



North Star

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2023



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On the Cover

"I completed the [Hike 100] Challenge March 13 (2022) near Tahquamenon Falls in the Upper Peninsula."
- Kristi Evans, NCTA Marquette Area Chapter board member and volunteer

Photo by Kristi Evans

Opposite Page

Laurentian Lakes Chapter.

Photo provided by Robert Becklund

Trailhead

MIKE CHAPPLE,
PRESIDENT, NCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Photo by
Mike Chapple

Last fall, many of us had the opportunity to gather in person for the 2022 NCTA Celebration in Walker, Minnesota. After two years of virtual Celebrations, it was wonderful to have the opportunity to gather again in person, share stories about the Trail, and recognize the efforts of the many volunteers who make the North Country Trail possible. I enjoyed

the opportunity to explore some sections of the Trail that were new to me and hear from some interesting speakers, but the highlight of my trip was meeting so many people from across the Trail and hearing about their experiences following the blue blazes. Celebration was an opportunity to meet new people and visit with friends that I hadn't seen since before the pandemic.

Most of all, Celebration was a reminder of what makes the Trail special: the community of hikers, volunteers, donors, agency partners, and others who put their heart into the North Country Trail every day. This year, through a partnership with StoryCorps, we were able to capture some of those stories digitally. Stay tuned for your opportunity to hear some professionally produced stories from the North Country Trail!

Hiking is often a solitary experience. While I often hike and backpack with friends, I also enjoy going off into the woods by myself for some peace and quiet. Sure, we might encounter a few other hikers here and there, but our trail generally isn't one that draws large crowds. It's not unusual to go an entire day on the Trail without seeing another person. Events like Celebration help us realize that there are, indeed, thousands of us spread across those 4,800 miles.

If you weren't able to join us in Walker, I hope that you'll consider joining us in Chestertown, New York for Celebration 2023, September 27 through October 1. I hope to see you there!

ANDREA KETCHMARK,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo by
Andrea Ketchmark

Life is full of magic. In the trail world, the term "trail magic" is usually associated with acts of generosity bestowed upon hikers: a ride into town when you need it most, the gift of a hot meal on a frozen day, a cake brought to the trailhead to help a hiker celebrate a birthday. These acts of kindness help renew our faith in humanity

and build kinship in our community. But there is also the type of trail magic that happens when you experience something rare, extraordinary, or inspiring in nature. Something that leaves you feeling like you witnessed something special, leaving you feeling connected to the universe and those around you. You walk away better because of it, with a memory that lasts a lifetime. There are experiences that are larger-than-life: sharing a breath with an owl perched in a tree, hearing elk bugle as you snuggle into your sleeping bag, watching the Northern Lights dance over Lake Superior. But there is also the magic in the everyday: watching a spider navigate a dew-soaked web, admiring the glow of a sunset over the prairie and watching as your kids or grandkids ramble down the trail ahead of you, taking in every sight, sound, and smell. Simply experiencing the Trail and where it takes me is my favorite type of magic.

As my favorite high schooler Ferris Bueller once said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." In this fast-paced world, it is important we take the time to look around, to take in and appreciate the big experiences and accomplishments, but to also notice the things that are hiding in plain sight. These moments are to be treasured. They are the magic that make up the Trail experience and the work we do to make it all possible.

The following pages are full of magic, big and small. You'll read stories about the big projects that kept us busy all year and about our volunteers that worked tirelessly to maintain the Trail every day. These

are the real trail angels, sharing the magic day in and day out, often unseen. In the year ahead, we have more big things planned. We'll put more Trail on the ground and trail protection will take center stage as we ramp up our efforts to permanently protect those new miles, along with the miles we've already built, to ensure it's around for future generations. We'll launch an awareness campaign aimed at growing our community of supporters and volunteers to meet the growing needs of a growing Trail. And we'll build a strong volunteer training program, aimed at empowering our community, giving them the skills they need so we all can be successful.

There is magic innate in nature, magic in helping others, and there is magic that we create - one mile at a time as we build and maintain the North Country National Scenic Trail. As you focus on your big goals and resolutions for the new year, I encourage you also to stop, listen, and look around. Magic is everywhere and if you're not careful, you'll miss it.

CHRIS LOUDENSLAGER,
NCNST SUPERINTENDENT, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Photo by
Kate Lemon

Greetings to one and all as we patiently weather the last few months of winter and look ahead to the coming field season. Looking back at all that we accomplished in the last year, it is very exciting to see how these successes have prepared us to move forward and have set the stage for us to do even more for the Trail and the dedicated trail community.

Much of my excitement is the prospect of the projects and planning that the National Park Service (NPS) and North Country Trail Association (NCTA) will be doing in close collaboration, to benefit and support those in the field getting things done. NPS and NCTA leadership, along with select members of the NCTA Board of Directors, are already underway on a project that will more clearly define our collective roles and responsibilities. This should better clarify "who does what," and better guide volunteers toward who to contact when questions or needs arise. We will also be working closely to put together a Volunteer Program Working Group made up

of staff from both organizations, to better develop and deliver the training, services, support, and information you all rely on to get your work done, to enhance your skills and abilities, and explore new opportunities the Trail might provide. Some specific examples of what we anticipate in the coming year include (but are not limited to) new leadership and skills training, improvements to the equipment and supply request process, improved information and guidance on trail signage, eight targeted chainsaw training courses, and a new pilot program to provide certified sawyers who wear glasses with reimbursement of up to \$150 for prescription safety glasses.

Another project that we will start work on in 2023 is the development of a North Country National Scenic Trail Junior Ranger program! This has been a strong, long-time desire for many of us, and once completed, the program will provide a fun, interesting, and immersive way for youth, parents, and kids of all ages to experience the North Country Trail. They can learn about the history, people, places, and things that make the Trail so special, and forge an enduring relationship with the NCNST that will last a lifetime. This will be quite an undertaking, and I look forward to working with many of you to include your input, experiences, and opinions for what is most valuable and meaningful to include in the program. At this point, we are only getting ready to start exploring the process and this will likely represent two or three years of work and development- so please manage your expectations for when this might be ready. But as it has been said in the past, "getting there is half the fun." This will be an incredibly fun process to be sure.

My thanks and sincere appreciation to all of you out there who live, love, and hike the NCNST, and do so much to contribute to our success and continued progress toward completing the Trail!



PARTNERSHIP

State of the Trail

NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL
ASSOCIATION STAFF

“

There are so many people working really hard at the local level to ensure the protection and care of the NCNST. For some of them, it's almost become a second job or a post-retirement job.”

— PAUL GAGNON,
DIRECTOR OF
TRAIL PROTECTION

What is the most rewarding project you worked on in 2022?

Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director: “I celebrated when I signed a permanent easement with the Manger-Lynch family for a section of the Trail in the Upper Peninsula. This project has been years in the making. It involved Connie Julien and others with the NCTA Peter Wolfe Chapter, who built the relationship with the family. Kenny Wawsczyk helped lay out the Trail location and Paul Gagnon helped finalize the legal agreement. The Manger-Lynch family's dedication to land preservation means the Trail experience will live on for generations. What a great partnership!”



Felicia Hokenstad, Next Generation Coalition Leader: “I

organized the first Next Generation Coalition (NGC) Summit since 2019. Matt Davis and I collaborated with American Hiking Society volunteers and the NCTA Arrowhead Chapter to

complete a new, one-mile section of Trail in Northern Minnesota. Once trail building was complete, the Chapter kept us busy with trail maintenance and an urban group hike through Grand Rapids, Minn. We were really stoked to run into NCNST thru-hiker Aaron “Soda” Landon, who also participated in both trail building and the group hike! It was fantastic to meet many [NGC members] in person for the first time, and bond over late-night camp games, a toasty fire, and the beautiful night sky. For many of us, it was our first exposure to trail building and the many tools required.”



Stephanie Campbell, Regional Trail Coordinator: “I have been working on the Rome area reroute

with the NCTA Central New York Chapter. Led by Steve Kinne, volunteers have been constructing an eight-mile reroute, estimated to be complete by 2024. Additional grant funds are being pursued to hire a trail crew to build safe, sustainable trail on the steepest sections of the route within Clark Hill State Forest and Pixley Falls State Park. Volunteers will also engage local landowners in an effort to reroute adjoining NCNST portions off-road, to enhance hiker safety and enjoyment.”

Becky VanDyke, Data Entry Specialist: “This was my first time working on the My NCT Membership Drive, and it really made me aware of how much support we receive from members and donors at all levels. I was amazed by the amount of people who renewed or activated memberships, along with donations we received. It's clear the Trail is important to many people, and they showed it through the generosity of their gifts.”



Heather Ertle, Database and Membership Administrator: “I was honored to be a part of the 2022 Celebration. It was such an energizing time with the Trail

Community! I had the pleasure of meeting many volunteers, members, and partners in person for the first time. Highlights included hearing Lou Ann Johnson's story, sitting with Tom Gilbert and Joan Young at dinner and listening to their stories of Celebrations past, the volunteer awards presentation, and the keynote speakers.”

Matt Rowbotham, GIS Program Manager:

“I worked on building a detailed map layer and database that represents the private land access agreements across the NCNST. Historically, the NCTA's map data identified whether a segment of Trail was on public or private land - but only limited information, such as trail mileage and seasonal hunting closures, were recorded for the private land segments. The goal of this project was to bring together existing private land documents with the private land segments in our mapping system. We also categorized the level of trail protection on each property. This allows us to visualize the private properties across the length of the Trail. Spending time working with scanned copies of old documents and new agreements demonstrated that each of these properties has a meaningful story behind it. These are the stories of landowners who bring a National Scenic Trail hiking experience to our local areas. They're also the stories of the hard work and dedication of volunteers and staff who, in many cases, have worked on securing access to particular properties for many years.”

Above: A 2022 Celebration hike in Walker, Minn.

Photo by Tom Gilbert

Right: Eagle Scout project on U.S. Bureau of Reclamation land, N.D.

Photo by Matt Davis

What's one new thing you learned about the NCNST, NCTA, or Trail Community?

Paul Gagnon, Director of Trail Protection: “The dedication and professionalism of our volunteers is what has most impressed me. There are so many people working really hard at the local level to ensure the protection and care of the NCNST. For some of them, it's almost become a second job or a post-retirement job. Everyone seems very grateful to have me involved, but without our Chapter volunteers interfacing with local forces on the ground, and relating their knowledge of the Trail and the land, I'd be ineffective in what I do.”

Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Operations:

“I had the pleasure of getting to hear a number of our StoryCorps recordings, and was blown away by the wealth of knowledge in our Trail Community and the ways the Trail unites people. I can't wait for everyone to hear these stories!”

Karen Raab, Finance and Operations Manager:

“I'm new to the NCTA this year, so meeting everyone [in person] at our staff retreat was nice and helpful to me.”



Matt Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator: “I learned more about the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), which owns land that 130+ miles of NCNST cross in North Dakota. We have built a great partnership

with this unique, can-do agency, which led to the construction of a new, 12-mile, off-road segment with Eagle Scouts last September.”

Abby Whittington, Annual Events Coordinator: “I learned so much about the Minnesota NCNST. I used the *Guide to Hiking the North Country Trail in Minnesota* as a resource and highly recommend it for anyone wanting to hike that area. It also helped me learn how to read maps better. I will be honest, maps were never my strong suit. Planning the 2022 Celebration allowed me to learn how to use our maps much more efficiently and effectively. I also really enjoyed using our maps from the website and began to appreciate all the interactive layers it provided.”

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PARTNERSHIP

What's one of your favorite stories from the Trail in 2022?

Nancy Brozek, Director of Development and Communications:

"It was a perfect Michigan summer day and I was spending it visiting members in Northern Michigan. I arrived early for a meeting, and as I sat in my car checking messages, a weather warning crossed my screen. The sky darkened so I decided to wait indoors. No sooner had I walked inside than the restaurant manager rushed everyone into the bathrooms. There we stood, in total darkness and awkwardness, before being given the 'all clear.' The awkwardness continued as I realized I had no idea who to look for, for my meeting. I started introducing myself to everyone by asking, 'Are you, Bob?' What are the odds that there would be more than one Bob in a restaurant without power that had just been swept over by a tornado? Turns out the odds are good, but I finally found the right one. We held a surprisingly relaxing conversation as the sirens whirled around us."



Kenny Wawsczyk, Regional Trail Coordinator: "The 2.33-mile reroute that YouthWork Conservation Corps crews did alongside the NCTA Marquette Area Chapter.

We knew that YouthWork was able to help, but we had no idea we'd actually complete it. Youth crews played a large role in many Michigan NCNST projects in 2022, but this might have been the hardest. Special thanks to Michael Sekely for logistics and supervising, as well!"

Kate Lemon, Marketing and Communications

Coordinator: "I led our partnership with StoryCorps in 2022 and thus, had the privilege of listening to stories from over 50 of our leaders, volunteers, members, and partners. Recording sessions contained laughter, tears, intimate moments, and cherished memories. One of my favorites starred two volunteers from Minnesota: one relatively new to the NCTA and the other, quite seasoned. The friendship, mentorship, and respect that has formed between them so quickly and securely was very endearing to witness. Yet, they still learned new things about each other during this session. I'm beyond fortunate to be a part of this Trail Community that cultivates such devotion and affection for both our surroundings and our peers. I look forward to continuing these recording efforts in 2023 and beyond."

Paul Kogelschatz, Fundraising Coordinator:

"The willingness of supporters to share their North Country Trail experience with friends and family is a common sentiment among many members and volunteers. Through shared experiences, many people have discovered the benefits of hiking, whether it be improved physical endurance or improved mental health. These inspiring stories continue to motivate others - myself included."



Alison Sanchez, Administrative Assistant: "Hearing from Brittany Pazdan* about her story of healing mentally and physically from addiction by getting out on the NCNST. We have become friends now."

**Brittany shared her story in the Fall 2022 issue of the North Star, within the larger article Be Part of Something Bigger than Yourself.*

Above: Brittany Pazdan (right), Mich.

Photo by Brittany Pazdan

Left: YouthWork Conservation Corps project, Mich.

Photo by Michael Sekely

CELEBRATION 2023

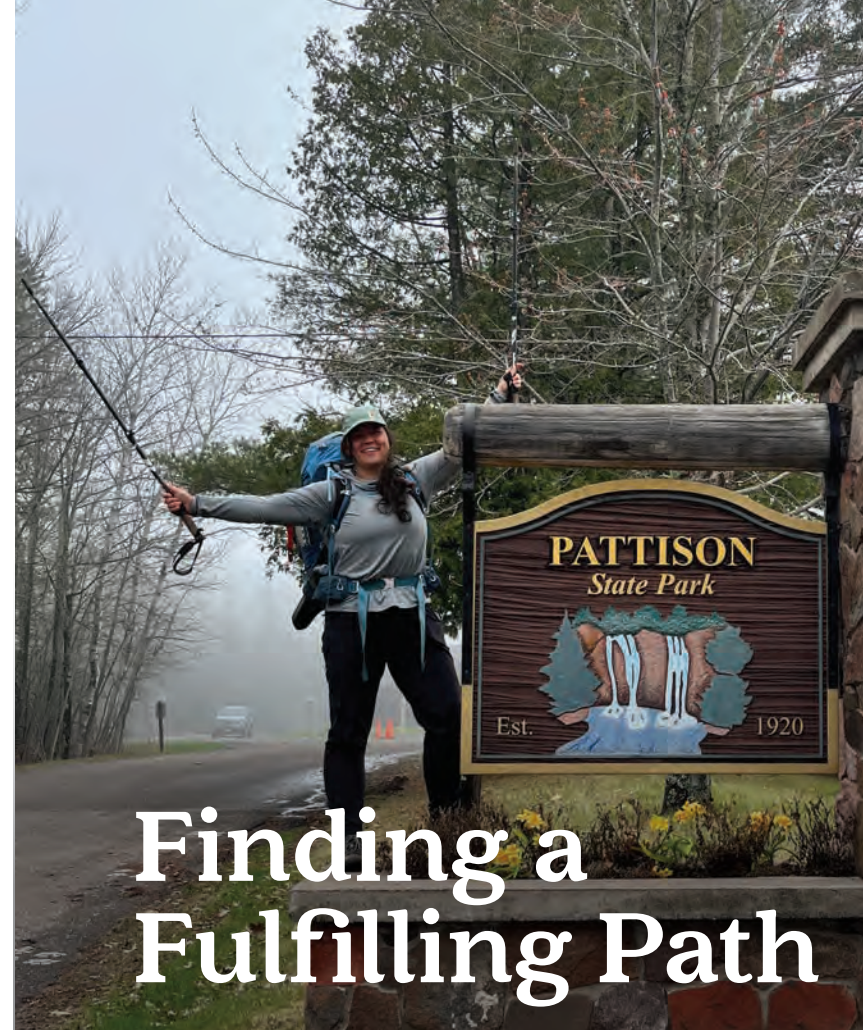
SEPTEMBER 27 - OCTOBER 1



CHESTERTOWN, NEW YORK
ADIRONDACKS + GREEN MOUNTAINS

You're invited to a multi-day commemoration of the North Country National Scenic Trail, and all those who care for it and want to be involved with the trails community. The North Country Trail Association coordinates this annual event, Celebration, that this year will take place September 27 - October 1 in Chestertown, New York — a wonderful access point to both the Adirondack and Green Mountains. A wide variety of activities are offered to Celebration participants, including many guided hiking opportunities, skills workshops, engaging presentations, and much more.

northcountrytrail.org/celebration



Finding a Fulfilling Path

Lisa Szela joined the NCTA Next Generation Coalition (NGC) in 2021 and remains active with the NCTA. She volunteers with the Heritage Chapter in Wisconsin and she attended the 2022 NCTA Celebration in Minnesota as a NGC representative. She volunteers with the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) as well, and in 2022, was hired onto their staff as the Volunteer Support Coordinator. This is an interview with Lisa, who provided insight to her professional journey, and how she balances work, volunteerism, and personal pursuits.

Above: Lisa backpacking in Wisconsin.

Photo by Felicia Hokenstad

NCTA: Tell us a little about yourself.

Lisa: I grew up just north of Green Bay. (The family name is Sobieski, for the few readers who might be familiar with the area!) I currently live in Madison, Wisconsin. My sister, cousins, and I grew up playing in the woods, climbing trees, wading through the river, and building forts out of sticks and snow. Although we grew up enjoying the outdoors, I didn't do much hiking or camping until I moved to La Crosse, Wisc. after college. I graduated from Winona State University in 2012 with a B.S. in Cell and Molecular Biology, and eventually moved to Madison with the intention of pursuing a career in healthcare.

NCTA: What experiences brought you to want to work for/with the trails community?

Lisa: As mentioned, I grew up pretty connected to the outdoors, and hiking became a regular part of my life after college. I took to the trails any time I needed to process things or make big decisions. After a few years in Madison, I realized that my

career path wasn't the right fit after all, and I was stuck making some really major decisions. Once again, I turned to the outdoors to help me through a difficult transition. I took up rock climbing and hiked local trails. I found a really incredible community there and started leading events with a women's outdoor meetup group in the area. It was incredibly rewarding to introduce people to new trails and outdoor activities, lowering some of their barriers to entry. I started volunteering with the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA), Sierra Club, Wisconsin Climbers Association, and the NCTA to give myself some purpose outside of what was feeling like an unfulfilling work life. I realized THIS was the community I wanted to be part of and what I wanted to do in my professional life, too.

NCTA: Walk us backwards through your professional trajectory. How did you get to where you are now?

Lisa: In late 2022, I became Volunteer Support Coordinator for the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Prior to that, I worked as part of the Overdose Prevention Team at Public Health Madison and Dane County. Before that, I spent three years as a Research Coordinator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy. I left medical school in 2018, and although I continued to work in healthcare-adjacent jobs, I realized it wasn't what I wanted to do forever. Volunteering with the local outdoor advocacy groups and trail organizations brought me joy and fulfillment, so I set out to make a major career transition.

Working with the NCTA Next Generation Coalition has been particularly beneficial. I still have a little time left in my second and final year with the Coalition, per the program's structure, but I've already learned so much. I got to dip my toe into some advocacy work with the NCTA, hear from outdoor industry professionals about their career paths, and connect with a local NCTA Chapter. Participating in work weekends and other events with two of the Wisconsin Chapters provided a useful background for working with volunteers and understanding their perspectives. It provided a vehicle for developing necessary skills and learning about a field I'd never worked in. And I've gotten to meet some really rad people.

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PARTNERSHIP

NCTA: What do your current job and free time entail?

Lisa: At IATA, I serve as the initial point of contact for our volunteers and help to develop trainings and other programs to support

our 19 volunteer chapters. It's a new position at the Alliance, which is exciting, because it gives me some flexibility on what projects to tackle first; I've been meeting with chapter leadership to learn more about them and where I can provide support. Although volunteer groups across the National Scenic Trails vary wildly in needs and resources, I'd like to think my volunteer experience on the NCNST and Ice Age National Scenic Trail (IANST) gives me a better understanding of what they're dealing with and what issues they face. I know it's definitely made me appreciate the enormous amount of work and passion that goes into building and maintaining a long trail.

Outside of work, I still volunteer with the same local outdoor organizations. I'm currently serving on the Wisconsin Climbers Association

Board, and helping out on the Land Equity and Access Team of my local Sierra Club chapter. I still get out to do some volunteer work with the IATA, and plan to continue going to NCTA Heritage Chapter workdays when the season ramps up again! Whatever free time I have left is mostly dedicated to outdoor activities like climbing, hiking, backpacking, and cross-country skiing, reading, or hanging out with my partner, Joe.

NCTA: What advice do you have for those with similar professional interests or goals?

Lisa: I'm by no means an expert, and sometimes I feel like I just got lucky, but I did put in some work to get here! It took about four years from leaving medical school to ending up at a job in the outdoor industry - years of putting in lots of volunteer time, attending webinars and trainings, and meeting people in the community.

One of the most important steps to transitioning into a new career was identifying what I actually wanted to do in the outdoor industry. For example, I really enjoyed leading hikes with our local meetup group, but I realized that going into guiding or something similar would probably take the fun out of activities I enjoyed in my personal life. Identifying organizations that fit well with my personality and values was helpful, and volunteering in various types of roles helped narrow down my interests, as well.

Putting in the time was also incredibly important. I gained hours of experience planning events, learning about the trail world, meeting people in the community, and developing other skills relevant to the jobs I wanted. I didn't have professional work experience in the field, but I was able to gain that through volunteer roles. If there was a skill I didn't have or hadn't learned, I sought out training and volunteer roles that would help me learn and practice those skills. On the other hand, I think it's also super important to identify what skills you've developed at previous jobs that might translate well into job duties in another field. You might not have experience in the outdoor industry, but your work elsewhere is probably more valuable than it seems at first glance; don't sell yourself short.

Lastly, getting to know people in the community is super important. The saying "It's not *what* you know but *who* you know" is definitely at least half true. What you know is obviously crucial, but developing relationships with people in the outdoor industry can key you in to potential job or mentorship opportunities. Not only that, but the people you meet will likely have years and years of knowledge to share with you. People are often happy to talk at length about the trail they love and, in my experience, trail people are really fun.

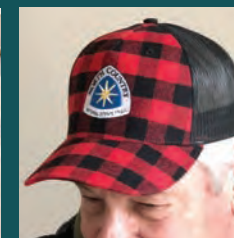
NCTA: What's been rewarding so far?

Lisa: This is a pretty vague experience, but I think getting to know the people who make up our trail communities has been the most rewarding thing so far. I'm not exaggerating when I say I'm constantly impressed by the amount of passion, time, and knowledge our volunteers bring to the table. I am very aware that there would be no trails without them. Getting to meet all the unique personalities along the way has been so fun.

Lisa was also featured in the Summer 2022 issue of the North Star: She provided an article about her experience hiking all the NCNST miles in Wisconsin.

Learn more about the NCTA Next Generation Coalition and the program's benefits at northcountrytrail.org/next-generation-coalition. Get familiar with the Ice Age National Scenic Trail at iceagetrail.org.

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

Buckeye Trail Association Blue Blaze Academy: April 21-23, 2023

In April 2022, the Buckeye Trail Association (BTA) held its inaugural Blue Blaze Academy at the BTA Century Barn at Tappan Lake. Over the course of two days, participants learned the basics of trail layout and design, tool maintenance, how to survey trail conditions as a trail maintainer, and how to work safely while benching trail and clearing brush from the trail corridor as a BTA work party crew member.

Building on that success, dates and curriculum have been set for a 2023 Blue Blaze Academy. Enrollment has increased, with space for up to 30 attendees. Curriculum has also expanded: Those who completed the *Introduction to Trail Building* course in 2022 will also be offered higher-level workshops that include instruction on using and maintaining gas-powered equipment, building trail structures with dimensional lumber, and sustainable trail design and maintenance. The *Introduction to Trail Building* and *Advanced Trail Work* workshops will run concurrently.

As with Blue Blaze Academy 2022, camping for attendees will be at the BTA Century Barn, April 21-23. Food is provided and attendance is free to BTA members. Registration is available at: app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/BuckeyeTrailAssociationInc/btrailwork2022-1.html



In 2022, 16 participants were trained in risk management, trail survey and design, volunteer leadership, developing a "trail eye," brushing and tread work, and tool maintenance.

Photo provided by
Tom Moutsos



Lisa (left), volunteers with Bethany Thomas of the NCTA Heritage Chapter (center) and Felicia Hokenstad, NCTA Next Generation Coalition Leader (right).

Photo by Felicia Hokenstad



TRAIL
USE

Winter Hiking Preparation

TIPS FROM ANDREW SKURKA AND JOAN YOUNG

Wintertime across the northern tier of the United States can be gorgeous and unforgiving. A quiet forest with the rhythmic squeak of dry snow underfoot invites a nearly meditative state. Endlessly unique ice and frost formations can fascinate for hours. Yet low temperatures and wind chills, feet of snow, and fierce winds add significant challenges to those pursuing extended time outdoors.

Many have chosen wintertime as the focus of their North Country pursuits. Joan Young, long-time NCTA volunteer and supporter, stepped on the NCNST in December 2021 and will finish her second end-to-end hike of it this spring. Andrew Skurka, Colorado-based adventure athlete, guide, and writer, thru-hiked the NCNST between the fall of 2004 and spring of 2005. In

March 2021, Emily Ford, accompanied by her Alaskan Husky, Diggins, became the first woman and second documented person to complete Wisconsin's Ice Age National Scenic Trail in winter. She spent 69 days on trail. Arlette "Apple Pie" Laan completed a thru-hike of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) in February 2022, having started in April 2021.

Each of these trail users stresses the importance of thorough preparation. It seems as though a balance of enjoyment and hardship is sought after, but in order to maintain that equilibrium while remaining safe, preparation is mandatory. Andrew Skurka and Joan Young have graciously offered their advice here. Andrew has robust winter trail use experience, while Joan is an extremely accomplished user of the NCNST.

Sturgeon River, Mich. **Photo by** Joan Young



Andrew Skurka

In his 20s, Andrew was a prolific long-distance thru-hiker, notably taking on the Alaska-Yukon Expedition (4,700 miles over six months), the Great Western Loop (6,875 miles over seven months), and the Sea-to-Sea Route (7,775 miles over 11 months). He was named Adventurer of the Year by both Outside and National Geographic, as well as Person of the Year by Backpacker. He has created guidebooks, led over 100 trips, and completed numerous marathons and ultramarathons.



Joan Young

Joan has loved the outdoors all her life, spending hours in the woods as a child. Girl Scouts provided a way to hone her outdoor skills and in 1965, she was selected to attend the International Girl Scout Roundup in Coeur D'alene, Idaho. After raising a family, she rediscovered time for her love of hiking and found the North Country Trail. In 2010, she became the first woman to hike the entire North Country National Scenic Trail and now, she has nearly completed it a second time - she's scheduled to finish this spring. She is the author of 17 books, including two about her experiences on the Trail.

NCTA: Please provide us with an overview of your winter trail use experience.

Andrew: I was in full-on winter conditions [on the NCNST] from mid-January through the end of March, from around Battle Creek, Mich. to Ely, Minn. I snowshoed 2,100 miles that winter. Temperatures were usually between 0° and 20° Fahrenheit; some mornings it was 20 below, and on a few days it got above freezing.

Joan: I have done some winter backpacking, but my gear is inadequate for seriously cold conditions.

NCTA: What's your favorite way to enjoy the outdoors in the winter?

Joan: I enjoy snowshoeing. It requires less skill than skiing and is quiet.

Andrew: In 2010 I learned to Nordic ski, and I've not snowshoed since. It's a beautiful and graceful movement, and it's generally a lot faster.

NCTA: Describe your favorite wintertime trail journey.

Andrew: The NCNST was my first legit winter backpacking experience. But my favorite was five years later, when I skied across the Alaska Range. Imagine having Denali National Park all to yourself! It was awesome.

Joan: Rock River Canyon Wilderness in the upper peninsula of Michigan. I camped with two friends and we built a quinzhee: a shelter made of snow. We also snowshoed to the Eben Ice Caves. We learned firsthand how much effort it takes to actually build a snow hut properly. It was finished in time to sleep inside for only our last night. The first night, the temperature dropped to -14° F and we were not warm in our tent - but we did not die!

NCTA: What are some of the best resources for a trail user looking to venture out in the wintertime?

Andrew: For weather, I like to use the point forecasts on weather.gov, which are more accurate than simply using a nearby town or city. For snow depth, use the National Snow Analyses. For current conditions, social media is often best, because users often post photos or trip reports on sites like Instagram or Reddit.

NCTA: What sort of gear do you most recommend?

Joan: To be a hardcore, four-season backpacker, you need to invest in clothing and equipment that can protect you in harsh conditions. That said, with an eye on the weather, anyone with three-season gear can get by for a few nights in the winter by adding extra layers. Most hikers will stick to outings of a few hours but even so, winter should command respect.

Think about temperature-sensitive gear. Some water filters should not be allowed to freeze. Butane lighters will

Continued on page 14



not work at low temperatures. Electronics such as phones may be difficult to keep charged in winter. Don't forget about layers. Throughout my recent NCNST hike, I've been teased about

wearing a spring jacket all year. This referred to a thin nylon anorak I used as a top layer. But underneath that were three to four other layers, not one of them individually heavy. I was never cold except in the strongest of winds. Also, take sunscreen. Several of my friends have ended up with a winter sunburn, not thinking about how many hours they were spending in the sun.

Andrew: An extra level of preparation is essential for hiking or backpacking in winter conditions. If you've never done an overnight before, I'd recommend testing all your systems (e.g. shelter, sleeping bag, clothing, stove) in a low-risk environment first, like your backyard, so that you can bail out easily if things aren't working. On day-hikes, bring enough gear and supplies to get you through a prolonged stoppage. For example: Very warm insulated layers, a lighter, headlamp, and foam pad.

As an overnight backpacker, I struggled most with condensation collecting inside my sleeping bag and insulated clothing. In really cold temperatures, the dew point is located inside the insulation, so my perspiration would transition from vapor to liquid, wetting my insulation. Every few days I'd have to find a warm place to dry everything out. On later trips I experimented with vapor barrier liner clothing, and this proved to be a perfect solution for this problem.

NCTA: Any other preparation tips or important reminders?

Joan: Everything is more difficult in the winter. Your hands are cold and stiffer than usual. You are wearing more clothes, and everything from tying your shoes to getting items from a pack, and especially digging a cathole and using it are more than twice as hard to accomplish. Small mistakes are amplified - this can't be stated enough. In the summer, slipping and dunking in a creek might be something to laugh about. In the winter, it can be fatal. The loss of a glove could result in the loss of fingers. Since most body heat is lost from your head, if you drop your hat, you might have trouble staying warm enough for the rest of the hike.

Stay hydrated. It's easy to drink too little in the winter because you don't feel as warm. Stay

dry. Wet clothing will suck the heat out of your body. Add waterproof outside layers, gaiters, etc. But also, try to avoid being so warm that your own perspiration wets you from the inside. On day hikes, you can dry out at home. On overnights, once your clothes get wet, you will probably be wet for the duration of the hike.

Study maps, stay updated on Trail Alerts, and find many other planning resources under **The Trail** tab at northcountrytrail.org.

Andrew Skurka: andrewskurka.com, [@andrewskurka](https://twitter.com/andrewskurka)

Joan Young: myqualityday.blogspot.com

Emily Ford: [@emilyontrail](https://twitter.com/emilyontrail)

Arlette Laan: [@arlette_laan](https://twitter.com/arlette_laan)



HIKE 100 CHALLENGE

Share your adventures like April!

"Hiking the NCT continues to support my physical and mental wellbeing. I'm on track to finish the lower peninsula of Michigan this year (2022) as the 'Border to Bridge' women continue our trek northward."

Learn more, sign up, and share your adventures at northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge.

Hike 100 Challenge 2023



find solitude, try backpacking, or see how far you can wander. The main rule is to complete your 100 miles on the North Country National Scenic Trail and fortunately, there are 4,800 miles to choose from. Visit the same one mile 100 times over or explore 100 unique miles.

The North Country Trail Association's **Hike 100 Challenge** is a program designed to help you meet your goals. Maybe you want to explore the outdoors more, spend time with your family, make new trail friends,

Hike, walk, backpack, snowshoe, or cross-country ski. Make the journey yours.

In 2022, over **3,000** people signed up for the Challenge and as of December 31, over **1,100** reported they had finished. But whether or not you bagged the full 100 miles, you made a point to spend some of your time on the North Country Trail, and that's why this program exists!

Sign up, find resources like free maps or group hikes to join, and eventually submit your completion form for your free, commemorative patch and certificate at northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge.



Lorana Jinkerson: Michigan Governor's Service Award Recipient

BY NANCY BROZEK, NCTA DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS



Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer (left) and Lorana Jinkerson (right).

Photo by Shrewsbury Photography

When Lorana began her journey with the North Country Trail Association in the mid-2000s, she could never have imagined how intricate a role the Trail would play in her life. Now after surpassing 10,000 volunteer hours, her dedication has been recognized by the Michigan Community Service Commission. She is the recipient of the 2022 Governor's Service Award in the Environmental Impact category.

Receiving a Governor's Service Award is a prestigious honor, and a tribute thanking citizens for all that has been done to make a difference in the lives

of Michiganders. It is an extension of thanks for an individual's selfless service, and willingness to provide hope and inspiration to many people in our communities. The award was presented at a ceremony last November at the historic Fox Theatre in Detroit. Two NCTA directors were in attendance, along with Lorana's sister, Fran Martin.

"Lorana, a member of the [NCTA] Marquette Area Chapter in Michigan's upper peninsula, is a leader in volunteer and philanthropic service. She has built relationships with numerous private landowners to establish Trail sections that are off-road when public land isn't available. Subsequently, this has minimized the area of road walking and enhances a 'road safe,' positive trail experience. To continue a positive trail experience, Lorana physically maintained the Trail while also planning for its future. Lorana worked with the Marquette community to establish interpretive signage along the Trail, and encouraged other groups to hold events on the Trail's behalf to promote the Trail as one of the 11 National Scenic Trails in the country. She developed a holistic approach to supporting the National Trails System and ensured that our nation's longest National Scenic Trail would be available for people to positively engage in the environment for many years to come." (Excerpt from Lorana's nomination statement.)

"Going to Detroit to the Fox Theatre for the presentation of the award was exciting," Lorana reflected. "The other honorees that evening really left an impression on me of how generous they were/are of their time, treasure, and talent to causes all across the state."



2022 was another big year for the North Country National Scenic Trail!

North Country Trail Association volunteers built new Trail, and structures like kiosks and bridges. They maintained existing Trail by painting fresh blue blazes and mowing the corridor. They forged new relationships and confidently approached new challenges. Most importantly, people used the Trail — they connected with their surroundings and with each other.

2022 OVERVIEW



743

volunteers reported working for or on the NCNST



64,921

volunteer hours dedicated to the NCNST



\$1,944,377

worth of time and work contributed to the NCNST

8 states

hosting the NCNST

4,830

current NCNST miles

3,238

current off-road miles

Current Trail Miles

State	Off-Road	On-Road	Totals
Vermont	42.34	26.36	68.7
New York	446.50	243.27	689.8
Pennsylvania	236.19	50.03	286.2
Ohio	516.79	555.86	1,072.7
Michigan	884.38	293.73	1,178.1
Wisconsin	140.32	74.24	214.6
Minnesota	693.96	160.87	854.8
North Dakota	277.19	187.74	464.9
Totals*	3,237.7	1,592.1	4,829.8



87 miles

of new trail built



3,209 miles

of Trail maintained



44 miles

of roadwalk eliminated



Partnered with 30 youth groups and corps programs to build and maintain the Trail.



5,094 hikers joined 358 hikes hosted by NCTA Chapters and Affiliates.



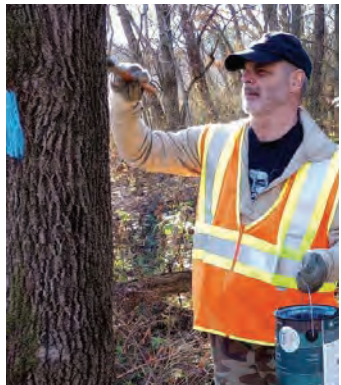
8 new Trail Easements and agreements were signed to protect the Trail corridor.



7,107 feet of puncheon and boardwalk were built or updated.



24 bridges were installed or repaired.



427 miles of blue blazes were painted.

Photos Top Row L-R: Matt Davis, Pam Tavernier, Dave Adams Bottom Row L-R: Ellie Williams, Bobby Koeplin, Michelle Lackey Olsen

Photos: (Youth) Tina Harkins, (Hike) Keith Meyers Bottom L-R: Mark Wadopian, Dakota Prairie Chapter, Connie Julien, Wampum Chapter

*All mileage totals are estimates and change frequently.

Hundreds of miles of trail data are improved each year, which can lead to discrepancies in the trail mileage totals and the trail mileage actually built in that year.

OVERVIEW REPORT by Valerie Bader, NCTA Director of Trail Operations

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



State of the Trail 2022

CHAPTERS, AFFILIATES, PARTNERS



Middlebury Area Land Trust (Affiliate)

BY JOHN DERICK

The Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) is a 19-mile trail that traverses public and private lands, winds through four towns, and crosses Otter Creek on suspension bridges in two locations. The TAM's development started in 1989 and completed in 2000 when the second suspension bridge was built. In total, the NCNST shares 15 miles of corridor with the TAM. Six of those miles require mowing; four miles get mowed 10 times a year and the remaining two, only three or four times a year. For two weeks in mid-July 2022, the Counseling Service of Addison County sent between six and 10 students to volunteer four hours each day. They installed new boardwalks, removed invasive species, cut brush, and spread gravel. In June, we hosted a birding walk and two separate mushroom walks to enjoy the Trail and learn to identify a variety of species. This year, we'll prioritize trail protection, volunteer recruitment, and maintenance of existing Trail.



Student volunteers improve trail in July 2022.

Photo by Middlebury Area Land Trust



Adirondack Mountain Club (Affiliate)

BY MARY COFFIN

A 65-mile stretch of the NCNST is split into 22 sections across the Adirondacks. This year, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) lifted a three-year moratorium on footpath construction, so we were allowed to construct three new miles of Trail in the Forest Preserve. Lyme Timber granted permission for the Trail to share corridor with a snowmobile trail on their property, eliminating eight miles of roadwalk on Route 30 near Speculator. Two new interpretive panels were installed at the Crown Point State Historic Site. The partnership we have with Stephanie Campbell, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator, is invaluable. Among many other things, she facilitated several meetings with DEC, the Adirondack Mountain Club, and foresters and planners of Adirondack Park. We held a five-day volunteer work session on Jones Hill: 12 volunteers spent over 200 hours benching three miles, reflagging the route to the summit, and removing 21 blowdowns. Twelve group hikes were led throughout the year, and we offered workshops for benching and steward maintenance. In 2023 we aim to host a successful Celebration event, recruit more volunteer stewards, finish the Jones Hill section, and continue to promote the Trail across the state.



Top: Benching trail on Jones Hill in the Adirondacks.

Photo by Amy St. John

Right: Sawyers opening trail in the Adirondacks.

Photo by Mary Coffin



Central New York Chapter

BY MARK WADOPIAN

The condition of our Chapter's NCNST segment continues to improve as enthusiastic and involved volunteers dedicate their time and support. In 2022, we provided a full range of outdoor activities, including snowshoe hikes with Scott Sellers, bird observation and identification with Steve Kinne, tree identification with me, and a trek from Cazenovia to the Stone Quarry Hill Art Park with Scott. Under Steve's guidance, the reroute through Pixley Falls State Park and Clark Hill State Forest is progressing nicely. Over eight miles of woodland trail has been roughed in so far. It will provide access to roads with minimal traffic and eliminate 14 miles of roadwalk. We completed the Canastota Creek reroute (0.3 miles) around a deteriorating staircase and replaced several treads there. Our Landowner Committee is actively reviewing past agreements for update, modification, and renewal. One landowner constructed a tent platform between Carrys Hill Road and Freber Road, and kiosk maintenance is ongoing, particularly at the Nelson Swamp trailhead. Reducing roadwalks will be our main priority in 2023, along with maintaining our 42 miles of off-road Trail.



Top: The Central New York Chapter volunteer crew blazing a woodland trail in state forest to eliminate eight miles of roadwalk.

Photo by Steve Kinne

Left: Snowshoe Hike 2022.

Photo by Mark Wadopian



Finger Lakes Trail Conference (Affiliate)

BY MICHAELA ANEY AND
PETER WYBRON

We maintain over 400 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) that shares corridor with the NCNST, but in its entirety the FLT system offers over 950 miles of hiking. In 2022, we constructed one small bridge, and rebuilt and widened two others, totaling another 40 feet. The Finger Lakes National Forest repaired several hundred feet of puncheon and provided other trail improvements with grant funds through the FLTC. We began construction of a new kiosk, and a number of new trail signs and markers were installed. We reopened the former site of a lean-to as a bivouac site, and with some help from the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), built four new parking lots. The Cayuga Trails Club (CTC) led close to 100 hikes in our region and we organized the Cross County Hike Series in Tompkins County with about 150 registrants. New boardwalks and bridges were installed near Watkins Glen, thanks to our volunteers from the Cargil plant. In October, the FLLT acquired a property, the Eberhard Preserve, with some financial assistance from the FLTC. Now, a permanently protected corridor has been created here for this segment of FLT/NCNST.



Left and Above: Improving trail drainage along the FLT/NCNST.

Photos by Deb Nero

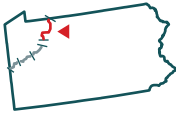


Top: Using a grip hoist to move a giant boulder into position for a stream crossing.

Photo by Tina Toole

Right: A guided hike near Fox's Dam on October. Left to right: Mike Toole, Tina Toole, Shelby Gangloff with Wendell and Oliver, Danielle Hoy, Gail Spicer, Kim Newland, and Sylvia Grisez.

Photo by Mike Toole



PENNSYLVANIA

Allegheny National Forest Chapter

BY TINA TOOLE

The NCNST winds nearly 100 miles through the Allegheny National Forest (ANF), and here, it's divided into segments that are each two to five miles long. For the first time ever, every segment has an Adopter! We blazed over 27 miles of Trail; installed road signs; repaired and built puncheon, bridges, staircases, and stone crossings; and rerouted nearly one mile. One long-term goal is to have a shelter every 10 miles along our NCNST section. We now have two left and hope to build them in the next two years. Students from Allegheny College and the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford volunteered with us on two separate projects last fall - wonderful help! We renewed an easement with Collins Pine Company to get the Trail off road. We continued to work closely with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) personnel on projects with NEPA* requirements like reroutes, new bridges, or shelters, and for information about logging or prescribed burns. We hosted monthly guided hikes, as well as another Allegheny 100 Hiking Challenge event with nearly 150 participants from 15 different states and one from Canada! This year we'll continue trail improvement and construction, revamp and diversify our hike program, and offer events for new Chapter members.

**The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a federal law. On the NCNST, federal agencies (e.g. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service) use the NEPA process to evaluate natural and cultural resources in a trail location, how trail projects might impact those resources, and what protections could be implemented to prevent significant harm to those resources during trail work.*



PENNSYLVANIA

Clarion County Chapter

BY DAVE GALBREATH

We maintained 90 miles of NCNST in 2022, rerouted one mile, and replaced a 30-foot bridge. Our Chapter hosted a landowner appreciation reception and we welcomed new members to the Chapter. We hosted one group hike each month and welcomed at least 10 participants at each - over two dozen in January! We challenged trail users in our area to attend all of these group hikes, and 33 did. In 2023, we're prioritizing a reroute north of Route 66.

TRAIL STRUCTURE DEFINITIONS

Throughout these State of the Trail reports, the word *puncheon* appears often and is sometimes paired with *boardwalk*. Seasoned volunteers likely skim right over these, but because not everyone in the North Country Trail Community builds trail, here's an explanation.

Puncheon is a trail structure for crossing some types of bogs, shallow marshes, and wooded wetlands. Sills are placed directly on the ground or wetland surface. **Boardwalk** is an elevated trail structure built on pilings or weight-bearing posts that are driven into or installed in the ground. Puncheon is used in wet areas that cannot be avoided and that do not allow for water to drain from the trail. Boardwalks are used to cross deeper water.

The main distinction between the two is that the surface of a boardwalk is constructed of boards that are perpendicular to the direction of the trail, and the entire structure is supported by posts driven or anchored into the bottom of the wetland, similar to a dock. Boardwalks do not rest on sill logs. Additionally, puncheon is typically less than one foot above the surrounding wetland, while a boardwalk can be two or three feet above the water, like an elongated dock. With boardwalks, wetland crossing permits will almost surely be required.



Puncheon



Boardwalk



PENNSYLVANIA

Butler County Chapter

BY DAVE ADAMS

Our Chapter hosted two Eagle Scout projects this year: An informational kiosk was built at the Old Stone House trailhead and two boardwalks were completed in State Gamelands 95. We maintained 57 miles of NCNST, and installed 122 feet of boardwalk, 40 feet of puncheon, and 50 new steps. Logging eliminated some of our tree blazes so we installed 30 signage posts. We also added a new parking area along Higgins Road, and improved the parking at both Branchton Road and Pry Road. In 2022, we completed the second and final year of a large grant's deliverables: We built five major wooden bridges and seven smaller ones, three sections of boardwalk, and 100 feet of puncheon. Moraine State Park staff met with us to plan new step and bridge replacement projects, and the Jennings Environmental Education Center to help plan our Cherry Pie Hike. Several hikes kicked off from the North Trails Library, and they hosted a scavenger hunt for kids. Our priorities are to continue trail maintenance, volunteer outreach, and move some Trail off road in the West Sunbury area.



Top: The new 40-foot Beaver Dam bridge.

Right: Scouts working on boardwalk.

Photos by Dave Adams



OHIO AND PENNSYLVANIA

Wampum Chapter

BY DAVE BREWER

Our volunteers established a roving maintenance and construction crew for projects all across our Chapter's NCNST segment: 120 miles. In 2022, we improved the Trail at locations like Alpha Pass in McConnells Mill State Park, Pennsylvania Gamelands 285, and the NCTA Trail Town of Wampum. We constructed new Trail on Muskingum Watershed Conservancy property near Zoar, Ohio, eliminating roadwalk. We built a large picnic pavilion on private property adjacent to the Trail in Lawrence County, Pa. as a gathering place for Chapter functions and a shelter for hikers. Sixty feet of stairs were replaced at the Alpha Pass trailhead in conjunction with improvements made by former NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator Tom Moutsos and the Student Conservation Association (SCA) PA Outdoor Crew. Over 50 miles of roadwalk blazing was refreshed between Zoar and Lisbon, Ohio - some by Lisbon's mayor! We updated signage, constructed a trailhead parking area, and attended many community events with our hiking stick carving station. We offered monthly hikes themed and led by volunteers, including the Bigfoot Search and the Pumpkin Pie Hike. We partnered with groups like Outdoor Afro, Scouts, and Tiger Pause Youth Ministry. In 2023, we'll aim to move more Trail off road and keep up with regular maintenance.



Top: Fourth of July parade marchers in Midland, Pa.

Photo by Dennis Garrett

Left: Tiger Pause hike on the NCNST in Beaver County, Pa.

Photo by Tina Harkins



Above: A BTA Appalachian Foothill Chapter group hike.

Photo by Jon Hall

Right: The BTA teamed up with an all-women crew from the Appalachian Conservation Corps for trail work.

Photo by Richard Lutz



OHIO

Buckeye Trail Association (Affiliate)

BY RICHARD LUTZ

Last year, the final chapter of the BTA was formed: the Appalachian Foothills Chapter. Now all 900 miles of the Buckeye Trail that shares corridor with NCNST is covered by a BTA Chapter (eight total). We hosted the first-ever Blue Blaze Academy with the NCTA and the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD). Participants were trained on trail building and trail layout skills by NCTA and BTA staff. The Academy will be annual, offered this year from April 21-23. We also worked with an all-woman Appalachian Conservation Corps chainsaw crew to clear several sections of the Buckeye Trail in Morgan, Athens, and Perry Counties. Alongside a summer youth crew through the Perry County Job and Family Services, we worked on portions of the Buckeye Trail / NCNST around Shawnee. This year, we'll work on relocating 18 miles of Trail in the Wayne National Forest Athens Unit, as well as other relocations in the Marietta Unit, as part of the Appalachian Regional Commission POWER Grant with the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia. We'll finish up a relocation in Hocking State Forest and replace some puncheon and boardwalk at Burr Oak State Park - the latter, thanks to NCTA Field Grant funding.



OHIO

Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association (Affiliate)

BY RYAN BOWLES

After several years of major reroutes, NORTA began improving backpacker amenities along our 53-mile section. We opened two new designated campsites in eastern Fulton County along the North Fork of the Wabash Cannonball Trail/NCNST. The HQ Campsite is near the NORTA maintenance building. The Wye Campsite is named for the unique place it is located in: a triangular property at the junction of two railroads, which allowed trains to switch tracks and reverse direction. We plan to add a picnic table and water cache in the next year, closing a very long dry stretch. We also plan to open another campsite in western Fulton County to continue making our section a top-notch hiking and backpacking destination. We have started working with the City of Wauseon to close a two-mile gap and hopefully develop more camping options. We also met with Williams County and the Village of Montpelier to discuss moving the Trail off-road between the North Fork of the Wabash Cannonball Trail and Lost Nation State Game Area in Michigan. Our biggest goal for 2023 is to increase communication about the Trail and our activities. We are very excited that Avenza maps for our section have been released, too!



Top: Wye Campsite completed!

Left: Clearing the Trail along the North Fork of the Wabash Cannonball Trail section.

Photos provided by Ryan Bowles



MICHIGAN

Chief Baw Beese Chapter

BY BRUCE DZIADZIO

A large accomplishment of 2022 was reconstructing a 25-foot railroad bridge in Osseo. Our Chapter received a Hillsdale County Historical Society 2022 Restoration Award for this project. We also built a 25-foot bridge on a connector trail near the Litchfield Township Hall, with help from 10 Scouts. Through these projects and others, we strengthened relationships with local partners, including the Litchfield Township Council, the City of Hillsdale, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Our volunteers represented the Chapter at a variety of community events, including the Osseo Great Mushroom Hunt and Festival and Jonesville Riverfest. We led 14 group hikes, welcomed six new Chapter members in 2022, and delivered 750 Chapter brochures to the Michigan Department of Transportation, who will place them at rest area kiosks. Volunteers blazed 22 miles of NCNST in our segment, and improved trailhead signage after two thru-hikers took a wrong turn. We're eager to receive permission from the Michigan DNR to build a bridge in the Lost Nation State Game Area at a major river crossing. We'll also attempt to contact private landowners throughout Hillsdale County this year, in hopes of receiving permission to build off-road Trail on their land.



Top: The new bridge in Litchfield.

Right: The new Osseo railroad bridge.

Photos by Chief Baw Beese Chapter



MICHIGAN

Chief Noonday Chapter

BY JANE NORTON

Our Chapter welcomed over 100 unique volunteers at over 40 activities throughout 2022, including workdays, outreach events in the community, and group hikes. We hosted 13 guided hikes and in total, had over 300 participants in attendance. Our Hike the County Challenge was offered for a second year, encouraging trail users to hike our Chapter's NCNST segment through Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and Barry Counties. We maintained nearly 120 miles of NCNST, eliminated roadwalk with almost two miles of new Trail, built 120 feet of boardwalk, blazed trail, and installed signage and boot brushes. We partnered with the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy on a boardwalk project and with the Girl Scouts on an outreach project. The National Park Trust purchased property to permanently protect a segment of NCNST in our region, and Trail Use Agreements were signed



by both the Kellogg Biological Station and Kellogg Forest. One landowner, who hosts a stretch of our Chapter's NCNST, is now a host for campers. This year, we will complete a reroute, build boardwalk and work on erosion control, and continue with our Media Committee.



Top Left: Larry Pio, Brett Mort, John Fomusa, and Stephen Kesler building boardwalk in Augusta Prairie.

Photo by Larry Pio

Left: Tom Norton and Bob Cooley installing a bench.

Photo by Jane Norton



VOLUNTEERS



MICHIGAN

Western Michigan Chapter

BY NANCY VANWINKLE

One of the most exciting new additions to our Chapter's Trail section this year was the addition of QR codes on our signage that added descriptions of the flora and fauna in the surrounding areas. We also led group hikes each month, taking turns between Newaygo and Kent Counties. Two bridges, each about 40 feet in length, were built by outside contractors across Tank Creek and West Michigan Creek within the Manistee National Forest thanks to funding from the Great American Outdoors Act. We installed three reroutes totaling over one mile and eliminated over a half-mile of roadwalk. We also worked with a SEEDS EcoCorps youth conservation crew on repairing puncheon along Rattlesnake Creek within the Manistee National Forest. Because our Chapter's NCNST section is near a large population area (Grand Rapids, Mich.) with quite a few on-road trail miles, long distance hikers often have difficulty finding campsites here. We are working toward remedying this. One member turned a silo into hiker lodging: the "Bin Walkin." Other members have opened their land as well, and we welcomed new businesses along the Trail who also hosted hikers. Detach Primitive is one new business with fun structures and places for people to camp. They have been very accommodating and affordable.

Above: A Chapter-led group hike in Western Michigan.

Photo by
Chris Halford



MICHIGAN

Spirit of the Woods Chapter

BY LOREN BACH

Our new volunteer, Monica Hatch, planned a Chapter-led hike on the first Saturday of each month 2022. We routinely saw 15-20 participants for each hike - several drove 50 to 100 miles to join us! The SEEDS EcoCorps youth conservation crew helped enormously with a large water diversion project to funnel water off the Trail. They also cleared many blowdowns last summer and fall. We continued to foster our relationship with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff in Baldwin, as most of our Chapter's NCNST miles are in the Manistee National Forest. NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator Kenny Wawczyk worked with a landowner to formally sign a trail use agreement, and trail signage has since been installed there. Volunteer Peter Bennett created and distributed blazing kits for Trail Adopters, and they were trained. Our goal is to blaze at least a quarter of our Chapter's 80 NCNST miles each year, and we're working on updating other signage. We look forward to working with the USFS on a reroute near the Manistee River to improve trail stability, and on an assessment originally commissioned by the USFS to improve and maintain the Trail, which is guiding our efforts.



Top: Chapter-led hike in December 2022.

Photo by
Peg Gramas

Left: Volunteers improving our Trail segment.

Photo by
Sue Ann Crawford



MICHIGAN

Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter

BY MIKE SCHAEFFER

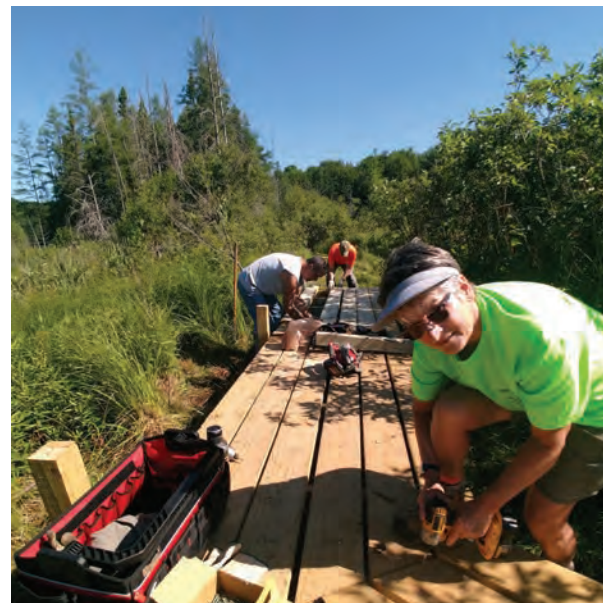
Alongside regular maintenance of 106 miles of NCNST, our Chapter repaired or replaced 41 puncheon segments totaling nearly 650 linear feet near the Hodenpyl Dam Pond. The new puncheon is wide enough for mowers to pass, allowing for more efficient trail maintenance. In this same area, we also reinforced a bridge, and constructed and restored multiple piers supporting puncheon. Our volunteers were aided by SEEDS EcoCorps youth conservation crew members. We installed Carsonite posts in Wexford County, where a logging project removed many blazed trees. Three trailhead kiosks were repaired and two new ones were constructed, and we updated 16 mileage signs. We manned tables at area farmers markets and hosted some large group hikes, including one at the Muncie Lakes Pathway with 40 participants. We welcomed 35 new members in 2022 and two of them stepped into Chapter leadership roles. We continue to coordinate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, especially regarding beaver-caused flooding. This year, we're prioritizing a Trail Adopter's training, investigating some reroute options, updating maps and information at kiosks, constructing new Trail along the North Branch of the Boardman River, and building three bridges and 200 feet of boardwalk to eliminate over two miles of roadwalk.



Top: Kiosk installation.

Left: Boardwalk replacement.

Photos by
Patty Warner



MICHIGAN

Jordan Valley 45° Chapter

BY KEVIN WHITLEY

We continued a 2021 project to get the Trail above high water by constructing 200 feet of new boardwalk north of Warner Creek. Volunteers also removed an old, obsolete boardwalk from this area, and we installed signage along Jordan River Road. Our Chapter installed a large toolbox full of trail maintenance tools at a trailhead near Petoskey, for our volunteers who live and work far from our tool trailer. Sixteen of our members/volunteers were trained and certified for CPR and First Aid, and two for chainsaw. Students from a school near our Trail segment spent time hiking, and removing litter and sticks. We offered 11 group hikes throughout 2022, as well as a family hike day, the Stampede: Aided by a list of clues, families hiked in search of trailside stamps. Children used the stamps to mark custom passbooks, and returned to the beginning for a prize. Priorities for 2023 include maintaining of our 80 miles of NCNST, volunteer training and certifications, moving Trail off US-131 and eliminating other roadwalks, and attending events including the Quiet Adventures Symposium and NCTA Celebration.



Top Right: Installing boardwalk at Warner Creek.

Photo by
Kevin Whitley

Right: A family participating in the Stampede event.

Photo by
Dove Day



A SEEDS EcoCorps crew collaboration.
Photo by Tim Calloway



Left: Nailing deck boards to puncheon on National Trails Day 2022, at the Silver Creek project site.

Bottom Left: Left to Right: Bob McNamara, Lucy Evashevski, Patricia McNamara, and Tom Walker celebrate the end of a workday on the Naomikong Overlook project. Several crew members camped and worked for a week in September.
Photos by Tom Walker



MICHIGAN

Harbor Springs Chapter

BY SHARI SANDERSON

In 2022, our Chapter maintained 46 miles of NCNST. We refreshed blazes, and repaired, widened, and extended boardwalks. We welcomed help from a SEEDS EcoCorps youth conservation crew with a couple of those boardwalk projects. Every month, our Chapter offered a guided hike. This year, we're excited to construct a shelter on land conservancy property that the NCNST traverses.



UP MICHIGAN

Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter

BY TOM WALKER

We led 16 group hikes this year, with an average of 15 people per hike - many who had never hiked with us before! Our leadership met with staff from the Hiawatha National Forest and Tahquamenon Falls State Park, as we do annually. We maintained over 130 miles of NCNST. Volunteers upgraded 350 feet of puncheon to rough-sawn transverse decking at Silver Creek, north of Worth Road, and installed



UP MICHIGAN

Superior Shoreline Chapter

BY CHARLIE TODD

Our Chapter consists of nearly 60 miles of NCNST. In 2022, with help from our volunteers and YouthWork, every one of those miles was clipped, chainsawed, and blazed from early spring to late fall. Beavers tend to own the woods here, but with help from the U.S. Forest Service and a YouthWork group, we rerouted about 1.5 miles west of the Valley Spur ski area. Regular reroutes were required from the mouth of the Two Hearted River west to the Lake Superior State Forest Campground, as short sections of the Trail are constantly being claimed by Lake Superior. Our great volunteer Fred Gerwitz and a friend moved and corrected a bridge. A YouthWork group blazed 35 miles of Trail. We revamped a very nice campsite east of Buck Bay Creek. We hosted a Zoom meeting on "Making The North Country Trail Climate Ready,"



Mother Nature strikes! Fred and a friend corrected this bridge.
Photo by Charlie Todd

by John Forslin. Climate certainly has a great effect on our segments, particularly near Lake Superior, and John offered many ideas to consider. In 2023 we'll aim to keep the Trail in excellent shape and we'd like to see more people adopt sections.



UP MICHIGAN

Marquette Area Chapter

BY LYNN MEISTER-THOMAS

Our volunteers maintained 100% of our Chapter's off-road Trail: 102 miles. We built over two miles of new Trail (moved it off-road) and rerouted about 20 yards to adjust for a stream crossing. We began replacing a 20-year-old pedestrian bridge over the West Branch of the Peshekee River; replaced 70 feet of boardwalk near CR-550; repaired 12 feet of puncheon; and repaired a bridge in Craig Lake State Park. Blazes were painted on over 20 miles of Trail, we refurbished a shelter at Lakenland, and installed a new parking lot on Michigan Department of Natural Resources property in the Mulligan Plains. We secured a permanent easement with landowner Jim Schneider and partnered with many organizations in 2022, including Northern Michigan University, Travel Marquette, the NCTA Next Generation Coalition, Lake Superior Community Partnership Trail Stakeholder Group, YouthWork, and the Ottawa National Forest. Our volunteers attended many events to promote the Trail and hosted seven group hikes with nearly 150 participants total. We welcomed three new Trail Adopters and are looking forward to a variety of projects in 2023, including new puncheon and bridges, trail crew recruitment, and many more group hikes.



Ribbon cutting for the Chapter's new 75-foot boardwalk, built by students from the NMU Construction Management Program.
Photo by Marquette Area Chapter



Left: Twelve volunteers built this structure in six hours!
Photo by Connie Julien

Bottom: Mark Roberts leads a monthly hike in early spring.
Photo by Keith Meyers



UP MICHIGAN

Peter Wolfe Chapter

BY CONNIE JULIEN

Our volunteers maintained over 120 miles in the Western Upper Peninsula, constructed seven miles of new Trail/ reroutes, and eliminated four miles of roadwalk. We installed a 60-foot boardwalk and a 10-foot bridge, and repaired other structures. We blazed seven miles of remote roadwalks and installed directional signs. Our mowing crew cared for over 25 miles in the Baraga Plains. We secured an easement on private property on the east end of our Chapter's segment, and plan to open this new, three-mile off-road route in 2023. We also secured an easement and special use permit to utilize gated road sections for that reroute. We obtained a Trail Access License for 3.6 miles on Michigan Tech University (MTU) property, and thanks to the Trust for Public Land (TPL), 0.66 miles of NCNST are now protected under the ownership of the Ottawa National Forest. Our volunteers attended many events and led 12 group hikes. The Great Lakes Climate Corps and YouthWork, two youth conservation crews, as well as MTU's Outdoor Venture Crew, helped us with a variety of trail maintenance efforts. In 2023, we'll aim for several bridge repairs, repairing and improving the Oren Krumm shelter, and a few reroutes.



UP MICHIGAN

Ni-Miikanaake Chapter

BY KARL JENSEN

Our Chapter has improved communication with the management at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (PMWSP) and volunteers for Friends of the Porkies, as a significant number of our Chapter's NCNST miles weave through the park. In 2022, we constructed, blazed, and signed a new Trail segment within PMWSP. We also conferred with park staff in the course of their dedication of colorblind viewers at Lake of the Clouds. We continue to maintain a solid relationship with the Ottawa National Forest, as well. Throughout the year, our volunteers maintained 49 miles of NCNST, replaced 12 feet of boardwalk in need of repair, installed signage (some that was created by a shop class at local high school), and led group hikes. Over the summer, we worked with youth conservation crews from the Great Lakes Climate Corps and YouthWork. They did a tremendous job working on a new Trail segment in the National Forest, installing signage, benching and brushing, and moving materials to staging points. Their certified sawyers were particularly helpful, too. This year, we will continue scouting and flagging new route, prioritize blazing, and continue our weekend hikes program.

Top Right: YouthWork students install a sign in Ottawa National Forest.

Right: Members pose at a new pedestrian bridge in the Porkies. Left to right: Matt Hall, Laurie Soltis, Deb Fergus, Janelle Larson, Mark Larson, and Tessa Fenstermaker.

Photos by Karl Jensen



WISCONSIN

Heritage Chapter

BY LAURA BETHANY THOMAS

Working in three groups - Chapter volunteers, the Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew, and the WisCorps youth conservation crew - we completed a new 3-mile trail segment from Porcupine Hill to Highway 169. Members of the NCTA Next Generation Coalition have joined us for several work weekends, which is greatly appreciated. We also installed a 12-foot bridge and repaired a deck bridge in Copper Falls State Park. We eliminated four miles of roadwalk, placed two new map boxes near Wren Falls, and updated blazes and signage. Volunteers attended multiple tabled events across Iron County and we led a group hike from Wren Falls to Porcupine Hill. This year, we're focusing on fundraising to construct the Sullivan Fire Land to Highway 169 segment, which we hope to start in 2024. We also aim to secure trail route on both sides of the northern Highway 169 crossing.



Above: Joe Kravetz working on the Heritage Chapter's NCNST section.

Photos by Bethany Thomas



WISCONSIN

Chequamegon Chapter

BY KEVIN SCHRAM

We were able to build three bog bridges, totaling 300 feet, in the Penokee Ski Trail area to avoid areas of boot-sucking mud. We completed two new campsites at Trout Book and Lake Three, complete with signs and rustic furniture, giving us 30+ miles of Trail in the eastern Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest with backpacker campsites at about five-mile intervals. We rerouted a quarter-mile of Trail in the Rainbow Lakes Wilderness. I organized nine fun hikes, covering our Chapter's 70 miles of NCNST, netting about 10 new members and four new Trail Adopters. We also had a joint workday with the Heritage Chapter to help build new Trail in Iron County. The focus of 2023 will be planning new Trail: We will work with Copper Falls State Park to lay out a mile-long reroute that will add another beautiful waterfall, the Red Granite Falls, to our list of points-of-interest. We will also work with the U.S. Forest Service to establish a four-mile reroute in the Canthook Lake area, which will be the substitute for a waterless stretch of existing Trail. The new route will follow the shorelines of four lakes and four ponds.



Top: The crew after completing the Trout Brook campsite. Front row: Marty Swank, Don Quick, Mel Baughman, Ellie Williams, Linda Hobbs, Mark Belknap, Kris Dah, and Izzy Peters. Back row: Jim Crandall, Bob Lind, MaryJo Gingras, Mary Tonti, Kevin Schram, Mike Trieschmann, Allon Bostwick, and Don Christensen. Not pictured: Brad Gingras and Julia Waggoner.

Photo by Julia Waggoner

Left: Mike Trieschmann tries a plank on a sleeper with Julia Waggoner and Mark Belknap in the background. Mark and Julia were screwing in the planks on the sleepers as we progressed, and Maryjo Gingras is on the right, helping Mike.

Photo by Ellie Williams

STATE OF THE TRAIL

Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew

BY BILL MENKE



Puncheon at Wren West.

Photo by Bill Menke

The Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew, the "Rovers," is a group of volunteers from a variety of NCTA Chapters. In 2022, we spent six separate outings on the Wren West project, within the NCTA Heritage Chapter's section in Iron County. For this project, we were tasked with rerouting the Trail from two-track roads and creating a new segment of off-road Trail. For all practical purposes, and thanks to a full month's worth of help from a WisCorps youth conservation crew, the project is now complete. We built 2.75 miles of Trail, two campsites, two 20-foot bridges, and 675 feet of puncheon, and blazed over three miles. This project presented several complexities, including some challenging weather, but the cooperative effort was very successful and there are now 5.5 new miles of off-road NCNST ready for hikers. Cumulatively in 2022, our crew volunteered 1,988 hours.



Brule-St. Croix Chapter

BY MARK VANHORNWEDER

WISCONSIN Our Chapter's Trail Crew built an informational kiosk at the new State Line trailhead near the Wisconsin-Minnesota border. The trailhead itself was built by the Carlton County (Minn.) Land Department. Volunteers also built 120 feet of boardwalk to improve a wet section of Trail in the MacQuarrie Wetlands, and maintained all 55 miles of our Chapter's NCNST. We hosted three winter hikes, and nine events throughout the summer and fall. In total, there were nine different hike leaders and over 100 participants. We partnered with the Friends of the St. Croix River Headwaters and their Canoes on Wheels program for a National Trails Day event. We also maintained our relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, most recently discussing land acquisition opportunities in Douglas County, with the help of NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator Matt Davis. A large goal this year is completing several miles of new Trail (on Carlton County lands we helped acquire) to eliminate a trail gap between the Wisconsin-Minnesota state line and the MacQuarrie Wetlands.



Above: Solon Springs High School student volunteers brushing a section of the NCNST.

Photo by Teresa Nelson

Right: The Brule-St. Croix Chapter Trail Crew built 120 feet of boardwalk in the MacQuarrie Wetlands.

Photo by Mark VanHornweder



Superior Hiking Trail Association (Affiliate)

BY LISA LUOKKALA

MINNESOTA In 2022, we officially closed the infamous Gooseberry Gap: the largest reroute ever undertaken by the Association. We installed nearly 1,500 feet of new boardwalk, hundreds of feet of puncheon, and over 50 steps. A 34-foot bridge was replaced at Spruce Creek and a new 24-foot bridge was installed at Fond du Lac. The Association secured a grant to conduct title reviews on about 145 privately owned parcels along the Trail corridor, which will help determine trail protection priorities. We attended many events last summer and provided webinars for up to 70 attendees. We welcomed four new board members and three new staff members. The SHTA went through a five-month internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) assessment process, using a participatory leadership model to grow leaders within our organization. As a result, the Board is currently acting on multiple recommendations, including furthering education and building local tribal relationships. We partnered with a new nonprofit, Unruly Women Outdoors, for a female-only volunteer work weekend. It was well received and we'll continue to foster this relationship. In 2023, we're launching our Ridge Runner volunteer program, completing our first ever Master Plan for the Trail, focusing on stone steps at multiple water crossings, and working on a few larger reroutes.



Top: Spruce Creek bridge abutment.

Left: The new 34-foot bridge over Spruce Creek.

Photos by Superior Hiking Trail Association



Tornado cleanup on the Border Route Trail section.

Photo by Matt Davis



BRTA volunteers.

Photo by Pam Tavernier



Border Route Trail Association (Affiliate)

BY FELICIA HOKENSTAD

MINNESOTA There were two incredibly synergetic efforts to clear up tornado damage on the Border Route Trail (BRT) in 2022. On the first pass, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator Matt Davis, Michigan NCTA volunteer Dan Dueweke, a BRTA volunteer, and two U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff were able to clear many downed trees and swamp the Trail corridor. On a later trip, a wilderness crew from the USFS cleared the remaining downed trees - nearly 100! - to open the Trail back up to hikers. In 2022, we also maintained over 44 miles of Trail (10.3 inside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness), installed new signage and painted fresh blazes along 31 miles of Trail, and repaired flood-damaged bridges. I am stepping into the role of Board President this year, and Brian Hanson is transitioning to Vice President. Additional Board changes include Chris Fothergill as the Wilderness Director and Pam Tavernier as the Marketing Director. In 2023, we intend to create a routine for all BRTA volunteers to sign up for the NPS VIP program. We are also working on coordinating our volunteers to complete Wilderness First Aid and Chainsaw Training. We hope to coordinate a crew leader training with the NCTA Kekekabic Trail Chapter and Superior Hiking Trail Association, too.



Kekekabic Trail Chapter

BY TERRY BERNHARDT

MINNESOTA On our NCNST segment, 22 miles were cleared and maintained by 11 separate crews during the spring and fall of 2022. Approximately 1,740 hours of service were provided by 42 volunteers. Led by Derrick Passe and working with the USFS, volunteers flagged approximately 12 miles of the new NCNST extension from the Snowbank Lake trailhead west toward Ely. This extension will be about 30 miles long when complete. We refurbished signage, renewed the Howard Lake campsite, and had great conversations with the Superior National Forest and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Friends of the Boundary Waters continues to be a strong partner for our Chapter, too. Last year they provided a reimbursement stipend for trail clearing trip volunteers, and a grant to help cover operational costs. We revised and distributed the Kekekabic Trail Guide and Chapter brochure, and we continued to grow partnerships with local businesses like outfitters and resorts. Chapter leaders also took part in a Lakeland PBS filming about the NCNST. This year we'll continue clearing and maintaining the Trail, focusing on sections affected by beavers and high water. We'll support new volunteers, finalize more off-road route, and continue trail promotion.



Top: A Chapter-led group hike on the Kekekabic Trail/NCNST in early October.

Photo by Terry Bernhardt

Left: A Kekekabic Trail Chapter Hikers Social in Ely, Minn. just before the NCTA Celebration 2022 down in Walker.

Photo by Matt Davis



Arrowhead Chapter

BY HOLLY MCKNIGHT

Last spring, one mile of new Trail was built thanks to an American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation crew, NCTA Next Generation Coalition members, and volunteers from both our Chapter and Star of the North. We even had NCNST thru-hiker Aaron “Soda” Landon help out! Many of us enjoyed camping at Schoolcraft State Park during the project. Additionally, in 2022, we cleared six miles of future Trail corridor, eliminated about 1.5 miles of roadwalk, and received urban signage approval from the City of Grand Rapids. Chapter members attended many outreach events, hosted many group hikes, and helped plan and participate in the 2022 NCTA Celebration. I stepped forward as Chapter President and Mary Donnellan became Secretary. We started planning trail building and maintenance work days for this coming spring with a student group from Minnesota North [College] Itasca Campus. We also have a growing partnership with the Cohasset Parks and Recreation Department, as well as a trails group in the Tower area. This year we plan to build a 42-foot bridge, 400 feet of puncheon, and as much of the new 17 miles of NCNST as we can. We look forward to strengthening our relationship with our community and showcasing our Trail segment to encourage involvement.



Top Left: A Crew Leader training held in that fancy classroom behind the group!

Photo by Matt Davis

Left: A group hike on the banks of the Mississippi River.

Photo by Carolyn King



Star of the North Chapter

BY KIM FISHBURN

Our volunteers maintained 30 miles of NCNST this year, which might be a short distance compared to some Chapters, but our efforts were mighty. When we started mowing the Trail at the end of June, we immediately ran into about 40 downed trees. The U.S. Forest Service cleared some and brushed out a new route around the rest. We finished mowing about a month later. One Chapter member hiked almost all our segments later in the summer, before embarking on a thru-hike of the Superior Hiking Trail. He provided a report of the sections that needed work before the annual NCTA Celebration event in October - we spent another three days in September caring for those sections. In October, I attended a Forestry Days event at the grade school in Remer, offering a handout with photos of the Trail in other states. This year we'll maintain a section that was logged in 2022, mostly marking the Trail and tidying the corridor. We'll also be replacing some old culverts with puncheon, and hopefully installing benches at a campsite.

Top Right: The USFS cleared some of the many downed trees.

Photo by Harlan Liljequist



Itasca Moraine Chapter

BY ED RANSON

In anticipation of the 2022 NCTA Celebration being hosted in our Chapter's region, we re-blazed our entire segment of NCNST. Hosting the event was a big deal! We provided leaders and sweeps for most of the hikes, who, prior to the event, attended two training hikes. Other 2022 efforts included finishing an elevated, enclosed camping shelter, replacing 250 feet of puncheon and repairing more, signing and blazing three miles of temporary reroute due to blowdowns, and general maintenance of over 84 miles of NCNST. Most of our sawyers attended chainsaw training last spring. We saw significant changes to our Board: Carter and Florence Hedeon and Jerry McCarty stepped down. Janice Springer, Ken Garness, and Stacy Strand joined the Board. I am the new President, Janice is Secretary, and Mark Evans is Treasurer. We also have several new trail maintainers and more volunteers participating in workdays. Upcoming plans include finishing the rebuild of our section through the big blowdown and salvage logging area, increasing outreach efforts to seek younger volunteers and members, and improving our data collection and communication capabilities to better serve our members.



Above: A rest stop on a hike during Celebration 2022 in Walker, Minn.

Photo by Ben Ranson

Right: Itasca Moraine Chapter members after salvage logging on a massive blowdown. Left to right: Carol Daniels, Byron Knapp, Bruce Johnson, and Mark Evans.

Photo by Ed Ranson



Laurentian Lakes Chapter

BY ROBERT BECKLUND

We maintained 66 miles of NCNST - blazing is a continual focus. An immense amount of work was put into small yet numerous reroutes made necessary by many blowdowns along a 20-mile section. We replaced geographical marker signs destroyed by bears and/or porcupines, and removed a kiosk from an abandoned access road. We supported a trail protection grant from the Frazee Community Development Corporation, Inc. to help purchase Wannigan Park, and will work with the City of Frazee on this project to develop a mile of the NCNST once park is acquired. We met with the Becker County Natural Resources Committee and successfully secured funding for equipment, and we worked with the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) for maintenance and training. In coordination with Itasca State Park, trailhead parking lots within the park boundaries will be maintained for snow removal. Our volunteers attended events like the Becker County Fair and Tamarac NWR Fall Festival for outreach efforts. We led 11 hikes for more than 115 hikers (total), and numerous crew members were trained to safely deal with complex downfalls and blowdowns. In 2023, we plan to acquire and install new mileage signage, clean up after logging activity, and engage more with the White Earth Ojibwe Nation.



Photos provided by Robert Becklund



VOLUNTEERS



MINNESOTA

Minnesota Waters and Prairie Chapter

BY MICHELLE LACKEY OLSEN

For the first time since the pandemic started, we were allowed to work in

Maplewood State Park again. Six volunteers spent many hours clearing trees and brush, and scouting routes for a group hike in June. Throughout the rest of the year, blazes were refreshed, wood chips were spread on wet spots in Ferber Park, and several kiosk maps were updated. We offered monthly group hikes from March through October, and a full moon hike in December. We planned a social gathering after each hike at local establishments. In February, we held a snowshoe/skishoe event with our partners at Prairie Wetlands Learning Center - land through which our Trail segment traverses. Our volunteers represented the Chapter at other community events, and we hosted a spring workday that attracted new volunteers. Otter Tail Power Company again provided us with brochure printing at no cost to us, to refill our kiosks and hand out at events and hikes. This year, we'll aim to finalize a connecting route to the new trail in Ferber Park, either through Otter Tail Power Company property or along city streets.

Top: Volunteers hauled and spread wood chips along the Trail in Ferber Park.

Photo by Michelle Lackey Olsen



NORTH DAKOTA

Dakota Prairie Chapter

BY TOM MOBERG

About 40 volunteers maintained our Chapter's entire 100-mile segment of NCNST in 2022. In the Sheyenne National Grassland alone, we blazed 24 miles, installed puncheon, built benches at scenic overlooks, constructed two campsites, and created water cache stations at four locations, where we'll stock bottled water for long-distance hikers and emergency needs. In collaboration with Doosan/Bobcat volunteers, we constructed 0.75 miles of fence to keep cattle away from the Trail. We completed a new NCTA Trail Town kiosk in Abercrombie, and installed dozens of signs. We hosted 25 different hikes in 2022 with at least 10 participants at every one, and several Chapter members were trained as hike leaders. Our volunteers represented the Trail at 11 different community events. With the two other North Dakota NCTA Chapters, we hosted the second annual, three-day-long Three Chapters Hiking Festival in Lisbon to promote the NCNST across the state. The planning committee created a marvelous schedule of hikes and historic tours. Plans for 2023 include expanded membership recruitment and engagement activities (e.g. hikes and events), and seeking access points and routes for off-road Trail.



Top Left: Volunteers with materials for trail structures.

Bottom Left: Our water cache system on the NCNST in the Sheyenne National Grassland.

Photos by Tom Moberg



Fence stile repair.

Photo by Daryl Heise



NORTH DAKOTA

Sheyenne River Valley Chapter

BY BECKY HEISE

We have embarked on a massive re-signing project, replacing Carsonite posts with steel U-posts and Carsonite toppers. We re-signed 10.5 miles of Trail in 2022. We refreshed blazes on 4.2 miles of Trail through the Sheyenne State Forest and installed half-mile markers along the waterfall trail there. We added QR codes to our interpretive signs and brochure boxes, maintained 65 miles of NCNST, repaired four fence stiles, and installed a 30-foot boardwalk. In partnership with the North Dakota Forest Service, many projects are planned for 2023, including a new parking area and trail arches. We met with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to discuss trail maintenance and reroutes along Lake Ashtabula where hillside slumping occurs. Our Outreach Committee attended many large community events, and we hosted several group hiking events, including the North Dakota Three Chapters Hiking Festival. Our Grant Writing Committee acquired funding to manufacture five new, steel-framed boardwalks to be installed along Lake Ashtabula. One has been completed and installed so far. In 2023 we will continue to prioritize easements to close gaps and finalize reroutes, maintain our Trail mileage, and focus on increasing the size of our volunteer base.



Photo by Bobby Koeplin



NORTH DAKOTA

Central Flyway Chapter

BY MARK ZIMMERMAN

Last June, we installed a gateway structure near the NCNST Western Terminus at Lake Sakakawea State Park. This was a cooperative effort with the state park. It's a simple structure, but being located near Highway 200 provides great visibility for the Trail to passing motorists, and it serves as a monument for those starting an adventure to Vermont. We eliminated 8.5 miles of roadwalk along the McClusky Canal - a project that greatly enhanced our partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Overall, we've had a successful year meeting with a variety of agency partners. We also rerouted the Trail through the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery, providing an opportunity to hike along the Missouri River and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. We were fortunate to work alongside Boy Scout Troop 123 (of Bismarck), installing 12+ miles of new trail signage in the Chain of Lakes Recreation Area - an Eagle Scout leadership project. We hosted many guided hikes and promoted some non-guided hikes, which are theme-based. Members represented our Chapter at a variety of public events, too. This year we hope to continue growing our membership, training volunteers, guiding and promoting hikes, implementing a couple reroutes, and installing puncheon, kiosks, and other structures at multiple locations.



Left: An Eagle Scout project on the NCNST in North Dakota's Chain of Lakes region.

Photo by Matt Davis



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Bob Courtois and Patricia McNamara, volunteers with the NCTA Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter, can't let a little cold or snow stop them from keeping the Trail in its best possible condition for you! Find opportunities to join volunteers like them at northcountrytrail.org/events.

Photo by Christine Steensma