legs.

Photo by Deb Koepplin

Right: The Clyde Anderson campsite.

Photo by Daryl Heise



Our Chapter signed a new easement with Barnes County to reroute an area where slumping had occurred along Lake Ashtabula. Our leadership also created a list of 26 proposed easements to prioritize pursuing and so far, four landowners have been approached. Due to major livestock damage, we embarked on a massive re-signing project, and have completed over seven miles so far. We repaired fence stiles and realigned a boardwalk, constructed a quarter-mile of new Trail, and maintained 65 miles of Trail. Last June, we hosted a Fargo 4-H group for a successful work weekend. We hosted three group hikes with 45 participants - we hope to draw more people to the Trail and grow our Chapter's volunteer base.



NORTH DAKOTA

Dakota Prairie Chapter

BY TOM MOBERG

Our kiosk project was a major focus in 2021, and we hope it serves as a model for other Chapters. Kiosks are great venues for NCNST storytelling, and to highlight the natural, cultural, historic, and scenic features along the Trail. Placed at key locations, they serve as starting/ending points for hikes, provide detailed navigation markers, and establish a consistent, interpretive pathway across our Chapter's NCNST section. These kiosks also provide land acknowledgments for Indigenous peoples. We also designed and built two kiosks for Lisbon and Abercrombie: North Dakota's first NCTA Trail Towns.

Volunteers designed and installed new metal signs at campsites, interpretive sites, trail registers, seasonal

detours, etc., and installed Carsonite signs along two miles of new Trail. We obtained four easements, maintained our Chapter's entire section of NCNST, and eliminated nearly two miles of roadwalk. We installed new gates, fence stiles, benches, and puncheon, and refreshed many blazes.

We fostered our relationship with U.S. Forest Service staff at the Sheyenne National Grassland, which hosts 31 miles of NCNST. We planned and participated in the Three Chapters Festival: Hikes and other activities with members and volunteers of all three NCTA Chapters in North Dakota. Our volunteers participated in a number of other events and we hosted many group hikes. Our "Hike Every Mile" option covers all 100 Dakota Prairie Chapter NCNST miles in one day; 60 hikers participated! Individualized trail maintenance trainings were held for new volunteers. As an experiment to help members understand our Chapter's NCNST, our Trail Development Coordinator took road trips by car, each with three Chapter members, along most of the Chapter's section. The tours included stories about trail development and our trail communities. Time consuming, yet quite valuable.

In 2022 we will improve our leadership team processes, seek new members and volunteers, offer hikes and events, collaborate for more off-road reroute opportunities, and develop a new system for coordinating trail maintenance.



MINNESOTA

Minnesota Waters and Prairie Chapter

BY MICHELLE LACKEY OLSEN

A member started a hiking club affiliated with our Chapter, and recruited many new people to organize and lead monthly hikes. With better utilization of social media, we saw larger, more diverse groups of hikers and had consistently high numbers of hike participants: generally 20 to 40. We took advantage of each hike to talk about our work, and we continue to publish



Rennae Gruchalla and Gail Rogne of the Dakota Prairie Chapter check out the new stairs along the Otter Tail River.

Photo by Michelle Lackey Olsen



VOLUNTEERS

Installing new stairs along the Otter Tail River are builders Larry Larson, Allan Schroden, Gaylan Mathiesen, and Bob Hubbes.

Photo by Pam Larson



monthly articles about our Chapter, the NCNST, and hiking in the Fergus Falls Daily Journal.

We continue to work with the City of Fergus Falls regarding trail maintenance and construction in Delagoon Park and Ferber Park. In Ferber Park, we moved a short portion of Trail to higher ground and added wood chips to low sections to mitigate wet walking paths. We added steps on a highly eroded, heavily used section of Trail along the Otter Tail River, and refreshed blazes in both parks. We installed “You Are Here” signs, repaired a kiosk, and constructed and installed a bench. We flagged a connector route between the Highway 1 kiosk (MN Mile 49) and the new trail in Ferber Park. This was done at the request of Otter Tail Power Company, the main landowner and longtime supporters of our efforts, so they can survey the route.

In 2022 we are planning to reschedule a presentation by Annie Nelson about her section hike of the NCNST. It was originally scheduled for March 2020 but the pandemic closed down the state just days before the event. The connector route to Ferber Park is still a main trail priority, and several of our members will participate in chainsaw certification training this spring. Chapter members plan to run a snowshoe/ski shoe event at Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC) this winter. The equipment is provided and everyone is welcome to try it on the trails at PWLC.



MINNESOTA

Laurentian Lakes Chapter

BY BARBARA JAUQUET-KALINOSKI

Our Chapter focused on volunteer relations in 2021, including improved engagement efforts and group hikes, the creation of a volunteer activities list, and the production of a new Chapter brochure with a revised map. Our volunteers designed Trail Adopter signage for three of the busiest sections in an effort to recruit additional volunteers. We gained 11 new Chapter members.

We inventoried all structures, signs, campsites, and kiosks within our Chapter's NCNST segment for better tracking of future maintenance needs and accomplishments. We're currently producing mileage signage of each section within our Chapter's whole segment. We borrowed a trail



counter from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and installed it in two locations to tally trail users over a four-week

period. (Numbers were much higher than expected, though it was during peak fall colors.) We maintained 64 miles of NCNST, rerouted the Hubbel Pond Wildlife Management Area ford bypass trail, reinforced kiosks, and installed trail signs and an interpretive panel. We also purchased a snow plow attachment to clear our trailheads during the winter.

John LaFond and Ray Vlasak pose next to the newly installed interpretive sign and boot brush station.

Photo by Laurentian Lakes Chapter



MINNESOTA

Itasca Moraine Chapter

BY CARTER HEDEEN

A big accomplishment for our Chapter was the construction of our first, three-sided, 10 x 12-foot trail shelter at the Amikwik Campsite near Lake George, using a donation from RDO-Lamb Weston in Park Rapids. It includes two wooden bunks and partial screen on one side. This fantastic addition to the Trail may be the first shelter constructed specifically for the NCNST in Minnesota. We maintained over 128 miles of Trail and refreshed many, many blazes.

Shelter building in progress.

Photo by
Florence Hedeon



Finished puncheon, installed once culverts were removed.

Photo by
Dan Geiger

Several new members joined in 2021, and some volunteers participated in First Aid and CPR training. We had virtual meetings with Abby Whittington, NCTA Events Coordinator, regarding the upcoming annual Celebration, which our Chapter is hosting in Walker, Minn. this October. We look forward to your participation! While Celebration remains our top priority, others include maintaining trail, especially tread improvements in multiple areas, and volunteer outreach.



Star of the North Chapter

BY KIM FISHBURN

MINNESOTA

Trail improvement was our focus this past year. We maintained over 26 miles and replaced three culverts. The culverts were difficult to get our mower over and two were starting to wash out, so we replaced them with rough cut 3 x 12s. Porcupines were making a meal of one small bridge, so thankfully, the U.S. Forest Service replaced it for us. Our spring cleanup events throughout May have gained popularity over the past few years, bringing more new people to the Trail and volunteering with our Chapter.



Volunteers remove culverts that were washing out and in the way.

Photo by
Dan Geiger



MINNESOTA

Arrowhead Chapter

BY MICHAEL CARSON

Quite significantly, the Tioga Beach to Highway 6 project was approved by the National Park Service (NPS) to eliminate 12 miles of roadwalk, so we began construction on the 18-mile project. We met with the NPS, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Itasca County Land Commissioner. We also participate on a county-based Trails Task Force that includes representatives from various trail organizations.

We maintained five miles of NCNST, constructed 1.5 miles of reroute, replaced a bridge with boardwalk, and rebled about seven miles of Trail, including the existing segment north of Grand Rapids and two miles in the Tioga Beach reroute section. We recruited several new Chapter members, gained many volunteers, and formed a partnership with the local Boy Scout troop. We hosted four guided hikes - one for each season - and two trail work



Route planners at work.

Photo by
Michael Carson



VOLUNTEERS



Photo by Cavour Johnson

days. I also attended a spring trail maintenance weekend with the NCTA Star of the North Chapter, to learn more about trail building and event hosting.

Priorities for 2022 are twofold: We will continue construction of the Tioga Beach project. We will also start identifying and collecting approvals, easements, and partnerships on the remainder of other segments of the Arrowhead Reroute from Grand Rapids to Ely.



A view from the Kekekabic Trail.

Photo by Melanie McManus



MINNESOTA

Kekekabic Trail Chapter

BY TERRY BERNHARDT

Alongside the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), our volunteers

flagged approximately 12 miles of the new NCNST extension (off-road) from the Snowbank Lake trailhead west toward Ely. The entire extension will be 30+ miles



Volunteers team up to flag new Trail on the Fernberg Reroute, which will remove 12 miles of road-walk.

Photo by Kekekabic Trail Chapter

when complete. Additionally, eight separate crews volunteered 1,800 hours in the spring and fall of 2021 to maintain 21 rugged miles. (See *Lucie Biddinger's article in the Summer 2021 issue of the North Star for the full story.*) We also maintained and improved four campsites.

Led by Derrick Passe and Matt Davis, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator for Minnesota, and with collaboration from the National Park Service and USFS, easement agreements were put in place for a private land parcel near the west end of the Kekekabic Trail. To best prioritize trail work, we had regular communication with the USFS Superior National Forest - mainly the Kawishiwi and Gunflint Ranger Districts. We kept close contact with the USFS during wildfire season, particularly when the Kekekabic Trail was closed from July into September for fire danger.

Our leadership has remained strong and we recruited new volunteers in 2021. Our social media presence has improved significantly, along with other outreach efforts. The Friends of the Boundary Waters continues to be a great partner to us. We also worked with Northwoods Volunteer Connection, and our constant partners at the Border Route Trail and Superior Hiking Trail associations, respectively. The Kekekabic Trail Guide was revised and updated in a collaborative effort, and distributed for resale to major outdoor outfitters throughout Minnesota and in the NCTA Trail Shop. A poster map of the Kekekabic Trail was prepared by our Chapter and Cody Bartz, as well as a promotional map by our Chapter, Keith Myrmal, Josh Redhead, and NCTA staff.

This year, we'll focus on outreach efforts, clearing heavy brush and continuing new route development, renewing the Howard Lake campsite, distributing the Kekekabic Trail Guide, and supporting planning of Celebration 2022.



A BRTA work weekend.

Photo by Pam Tavernier



MINNESOTA

Border Route Trail Association (Affiliate)

BY BRIAN HANSON AND TOM SUTER

In 2021 our organization maintained over 50 miles of trail that the Border Route Trail (BRT) shares with NCNST. We cleared all of the BRT sections outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and over 20 miles within it. As usual, we continued to meet and collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service.

Our top priority this year is to reopen the trail from significant tornado damage near Clearwater Lake. Since October 2021, over a mile of trail has been deemed impassable. We are working with the



An American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation on the BRT within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Photo by Matt Davis

U.S. Forest Service to address the damage and make a plan for the springtime. Additionally, we aim to get all Border Route Trail Association (BRTA) members individually enrolled in the NPS Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program, and offer more training like Wilderness First Aid and sawyer certifications. We have a number of maintenance projects we're eager to start on, and we plan to build a Border Route Trail campsite in the Pigeon River area of the eastern, non-Wilderness section.



MINNESOTA

Superior Hiking Trail Association (Affiliate)

BY LISA LUOKKALA

One of our greatest accomplishments of 2021 was reestablishing our pre-pandemic volunteer hours. In 2020, our volunteer opportunities and associated contributed hours plummeted. But with new safety protocols and approaches to the workload, we emerged from the 2021 maintenance season with over 6,000 volunteer hours. We maintained 300 miles of trail and got 2.5 miles of reroute (and roadwalk elimination) underway. We installed or repaired many trail structures including puncheon, bog pan boardwalk, bridges, and stone steps. Volunteers blazed nearly 39 miles of Trail, replaced 17 handmade campsite signs, and installed bear poles.

We partnered with Cook County Highway Maintenance to get new directional signage at the Woods Creek trailhead on Lindskog. With the generous support of Lake County and the Highway Department, our County Road 6 parking lot was relocated and expanded. We coordinated with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) during wildfires, backcountry fires, and various closures; with Superior National Forest (U.S. Forest Service, USFS) during wildfire season and on partnership projects like the Kimball Creek bridge installation; with Lake County on mountain bike development and mapping needs; and with the City of Duluth on many maintenance projects and temporary closures. A Conditional Use Permit was secured for the construction of almost five miles of new trail to address the Gooseberry Gap.

We hosted webinars for both volunteers and the public, covering topics like a trail maintenance manual Q&A and volunteer appreciation. We also hosted virtual and on-trail trainings: "Assessing and Developing a Plan for Trail Sustainability" and "Building and Maintaining a Resilient Superior Hiking Trail."



VOLUNTEERS



The Chapter partnered with Friends of the Bird Sanctuary for this evening solstice hike.

Photo by Al Decker



WISCONSIN

Brule-St. Croix Chapter

BY MARK VANHORNWEDER

Our Chapter held 10 group hikes in 2021 with nine different leaders and 135 attendees. We partnered with Friends of the St. Croix River Headwaters and their Canoes on Wheels program for one event to include a canoeing option alongside the group hike. Alongside Matt Davis, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator, we participated in several calls with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Douglas County Forestry Department to discuss land acquisition opportunities in Douglas County.

Throughout the year, we heavily maintained all 55 miles of our NCNST segment. This included the relocation of approximately 300 feet of Trail to drier ground west of Rainbow Bridge, installation of a 32-foot puncheon extension and a 16-foot bridge near Solon Springs, lots of brushing and blazing, and adding signage in the Douglas County Bird Sanctuary.



Morris Pond campsite, en route from Wills Road to Banana Belt Road.

Photo by Teresa Nelson



Michael Trieschmann at Copper Falls State Park.

Photo by Kevin Schram



WISCONSIN

Chequamegon Chapter

BY KEVIN SCHRAM

We added 25 new memberships and four Trail Adopters in 2021. We maintained 70 miles of Trail and added about 1.2 miles, including the Drummond Connector Trail and two reroutes in the Rainbow Lake Wilderness. We built one bridge and replaced two, all from scratch, and repaired six others - a combined 150 linear feet. We also built the first two designated backpacker campsites in the northwest unit of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Our signmaker Rick Pomerleau made about 10 destination signs for distance between trailheads, spur trails, and campsites. We built our first stone-lined culvert and our first wilderness stairs, and about 15 miles of Trail was reblazed. Six sawyers received chainsaw certification training thanks to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and National Park Service.



The backpacking campsite crew, minus a few special faces.

Photo by Julia Waggoner

About 25 people participated in our interpretive hike in the Porcupine Lake Wilderness on National Trails Day in June. It was led by Mel Baughman and Tom Matthiae, experts in forest ecology and wildlife biology, respectively. Our members Sara Balbin and Jackie Kruse were recognized with the NCTA's Boots on the Trail Award in 2021. We continued our working relationship with the USFS, and worked with volunteers from both AmeriCorps and Northland College in Ashland, Wisc.

We plan to build several bog bridges this year in part with funds from a NCTA Field Grant. We'll also fix bridges by Lake Three, plan scenic reroutes near Cant Hook Lake and Copper Falls State Park. We will help Copper Falls State Park staff build a trail to a backpacker campsite too, and build two more designated backpacker campsites in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.



Heritage Chapter

BY KEVIN STEFFENS

Our Chapter was proud to dedicate the Bill Thomas Memorial Bridge in 2021. It's located within the Iron County Forest, crossing the Tyler Forks River near Wren Falls, and was built by the Iron County Forestry Department. It is named for Bill Thomas, late husband of Heritage Chapter volunteer and generous project donor Bethany Thomas. We also eliminated six miles of roadwalk, constructed two bridges (16 and 20 feet respectively), repaired one, and installed 112 feet on puncheon. We installed navigational signage across our Chapter's section, and constructed a new campsite along the Wren West segment.

Chapter members successfully acquired an easement across private property. We met regularly with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), led group hikes, and three volunteers became chainsaw certified.

This year we will continue to maintain the Trail with the help of our Trail Adopters and local volunteers, especially during dedicated work weekends.



Updating a trailhead kiosk.

Photo by
Heritage
Chapter

STATE OF THE TRAIL

Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew

The Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew is a group of both local volunteers from Wisconsin NCTA Chapters and "regulars" - repeat volunteers from anywhere. The Rovers aim to work on one week-long project per month between April and November. They focus on building structures like bridges and puncheon, new trail tread, and constructing trail amenities such as new campsites.

Last year in the Brule-St. Croix Chapter's section, we constructed 32 feet of puncheon, a 16-foot bridge, a small trail relocation near Rainbow Bridge, and performed heavy maintenance (brushing and blazing) on three miles of NCNST.

In the Heritage Chapter's section, we built one campsite, constructed over a mile of new Trail, installed 112 feet of puncheon and many Carsonite signs, and constructed two bridges, 16 and 20 feet long, respectively. We also repaired one bridge and extended it by 28 feet.

In total, we performed this work over four trips. There were 40 Rover participants throughout the year, including four first-timers. Over 1,450 hours were volunteered.

BRULE-ST. CROIX SECTION BY THE NUMBERS:

32

feet of
puncheon
constructed

16

foot bridge
constructed

3

miles of
NCNST
brushed
and blazed

HERITAGE SECTION BY THE NUMBERS:

112

feet of puncheon
constructed

16 & 20

foot-long bridges
constructed

1,450

total hours
volunteered
in 2021



VOLUNTEERS



Above: A group hike on prospective new NCNST at the Montreal Gorge overlook.

Photo by
Nannette Bell

Right: Deb Fergus chainsawing with Brady Hahn swamping on the NCNST, west of Highway 519.

Photo by
Karl Jensen



Connie Julien and Connie Sherry maintaining trail in October 2021.

Photo provided by
Connie Julien



Ni-Miikanaake Chapter

BY KARL JENSEN

UP MICHIGAN

Our hardworking volunteers maintained over 25 miles of NCNST and constructed two new NCNST miles. We refreshed over 10 miles of blazes and marked forthcoming segments in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park. We worked alongside a SEEDS EcoCorps youth conservation crew to develop new trail, and we worked productively with Dan Stang of the Ottawa National Forest, as well as the National Park Service, on various trail project and protection discussions. We collaborated on grants with Joe Stieber of the Ottawa National Forest. A landowner met with us regarding access to new trail segments in the southeast Porcupine Mountains.

We gained five new members in 2021. Chapter members attended chainsaw training, and we participated in many outreach efforts. We led about five group hikes throughout the year, welcoming as many as 25 participants at one in the Porcupine Mountains.

Looking ahead, we will focus heavily on the Porcupine Mountains: Trail benching, blazing, and adding signage. We'll also continue with a program of group hikes, as they're quite useful for member and volunteer recruitment, and raising local awareness of the Trail and our Chapter.



UP MICHIGAN

Peter Wolfe Chapter

BY CONNIE JULIEN

We worked with a local contractor last spring to replace about 700 feet of rotted boardwalk on the very popular Canyon Falls trail. Also in the spring,

Mark Roberts led a volunteer project to repair the Plumbago Creek bridge. We fastened 600 feet of metal mesh to a very slippery boardwalk for improved hiker traction, and installed a "Welcome to the Peter Wolfe Chapter" sign and a registration box at the western terminus of our Chapter's section, at M-64. We formed a successful mowing crew, coordinated by Grant Fenner, and they mowed over 20 miles in the Baraga Plains area this summer! We also scouted future route for off-road Trail potential and look forward to building it.

We signed a Trail Use Agreement for a half-mile of NCNST that crosses 40 acres of Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy land recently purchased on behalf of the Michael Dempsey Nature Preserve. We signed a Right-of-Entry permit with Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands, as well. We gained permission from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to install a bridge on private property. We had multiple meetings about work within and management of the Ottawa National Forest.

Last spring we hosted a presentation and film by long distance hiker Annie Nelson, who recently hiked all Michigan NCNST miles. We offered group hikes, and multiple volunteers participated in trainings such as Trail Safe!, chainsaw, and the NCTA Leadership Summit. We collaborated with a forestry student group from Michigan Tech University and SEEDS EcoCorps



A SEEDS EcoCorps group benching trail in the Peter Wolfe Chapter's section in October 2021.

Photo by Connie Julien

for trail projects. We gained new board members, but mourned the loss of long-time Chapter leader, member, and volunteer, Doug Welker.

Our top priority for the next trail season is to get our Chapter's entire NCNST section fully maintained by Memorial Day - in time for the many summer hikers and to beat the biting bugs! We also have several bridges in need of repair, and we'll address areas of flooding caused by beavers.



North Country Trail Hikers Chapter

BY LYNN THOMAS

UP MICHIGAN The Chapter's biggest accomplishment of 2021 has been incredible teamwork resulting in efficient and productive transition of leadership. We formed a Trail Crew Committee to better approach trail maintenance and volunteers. Volunteers worked over 900 hours during 39 scheduled trail crew days. Crew leaders recruited new members and brought aboard six new Trail Adopters. We had a productive workday in October with staff from various UPS centers across the entire Upper Peninsula and northern lower Michigan. We've maintained partnership with the Northern Michigan University Conservation Club to build and maintain trail, and worked with the Michigan Youth Outreach Initiative with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to engage youth groups in trail maintenance. The opportunity was positively received and we will be offering work days for groups in the spring.

We attended multiple events, including one for National Scenic Trails Day and the Marquette Trail 50 Ultramarathon. We've had multiple media interactions, and Chapter board members participated in Hike the Hill 2021. We met with our Ottawa National Forest partners

to discuss current and future projects - they're wonderful at keeping us informed of anything that affects the NCNST. We also attended multiple meetings and workshops for the Superior Region Non-Motorized Plan, and had a positive meeting with Lyme Timber.

We assisted the Michigan DNR with the replacement of two 44-foot bridges in Craig Lake State Park. There is one mile of NCNST between them. We maintained approximately 100 miles of off-road NCNST and rerouted 0.6 miles, mostly in West Mulligan Plains. We repaired 50 linear feet of boardwalk and puncheon along the Wetmore Pond Trails, and replaced 150 feet of boardwalk in DNR Segment 13. We refreshed and replaced blazes as needed, and installed Carsonite posts. Our members participated in Trail Safe!, First Aid/CPR/AED, and sawyer trainings.

In 2022, we will eliminate more roadwalk and work toward the Marion's Bridge replacement, east of Craig Lake State Park. We'll also continue to search for new Trail Adopters, and develop a more robust recruitment and retention plan for volunteers and members.



Above: The UPS crew poses on the NCNST.

Left: Trail crew leaders of the North Country Trail Hikers Chapter.

Photos by Brad Slagle



VOLUNTEERS

Charlie Todd and Doug Sanford installing a new post for the reroute.

Photo by Superior Shoreline Chapter



Todd and new member Doug Sanford rerouted another 0.8 miles, eliminating an ugly, muddy section of two-track, and further shortening a half-mile of dusty county road. It's ready for hikers to enjoy! We installed a new trailhead kiosk east of Grand Marais, and met with Central Upper Peninsula Planning And Development (CUPPAD): Their goal is to connect with area non-motorized groups to update their existing maps. Four Chapter members received chainsaw certification and three completed First Aid/CPR to become swampers (to assist sawyers).

This year, we plan to blaze from PIRO through Grand Marais, and we're grateful Barb Whittington and Marcia O'Brien volunteered for this task! We'll install a reroute west of the Valley Spur ski area that's been flooded by beavers over the past few years. We have several miles of Trail east of Grand Marais still needing a Trail Adopter. If you enjoy hiking, spending time in the woods, and are interested in volunteering, please contact us!



UP MICHIGAN

Superior Shoreline Chapter

BY CHARLIE TODD

We are thrilled our membership grew by 17 members this past year. And thanks to our wonderful volunteers who go above and beyond, we clipped, marked, and chainsawed our Chapter's 61 miles of NCNST in 2021. Our Trail segment consists of a western (21 miles) and eastern section (40 miles), divided by Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore (PIRO).

We had awesome volunteer turnout with many new faces at a 1.2-mile reroute project. A timber company offered to clean up the Trail after logging activity, but with the help of Kenny Wawsczyk, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator, a new section was tagged for reroute. This section will be left intact without the possibility of ever being logged. It was encouraging to see our volunteers' enthusiasm as we finished in one day. This section has since been adopted by Joe and Tina Barsky. Barb Isom, Charlie

Fred Gerwitz, Craig Winnie and Charlie Todd install a new sign replacing an old kiosk.

Photo by Superior Shoreline Chapter



UP MICHIGAN

Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter

BY TOM WALKER

2021 was a heavy maintenance year for our Chapter. We maintained nearly 130 miles of NCNST and rerouted a mile. We repaired, replaced, or installed 56 feet of puncheon in Tahquamenon Falls State Park, and installed 60 feet of gravel turnpike in Hiawatha National Forest. We met with a U.S. Forest Service (Hiawatha National Forest) crew for three field days to assess multiple projects. Our sawyers were recertified and several of our volunteers completed additional training.



Bob and Pat McNamara create new tread for a reroute in the Hiawatha National Forest.

Photo by Tom Walker

John Texter, Erik Baron, and Pat McNamara (left to right) carry the Joe Clewly Memorial Bench to its final location in Tahquamenon Falls State Park near Camp Ten Lake.

Photo by Tom Walker



We hosted 16 group hikes throughout the year, and our Chapter sponsored video spots at the virtual Quiet Water Society Adventures Symposium.

Looking ahead to 2022, we will keep the Trail clear by mowing and removing branches and trees, refreshing blazes, and placing interpretive signage near historical areas. In the Naomikong Overlook area, we'll replace puncheon and build turnpike. Near Tahquamenon Falls, we'll seek a sustainable route to move three miles of Trail off road.



MICHIGAN

Harbor Springs Chapter

BY KENNY WAWSCZYK

A fun, new partnership emerged between our Chapter and the Blissfest Music Organization. The organization allowed the NCNST on their property, eliminating 1.5 miles of the longest roadwalk in our Chapter's section. We are also working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to replace the bridge over the Carp River.

We hosted one group hike each month in 2021. We maintained nearly 50 miles of NCNST, rerouted almost two miles, and installed 65 feet on puncheon. We have another, albeit much larger, puncheon project planned for this year: 500 feet east of Larks Lake Road. We also hope to install a parking area off Robinson Road.



A Mother's Day hike.

Photo by
Harbor
Springs
Chapter



A "Blissfest Hike" in November.

Photo by
Harbor
Springs
Chapter



Boardwalk work crew at Bear River.

Photo by
Duane
Lawton



MICHIGAN

Jordan Valley 45° Chapter

BY MARY CAMPBELL

Our crown jewel accomplishment of 2021 was the Bear River Iron Belle Trail bridge: a commercial project led by Petoskey Parks and Recreation with support from the NCTA and North Central Michigan College. A reroute south of Petoskey was officially opened with the completion of this bridge. This new trail segment is nearly three miles long with one mile of roadwalk eliminated, and it positions us to eliminate another two miles [of roadwalk] pending a landowner agreement. In conjunction with this bridge, our Chapter built a 90-foot boardwalk.

We also replaced 80 feet of boardwalk at O'Brien Pond. We hosted a work weekend in September with participation from near and far. For these new, 48-inch-wide boardwalks, we used "Menke Boardwalk Box Technology" (thanks to former NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator Bill Menke) and swamp pans. This year, we'll remove the old boardwalk and install 200 feet of puncheon. Other projects in 2021 included 80 miles of Trail maintained, a half-mile of new Trail in the Jordan Valley, and an interpretive panel installed in the Petoskey Bear River Sports Complex. We met with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify a potential reroute. In 2022 we hope to start on a major reroute between Dobleski Road and Giem Road, bypassing the US-131 roadwalk. This is pending permits and a landowner agreement. We worked with a local charter high school class for an afternoon of trail work, and they have since adopted a segment near their school.



VOLUNTEERS

In October, we hosted a multi-day thru-hike of our Chapter's NCNST segment. There were four participants who were then joined by participants of the Chapter's regular monthly hike.

Photo by Duane Lawton



Our volunteers participated in First Aid, CPR, and sawyer training. They also coordinated monthly hikes, including our hit, "Where the Wild Things Are" themed, self-guided hike for National Trails Day in June. In 2022, we aim to recruit new leadership, and focus on landowner contracts and agreements to facilitate more off-road NCNST.



MICHIGAN

Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter

BY MIKE SCHAEFFER

We welcomed 39 new members in 2021 and celebrated John Gerty becoming our new Trail Chief. We continued our partnership with the Boardman River Nature Center and the Grand Traverse Conservation District, and worked with the Village of



Above: Downed trees at Mile 715 (Michigan), following a storm.

Right: Downed trees removed from Mile 715 (Michigan).

Photos by John Gerty



Kalkaska to raise funding for a reroute through town. Approximately 50 people attended our National Trails Day group hike and picnic in June.

We maintained 108 miles of Trail, including 120 feet of trail we rerouted because of bad erosion. We assessed a bridge and puncheons for reconstruction along the Hodenpyl Dam Pond and made spot repairs, and refreshed blazes. We began updating mileage signs, each indicating distances to the eastern and western NCNST termini. Our certified sawyers put their recent training to good use after the several episodes of heavy winds we experienced in 2021.

In the spring of 2022 we will prioritize a Trail Adopter training. We also hope to begin a mile of reroute west of Kalkaska, and rebuild or upgrade 20 sections of puncheon. We have many trailhead upgrade plans including repairing, repainting, and constructing new kiosks, upgrading maps at multiple locations, and installing boot brushes.



MICHIGAN

Spirit of the Woods Chapter

BY LOREN BACH

We were so happy to resume Chapter-led hikes in 2021! Chapter member Joan Young also created a challenge for "Do It Yourself" hikes from June through October with monthly themes: Hikers needed to take pictures of theme subjects on the NCNST, along with the nearest signpost. We had 44 entries. We had a full change of Chapter board members, and held a potluck for these leadership elections - 50 people attended! The new leadership continued communication with the U.S. Forest Service, as our Chapter miles are largely within the Manistee National Forest. Our current trail work is to correct many items noted in an audit of the Trail from a few years ago that the Forest Service had commissioned.

We maintained a total of 80 NCNST miles in 2021. A SEEDS EcoCorps crew completed a project in our section near High Bridge Road outside of Brethren, rebenching and reblazing a section of Trail. Two big blowdowns impacted our boardwalk through Sterling Marsh, and another area south of Baldwin. Crew members Pete Bennett and Bob Dunning worked to repair the damage. Joan Young was hard at work, along with other volunteers, to replace Carsonite posts across our Chapter's section. Other volunteers will continue this project in 2022, as Joan has since departed for a year-long hike of

Near Baldwin, Mich., seeing Joan Young off on her NCNST thru-hike, that she started on December 1, 2021. Lef to right: Loren Bach, Omer Young, Joan Young, Peg Gramas, Ada Weier-Amor, Gary Hearing, Michael Wheeler, Laura Acton, Sue Crawford, and Cathy Laman.



Photo by Ada Weier-Amor

A group hike in January 2021 on the NCNST/ Bowman Lake loop west of Baldwin, Mich.

Photo by Loren Bach



The new bridge over South Brooks Creek.

Photo by Cheryl McGrath

Volunteers set stringers - the foundation for a bridge - over South Brooks Creek.

Photo by David Snoek



the entire North Country Trail. We wish her safe and enjoyable hiking!

This year we want to find a volunteer Trail Coordinator to be the leader and scheduler of our Chapter's building and maintenance efforts.



Western Michigan Chapter

BY SARAH COLLIER AND DREW HENDRIKSEN

MICHIGAN

Our Chapter volunteers had four bridge projects in 2021: New bridges were constructed in the Lowell State Game Area, 12 feet and 18 feet in length, respectively, and within the Manistee National Forest, bridges at Coonskin Creek and South Brooks Creek were replaced. The 18-foot bridge also included 60 feet of puncheon on its south side. We maintained over 140 miles of NCNST in total.

We attended a regular, annual meeting with Manistee National Forest staff in Baldwin, and held our Chapter annual meeting outdoors. We hosted a workday alongside the Kent Conservation District to control oriental bittersweet within the Lowell State Game Area, and held group hikes for the public to attend. A SEEDS EcoCorps youth conservation crew assisted us with some projects within the Manistee National Forest, as well.

Our Chapter has a new President Trainee, Nancy VanWinkle, as a part of our leadership succession plan, as well as a new Member/Volunteer Coordinator, Faune Benson-Schuitema. We welcome them both into these roles and look forward to them utilizing their expertise for the Chapter.

This year, we'll focus on two new bridges in the Manistee National Forest at Tank Creek and West Michigan Creek. We will also work on minor reroutes, identified by an assessment of the entire NCNST segment within the Manistee National Forest. We'll continue to seek off-road routes throughout Kent and Newaygo counties.



Chief Noonday Chapter

BY JANE NORTON

MICHIGAN

Our Chapter's memberships increased by nearly 43% in 2021!

Our "Hike the County" challenge became quite popular: Hike all NCNST miles that traverse Barry, Kalamazoo, and Calhoun counties, including all roadwalk. As of December 2021, over 350 people signed up and over 50 full completion patches were awarded. About 20 of those participants became new members. Grants were obtained to help purchase patches and mailing supplies. We will offer this again in 2022.

We obtained permission to build a campsite on a private landowner's property: the first campsite in our Chapter's section of NCNST is now complete. Kellogg Forest donated 10 picnic tables to us, so we held multiple workdays to refresh and brand them with the NCNST logo. Most have been installed, resulting in new and refreshed relationships with villages, cities, parks, and private landowners. We worked with three landowners on easements, and a new draft is being written with Michigan State University for their properties in our region. We also collaborated with the Barry-Eaton Conservation Department, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Boy and Girl Scouts, and 4-H groups. A three-minute video we produced was viewed at the virtual Quiet Water Society Adventures Symposium. We participated in many other community activities and led group hikes.

We maintained 119 miles of Trail, rerouted one mile off-road, and rebuilt a bridge in Kellogg Forest. Urban signs were added to Prairieville, and all 35 of our kiosks were updated. Our Chapter provided CPR and First Aid training to sawyers. We are eager to

start on two projects on private property, and to provide more off-road Trail and camping opportunities. Boardwalk on Augusta Prairie will be constructed, puncheons in wet areas will be built as approved, and easements and outreach will be continuing efforts.

Refurbishing 10 picnic tables given to the Chapter by Kellogg Forest. These tables have been placed along the NCNST in all three counties of the Chapter for hikers to enjoy. This project was unexpected in 2021, but embraced by our volunteers.

Photo by Mary Rebert



Nick Phillips on the NCNST at the Michigan-Ohio state line.

Photo by Nick Phillips



MICHIGAN

Chief Baw Beese Chapter

BY BRUCE DZIADZIO

We celebrated successful contact with private

landowners to move Trail off-road, including the initiation of Trail Use Agreements for a 0.15-mile trail in the Lost Nation State Game Area (SGA). We will continue to focus on increased contact with more private landowners. We also formed a new relationship with Litchfield Township, and renewed contact with the City of Hillsdale to document agreement permission to maintain the Trail and repair an old bridge. We attended the Osseo Great Mushroom Festival in May, and multiple meetings with the City Director and Attorney of Hillsdale, City Manager of Jonesville, the Litchfield Township Board, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. We hosted group hikes with an average of 15 participants.

Over 50 miles of NCNST were maintained in our section in 2021. We repaired three river crossings totaling 60 linear feet, refreshed blazes on 15 miles of Trail, and installed new signage in Jonesville.

In 2022 we will build and repair bridges in the Lost Nation SGA, Osseo, and Litchfield Township, as well as create new trail in Lost Nation SGA and Jonesville. We will establish committees within our Chapter to include more members, and plan to represent the NCTA at more public events in Osseo, Jonesville, and Litchfield.



Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association (Affiliate)

OHIO

BY RYAN BOWLES

The Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association (NORTA) owns a portion of the Wabash Cannonball Trail that's a shared route with the NCNST. Our association maintained 53 miles of trail in 2021 and rerouted 5.5 new miles, eliminating a half-mile of roadwalk. In addition to blazing the reroute in Oak Openings Metropark and Maumee State Forest, we blazed significant portions of the Wabash Cannonball Trail that had never been paint blazed. We also completed about half of the blazing for a major reroute that we expect to open in the spring of 2022.

NORTA continued interactions with our public land managers: Toledo Metroparks, Maumee State Forest, the City of Waterville, the Village of Whitehouse, and the Ohio Department of Transportation. We also met with the City of Montpelier to discuss options for routing the Trail across the Ohio-Michigan state line. We hosted two National Trails Day hikes. The NCNST committee of NORTA is only two years old, and we are very proud to be growing and developing new leaders to make the NCNST in northwest Ohio a great resource for our community.

This year, we will open the Whitehouse-Waterville reroute, which will add some great natural and historical scenery to the Trail. We are also working to identify, clear, and designate primitive camping opportunities for the Wabash Cannonball Trail, which will be available to NCNST users as well.



Top: Mason and Malinda Luzier paint blazes on new Trail in Maumee State Forest.



Bottom: The NCNST traverses an area of oak savanna in Oak Openings Metropark.

Photos by Ryan Bowles



OHIO

Buckeye Trail Association (Affiliate)

BY STEVE WALKER

We maintained approximately 900 miles of NCNST (shared with the Buckeye Trail) in 2021. We happily rerouted a dangerous half-mile road segment as well. The new, 138-foot Bill Miller Boardwalk was installed in the Hocking Hills area. We installed interpretive panels in St. Marys, Ohio and in several state parks, and a new shelter was constructed near Milford.

Our Association was in communication with the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about a reroute between Clendening and Piedmont Lakes. In December, we entered into a five-year agreement with the conservancy district for development of more off-road trail in eastern Ohio. We also began planning for engagement with Scouts organizations. Major 2021 events included MorelFest, the EGGS Hike, our annual Little Loop Challenge (a collective hike of 250 miles in one day), and we hosted many group hikes.

We founded a Chapter Leadership Council in 2021 and look forward to growing that. In 2022, we'll continue to focus on growing our volunteer capacity, increasing advocacy presence in the Ohio General Assembly, and expanding our presence at events.



The new Bill Miller Boardwalk in the Hocking Hills area.

Photo by Pat Snyder



OHIO AND
PENNSYLVANIA

Wampus Chapter

BY DAVE BREWER

In 2021 we reached out to groups who don't typically get invited to experience the North Country Trail, including the Pittsburgh Chapter of Outdoor Afro and Tiger Pause from Beaver Falls. Our Outreach Committee invited

youth and adults from the more urban areas we are in proximity of to experience the Trail through guided hikes. We also participated in community events farther away from the Trail to diversify our outreach. We organized a series of diversity



VOLUNTEERS

webinars, culminating in a session and hike at McConnells Mill State Park, and we facilitated the first NCTA JEDI grant for a group of youth to be able to experience an outdoor overnight trip. We organized three “pop-up” hikes, led a National Trails Day

Hike near Darlington, Pa., and reintroduced our Pumpkin Pie Hike in November with 75 people in attendance.

We supported a local landowner as he purchased property near PA Mile 18 to add it to his established land bank, thereby protecting the Trail on a key land parcel between Wampum and Enon Valley. Our volunteers maintained 123 miles of NCNST, using a weekly schedule for group work. We worked with Ohio’s Beaver Creek State park to reopen a new mile of reconstructed Trail, and we’re working on trail and a new bridge in McConnells Mill State Park. We replaced three other bridges in 2021 and built a new one at PA Mile 18. We also installed parking areas, many new signs at trailheads and kiosks, and journal boxes. We aided an Eagle Scout candidate in his construction of a hiking shelter, off-trail near OH Mile 76.5. In conjunction with the Buckeye Trail Association, we rejuvenated an established campsite in the NCTA Trail Town of Zoar, Ohio.

We communicated with existing partners, county commissioners, tourism bureaus, representatives from NCTA Trail Towns, county park boards in Ohio, and the Muskingum Watershed Conservation District in Ohio. Our Closing the Gaps Committee held productive meetings with local government agencies in Ohio. Moving more Trail off-road will be a focused effort in 2022.



Chapter volunteers at our second Great American Cleanup project.

Photo by Wampum Chapter

Fifteen members of Pittsburgh’s Outdoor Afro Chapter joined the Wampum Chapter for their annual Pumpkin Pie Hike in early November 2021.

Photo by Frank Pisano



New Pry Road bridge.

Photo by Dave Adams



PENNSYLVANIA

Butler County Chapter

BY DAVE ADAMS

Four years ago we submitted an application for a \$25,000 grant from Stream Restoration, Inc. to upgrade trail, and to replace 20-year-old bridges and structures in Pennsylvania State Game Lands 95. This was funded in early 2021, allowing us to replace two major bridges (Pry Road and KL 24, now both 32-foot wooden truss bridges) and three smaller ones. The grant also helped us build a new 50-foot boardwalk and improve drainage in a wet area. We had nine 22-ton loads of limestone delivered to various trailheads for bridge ramps, and to fill in muddy holes and areas along the Trail in the gamelands. We replaced damaged or missing blaze posts along the NCNST throughout the gamelands. We cut decking, railings, and supports for a 40-foot bridge replacement project that will take place this spring. We also continued to maintain 50 miles of NCNST. The trail upgrades and bridge replacements within the gamelands will continue throughout 2022, and we’ll prioritize recruiting new members and improving landowner relations to close trail gaps.

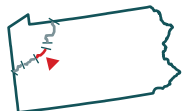
We’ve been working closely with the North Trails Library staff and Library Friends Group to promote the NCNST in northern Butler County and to plan fundraising projects. There is now a NCTA Butler County Chapter banner on the front exterior of the library! We’ve co-sponsored a number of events together, resulting in



New KL24 bridge.

Photo by Dave Adams

new Chapter members. We sponsored a weekend hike and trail work weekend with a local Boy Scout group, who hiked in and overnighted at our shelter north of West Sunbury. In the fall we led multiple group hikes, including a Turkey Day Recovery Hike and an evening cemetery visit on Halloween. Our Chapter volunteers attended various trainings, including First Aid, sawyer, and step construction led by Tom Moutsos, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator. We met with Dustin Drew, Manager of Moraine State Park, to discuss and plan training and trail improvements to the Trail through the park, including the Hidden River Bridge steps.



Clarion County Chapter

BY DAVE GALBREATH

PENNSYLVANIA

The Clarion County Chapter maintained 45 miles of NCNST in 2021. We constructed 1.2 miles of reroute, and with the Boy Scouts: a 50-foot boardwalk, and multiple benches at the Doe Run, Highland, and Maple Creek shelters. Chapter members completed a chainsaw training (four participants), as well as a First Aid course (six participants).

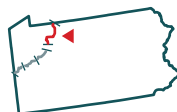
We promoted the NCNST through monthly group hikes (12, averaging 12 participants), a landowner reception, and kayak float trips.

The top priority for 2022 is to complete the White Oak reroute, moving the Trail off pipeline north of Route 66.

Chapter President Dave Galbreath laughs with others during an appreciation dinner for private landowners who let the Trail cross their land in the Clarion County Chapter's region.

Chapter members stand in front of a giant hemlock root ball in Cook Forest State Park.

Photos by Tom Moutsos



PENNSYLVANIA

Allegheny National Forest Chapter

BY TINA TOOLE

An ANF Chapter trail work crew is happy with the 0.3-mile reroute they built.

Photo by Alisha Glasgow

In 2021, we focused on bridge repair. We also blazed the northernmost 25 miles of Trail in our section, built one kiosk, added a campsite along the West Branch of Minister Creek, and upgraded the parking area at the Route 66 trailhead. We had several trainings, including a sawyer certification, First Aid/CPR, and grip hoist. We maintained over 98 miles of NCNST and constructed a 0.75-mile reroute. Our Chapter worked with a rails-to-trails group to upgrade a section of NCNST that will be used to bring both cyclists and hikers to a newly constructed rails-to-trails path that crosses the NCNST. We continued to regularly communicate and work with U.S. Forest Service personnel, including a non-motorized trail technician, a recreation specialist, and district rangers.

The Allegheny 100 (A-100) Challenge was successful with nearly perfect weather and a record number of 100-mile finishers: 28, plus our first dog! All 11 of the 25-mile registrants achieved

A guided hike in the Allegheny National Forest.

Photo by Mike Toole





VOLUNTEERS

their goal; 22 completed 50 miles, and two completed 75 miles. A total of 134 hikers from as far away as California and Florida participated. We adjusted the event's format to reduce contact between

participants. Hikers enjoyed the smoother registration process and appreciated the uncrowded first few miles.

This year we plan to offer more training opportunities. We'll create manuals for events and Chapter leadership positions, continue to repair trail tread, construct a staircase, puncheon bridges, and a shelter on the southern end, and start on some reroutes. It looks to be a busy year for construction, as we hope to build two 40-foot+ spans over creeks in the remote Tracy Ridge area, along with a reroute and a shelter. All supplies for this project will be brought in by boat.



NEW YORK

Finger Lakes Trail Conference (Affiliate)

BY MICHAELA ANEY

Hello Trail Community! I'm Michaela Aney, the new Director of Trail Development for the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) as of 2021. The Finger Lakes Trail is the official route of the NCNST for 421 miles. It's maintained by the FLTC, and we work closely with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) foresters and New York State park managers. In 2021, over 10 miles of roadwalk was eliminated and four miles of new trail were constructed. Puncheons were installed in Sugar Hill State Forest, made

possible by an NCTA Field Grant! The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Onondaga Chapter blazed several miles within many state forests and two Wilderness areas. A new bivouac area was added, and old outhouses were removed and replaced with fiberglass privies.

An easement was acquired between Burt Hill and South Woods State Forests. The Finger Lakes Land Trust received a land donation to help eliminate a large roadwalk. This is the fourth land parcel to be acquired in this area, and trail construction will begin in 2022. The Finger Lakes Land Trust and the NYS DEC are instrumental in protecting the Trail. A virtual landowner relations panel was also held for volunteers.

Boy Scout troops continue to be a workforce. I also brought in a crew from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Excelsior Conservation Corps, an AmeriCorps program and a partnership we hope to continue. We started working with the Cargill plant in Watkins Glen, as both a trail sponsor for a section of trail and working with their grant program. We led several presentations for hikers to learn more about Leave No Trace, edible plants, wilderness emergencies, and other topics - these will continue in 2022. Many, many group hikes were offered, with excellent attendance at our Cross-County Hike Series across Cortland County.

In 2022 we'll continue to work toward increasing our programming and structure as we continue to experience growth and turnover in volunteer leadership. We will also increase volunteer engagement, and improve tracking and reporting.

Student Conservation Association (SCA) Excelsior Conservation Corps AmeriCorps member and a Boy Scout from Ithaca Troop 2 work on a tread and drainage project.

Photo by
Michaela
Aney



A group at the Cross-County Hike Series across Cortland County.

Photo by Peg Fuller



Turnpike and rock water bar construction in Hoffman Notch Wilderness.

Photos by
Mary Coffin



Above: Ed Setliff and Paul Mannion introduce hikers to forest fungi at the Nelson Swamp Unique Area.

Photo by Mike Daly

Right: Dennis Harrod and Scott Sellers assist Cazenovia College students under direction of professor Thad Yorks.

Photo by Mark Wadopian



NEW YORK

Central New York Chapter

BY MARK WADOPIAN

With 30 Trail Stewards, we maintain over 40 miles of off-road NCNST, and monitor and blaze 65 more (including road walks). About a half-mile was rerouted in 2021. Approval is pending from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) for a reroute through Clark Hill State Forest, which will eliminate six to eight miles of roadwalk. NYS DEC has approved the concept of the Trail transiting the state forest and linking with a trail to be built in Pixley Falls State Park. At the request of a landowner, 120 feet of puncheon was relocated to accommodate their land use requirement. Our Landowner Committee is also actively reviewing past agreements for update, modification, and renewal.

We recruited 18 new Chapter members in 2021. Two members are active in the NYS Volunteer Council, and many participated in leadership events hosted by the NCTA. Five members participated in sawyer recertification and a Game of Logging seminar held in Pharsalia. We led many group hikes that included additional activities such as snowshoeing, birding, tree and fungus identification, and a fish survey. We coordinate with local schools, colleges, and scout groups whenever possible - Cazenovia College has been particularly supportive.

Priorities in 2022 are to continue the pursuit of proposed route alterations and to reduce roadwalk. We're also hopeful and prepared to return to public venues for membership recruitment and NCNST education.



NEW YORK

Adirondack Mountain Club (Affiliate)

BY MARY COFFIN

The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) maintained 70 miles of NCNST, and installed several new water bars and puncheons on the west side of Jones Hill in Hoffman Notch Wilderness. On the east side, we installed 90 feet of rock turnpike foundation and sides. We updated kiosk panels at the Crown Point State Historic Site (SHS) and confirmed the NCNST route there for the Unit Management Plan (UMP). We had our annual meeting with NYS DEC (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation) foresters and planners, and the site manager of Crown Point SHS. We requested funding support and permissions/permits for trail projects, UMP support and NCNST inclusion, and more. We also met with them in the field about volunteer and professional projects, flagging new routes, and revising kiosk panels.

I led work trips to Little Woodhull Lake, Kunjamuk, Jones Hill (for four days), and Oak Mountain. There were at least 11 additional Trail Steward trips. I provided Benching 101 to a local group and assistance with rock turnpike. We acquired two new Trail Stewards, and working with Stephanie Campbell, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator, has been a tremendous help. I am now stepping down from 10 years on the NYS NCTA Volunteer Council to focus on the Adirondacks.

In 2022 we will establish rapport with the ADK to revise partnership agreements. We aim to complete the Jones Hill project and I have Trail Stewards lined up for that entire section! We'll work on flagging the west side of Hoffman Notch Wilderness and in Hammond Pond Wild Forest. We'll submit funding requests for professional trail crews, create a steering committee for 2023 [NCTA] Celebration, promote awareness of the NCNST with ADK Chapters, and encourage completion of a parcel purchase or Trail Access Easement / Right of Way south of Crown Point, when the landowner is ready.



VOLUNTEERS



VERMONT

Middlebury Area Land Trust (Affiliate)

BY CALEB BASA

The Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) received approximately \$1,000 from the NCTA Field Grant program to rebuild a boardwalk on Monument Farms land in Weybridge, Vt. This 100-foot boardwalk was widened from 16 to 28 inches by MALT staff and community volunteers. I coordinated with the Community Counseling Services of Addison County (CSAC) for about six high school students in the program to help with the rebuild for five days. This project was a major success.

We secured two new license agreements to get the NCNST into the Green Mountains in East Middlebury: One with the East Middlebury Fire Department, and one with landowner Peter Burfoot. We also welcomed NCTA staff Stephanie Campbell and Valerie Bader last summer, and we discussed the Trail route up to the Green Mountains.

Top priorities for 2022 are to maintain the Trail that we have constructed and determine the best route into the Green Mountains. Ideally, MALT would solidify all the trail easements and license agreements necessary to complete this section of Trail.



Top: MALT volunteers.

Photo by Middlebury Area Land Trust

Left: CSAC volunteers widening and strengthening a boardwalk.

Photo by Stephanie Campbell



Lorana poses with her award for incredibly impressive service to the NCNST Community.

Photo by Lorana Jinkerson

10,000 Hours for the Trail

BY NIC LOISEAU, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)

The National Park Service recognizes and celebrates Lorana Jinkerson for her dedication to the North Country National Scenic Trail. Since 2005, Lorana, of the NCTA North Country Trail Hikers Chapter, has contributed 10,000 hours to promote and protect the nation's longest National Scenic Trail.

People volunteer for different reasons. Lorana believes "volunteering for the NCNST is an act of kindness to others, the NCNST, and to myself: To others by providing them with a trail through which they can reconnect with nature, to the NCNST by ensuring it is available for future hikers, and to myself by improving my physical and mental health, making new friends, and realizing a sense of purpose."

From communication and administrative tasks to event planning and trail building and maintenance, Lorana's commitment is undeniable. She is a respected member of the volunteer community. She has also served in important roles with the NCTA as a board member, and Chapter President for 12 years.

"Lorana's volunteer service and many contributions and accomplishments demonstrate that one volunteer can make a huge difference," said Chris Loudenslager, NCNST Superintendent (NPS). "Thank you for your love and dedication for the NCNST, and for so generously sharing your passion, time, and energy with the Trail!"

When asked about volunteering, Lorana said, "My favorite thing about volunteering is the feeling of doing something for others, most whom I will never even know, but who use the Trail for day, section, or longer hikes is worth all the effort. When I read comments by users of the Trail, I smile knowing that I had a small part in providing for their experience - connecting through volunteering."

Trail staff smile too, knowing that they are fortunate to acknowledge such a wonderful volunteer!

2022 NCTA Annual Awards: Call for Nominations

Each year during the annual NCTA Celebration, an awards ceremony is held to honor those who build, maintain, protect, and promote the North Country Trail. Those who receive these awards have given exceptional service, often many years' worth, to the Trail and the NCTA. There are diverse award categories to represent the myriad of efforts put forth for the Trail. **Nominations for 2022 awards will be accepted January 15 through May 1, 2022.** Awards will be presented in October.

Award categories include physical trail builders and maintainers, trail supporters, outreach superstars, and everything in between. Find the full list with descriptions at northcountrytrail.org/volunteer-awards.

Who are you thankful for and proud of in your local Chapter, state or region? Think of someone special in their commitment and enthusiasm for the North Country Trail. Submit your nomination online at northcountrytrail.org/volunteer-awards. You may also email Larry Pio, Awards Committee Chair (nalcoman1@aol.com) or Abby Whittington, NCTA Events Coordinator (awhittington@northcountrytrail.org). If sending the nomination via email, please include the following information:

- Nominee's name
- Chapter/Affiliate/Partner name
- Award category
- Nominee's full mailing address, phone number, and email
- Your full mailing address, phone number, and email
- A one- to two-page statement explaining why this person should receive the particular award you're nominating them for

Provide the NCTA Awards Committee with enough detail to adequately compare your nominee to others in the selected category. Lists of accomplishments or descriptive stories will support your nomination. Get help from others - even from the nominee - to provide a complete picture of your nominee's contributions.



NCTA's 2022 Celebration: October 5-8 in Walker, Minnesota

Stay tuned to northcountrytrail.org/celebration for schedule and registration information coming this spring and summer. Visit northcountrytrail.org/membership to learn about exclusive registration perks for NCTA members!

northcountrytrail.org/celebration



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TRAIL
WORK

SEEDS EcoCorps Tackles North Country Trail Projects

My-Nhi and Joe cut trail in L'Anse.

Photo by SEEDS
EcoCorps

BY JENNIFER FLYNN, ECOCORPS PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND KENNY WAWSCZYK, NCTA REGIONAL TRAIL COORDINATOR FOR MICHIGAN

Throughout 2021, the SEEDS EcoCorps conservation crew worked on multiple sections of the North Country Trail, ranging from the Manistee National Forest to the Porcupine Mountains in the Upper Peninsula (UP). EcoCorps crew members, primarily young adults, get firsthand experience in careers related to the restoration of public and private lands.

EcoCorps partnered with the NCTA Spirit of the Woods Volunteer Chapter to renovate bridges, install erosion control features, clear storm debris, and improve tread. Near Dickson Township, they repaired foot bridges to increase safety for hikers, and to encourage visitors to stay on the Trail and not disrupt surrounding ecosystems. EcoCorps crew member Brynne O'Donnell, a recent graduate of Manistee High School, shared that her favorite project this year was installing three new corduroy bridges in a swampy section of the North Country Trail.

“

It was great seeing a part of the old growth forest that is not frequently visited, and I was extremely enthused to take part in constructing a new section of a National Scenic Trail.”

— JOE JACZKOWSKI

“It's been cool to learn new skills, like trail building, and working with the crew,” said Brynne. “It's hard work, but a lot of fun.”

In Ontonagon County, EcoCorps crew members constructed nearly one mile of new NCNST corridor as part of a reroute project in the Porcupine Mountains. The reroute is planned to connect to a newly constructed bridge, which will create a new route south of the Little Iron River in the Porcupine Mountains and Ottawa National Forest. The focus of this project was benching: Removing dirt from the hillside to create a walking path three feet wide and very slightly angled downhill to encourage water to run off the trail. This work was completed in collaboration with the NCTA Ni-Miikanaake Chapter and the Ottawa National Forest. EcoCorps crew leader Joe Jaczkowski traveled here with six other crew members and leaders from Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Saginaw counties.

“To reach the work site, we had to hike in and out with all of our tools, between two and six miles each day,” shared Joe. “It was great



Benching trail in the Porcupine Mountains.

Photo by SEEDS
EcoCorps



Top: Girard loving his work in the Porcupine Mountains.

Above: Benching trail using logs in the Porcupine Mountains.

Photos by SEEDS EcoCorps

seeing a part of the old growth forest that is not frequently visited, and I was extremely enthused to take part in constructing a new section of a National Scenic Trail.”

EcoCorps crew members collaborated with the NCTA Peter Wolfe Chapter in Baraga County to create a reroute of the Trail near L’Anse. Crew members learned new skills from the Chapter members, including how to use a stump puller, while the EcoCorps crew offered their experience of treadwork and bench cutting. The newly created route will get NCNST hikers off the road and into the wilderness.

Learn more about SEEDS EcoCorps at ecoseeds.org and if you’re interested in similar volunteer work, submit a Volunteer Interest Form to the NCTA today: northcountrytrail.org/volunteer-interest-form.

These projects were made possible with support from the National Park Foundation, the Minger Family Endowment, the Iron Belle Trail Fund via the NCTA, and the National Forest Foundation.

Applications for the 2022 cohort of the NCTA’s Next Generation Coalition open on April 1.

We’re seeking 12 individuals, ages 18-35, from across our eight NCNST states to join us! The Coalition is a two-year commitment, created to empower young and diverse individuals to become involved through volunteerism along the North Country Trail. Learn more and find the application at northcountrytrail.org/next-generation-coalition.





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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.

Lisa Szela, member of the NCTA Next Generation Coalition's 2021 Cohort, stands at the Curtains Ice Formation at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. This feature isn't directly visible from the NCNST, but it's a very short walk from the Trail, between Sand Point and Munising Falls. Lisa represents Wisconsin in the Coalition, and is particularly passionate about increasing access to the outdoors, and creating strong and welcoming outdoor communities.

Photo by Lisa Szela