



North Star

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2023



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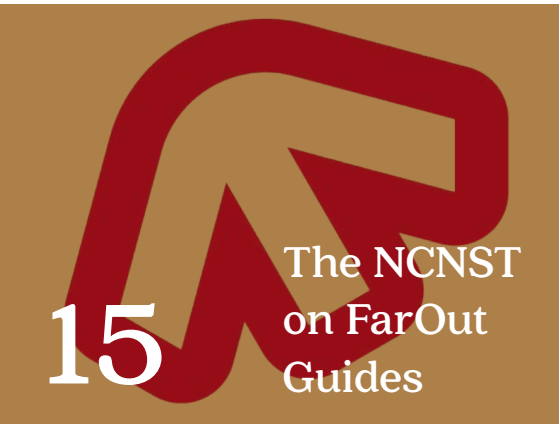
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Trailhead

MIKE CHAPPLE,
PRESIDENT, NCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Photo by
Mike Chapple

By the time you read this article, we'll be well into hiking season. I hope you're out there enjoying the trails, and spending time with family and friends in the outdoors. As I write this, we're experiencing a last-minute cold snap in the Midwest that's delaying the start of my own hiking, and I'm getting jumpy to get back out there. It's time to hike!

While I wait to get back on the trail, I find myself reflecting about the many people who make our trail possible. I encourage you to do the same the next time that you walk past a blue blaze. There are so many crucial partnerships that make even the shortest hike possible.

First, and most obviously, there are the trail builders and maintainers who put that trail there in the first place. Whether it's the pioneer who scouted the route, the team that moved a large boulder out of the way, or the volunteer who just slapped a fresh blue blaze on a tree last week, many people over the years have had a hand in getting the Trail on the ground. Who knows, you might even see one of them out there on the Trail with you!

But there are also so many people that perform work behind the scenes to make the Trail possible, and we count on their partnership as well. Our friends at the National Park Service are perhaps our longest and closest partners. Superintendent Chris Loudenslager and his team work tirelessly to provide us with financial and technical resources, and help promote our trail within the National Park System. Advocating for a long-distance hiking trail in an agency that's designed to manage traditional parks isn't an easy task, and we appreciate the work they do with and for us.

The NCTA staff are top-notch professionals. I've had the pleasure of working with them for almost a decade now, and I can easily say that they're among the best in the nonprofit world. Andrea Ketchmark and her team are talented, dedicated professionals who know the trail community inside out and are committed to building the nation's best hiking trail.

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On the Cover

Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew volunteer Jerry Fennell hauls lumber at the Wren West project site in Northern Wisconsin.

Photo by Bill Menke

Trailhead

ANDREA KETCHMARK,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo by
Andrea Ketchmark

If asked what NCTA does, I may quickly answer that we build, maintain, protect, and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail. That is our mission. But how we do this work, through a trailwide coalition of volunteers and partners, is just as important to share.

When you look across the landscape of the North Country National Scenic Trail, you see a network of partnerships unlike any other. The National Park Service serves as the administrator, and sets direction in planning the route, protecting the resources, and setting standards that help guide consistent trail management across thousands of miles. More than 160 different land management units, many Tribal Nations, and individual landowners that host the Trail have a role in its on-the-ground management and use. Across the Trail, NCTA serves as the conduit to bring all of these partners together working toward a shared goal. Nonprofit and volunteer organizations provide the support needed to do the work. NCTA Chapters build, maintain, protect, and promote the Trail in their region, covering roughly 100 miles per Chapter, and our Affiliate organizations manage approximately 1,800 miles of the Trail in sections we share with other trail networks.

Partnership is effective, empowering, and rewarding, but it's not easy. Coordinating the different missions, goals, and organizational structures and cultures has its challenges. Balancing these to find shared goals while also navigating through the places we disagree is as much an art as it is a science. It takes patience and persistence to build the strong relationships that serve as the foundation to carry the work forward.

Some years ago, I was introduced to Brian O'Neill's 21 Partnership Success Factors. As the Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Brian challenged the status quo and set a standard for the National Park Service, in regards to partnerships and civic engagement that inspired agencies and nonprofits to this day.

"Brian understood that for the National Park Service to be relevant to a changing and more diverse

nation, parks needed to think bigger than themselves and beyond park boundaries; listening and working with partners and communities for the betterment of all. He was quick to remind others that 'every time we do it ourselves, we miss out on an opportunity for community engagement.'" (21 Partnership Success Factors)

Brian outlines the best practices he found in his career that help build partnerships based on trust and accountability. I revisit them often to guide our work.

National Trails are the largest and best example of this type of public-private partnership that exists in this nation. No other sector leverages federal funding with private investment in a more substantial way. No other sector engages as many dedicated citizens as our trails community, and as America's longest National Scenic Trail, we are leading the way.

In this issue, you'll read about many partnerships that help us advance the Trail. As you do, consider the work that goes on behind the scenes. Agency, nonprofit, staff, and volunteer, and **you** - all coming together for a common purpose, and the goal to bring the North Country National Scenic Trail to a world that desperately needs it. Partnership is indeed a beautiful and powerful tool, and I thank you for being a part of it.

BRIAN O'NEILL'S 21 PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS FACTORS

1. Focus on Important Needs
2. Make the Partnerships a Win-Win
3. Adopt a Shared Vision
4. Negotiate a Formal Agreement
5. Ensure Good Communication
6. Ensure the Partnership is Owned by Your Whole Organization
7. Maintain an Environment of Trust
8. Leave Your Ego and Control at the Door
9. Understand Each Partner's Mission and Organizational Culture
10. Utilize Strengths of Each Partner
11. Find Ways Through the Red Tape
12. Build Step by Step
13. Strive for Excellence
14. Diversity Your Funding Sources
15. Constantly Seek Out and Adopt Best Practices
16. Always Be Courteous and Diplomatic
17. Honor Your Commitments
18. Celebrate Success
19. Respect the Right to Disagree
20. Network and Build Relationships
21. Put Mechanisms in Place to Reinforce the Partnership

Download the booklet online at nps.gov/subjects/partnerships/upload/BrianONeillBooklet-Edited-9-27-13-2.pdf or email hq@northcountrytrail.org to request a hard copy.

CHRIS LOUDENSLAGER,
NCNST SUPERINTENDENT, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Photo by Kate Lemon

The premise that "the only constant in life is change" has been recognized and quoted for thousands of years. This couldn't be any more evident as I write, gazing out the window to watch the last, stubborn piles of snow melt away while the emerging daffodils and budding red maples suggest spring is upon us. Just as sure as the seasons change, so it is also true for the North Country National Scenic Trail, as we welcome new members to our trail community and bid fond farewells to others whose lives are taking a new course, as we continue to grow, improve, and take on new challenges that leads us ever closer to completing the Trail.

To that, I would like to take the opportunity to share some of the changes that many of you will begin to encounter over the course of the next few months. Luke Jordan, who has served as the National Park Service Trail Planner for the last several years, has chosen to pursue other passions. Luke shouldered a broad array of duties and responsibilities, and worked closely with many of you on Optimal Location Reviews, Trail Certification, signage questions, and many other topics. Filling behind Luke will be a great challenge, and it may be several months until this vacancy is filled. In the meantime, any questions or requests for assistance should be routed through your NCTA Regional Trail Coordinators or to our National Park Service Trail Manager, Ken Hendrickson.

Another change that many of you will experience, if you haven't already by the time this piece finds its way to you, is that the U.S. Forest Service has made some substantial changes to its chainsaw program and policy. It is very important for all to understand that although the North Country National Scenic Trail is administered by the National Park Service, we have long adopted the Forest Service Saw Program as our own. While the full details of how its changes may affect how we manage our own program moving forward, the only change you should anticipate for now will be an adjustment to the training content and how it is presented.

I am especially excited to share that through temporary funding the National Park Service received via the Inflation Reduction Act, we are working to create three new National Park Service staff positions, which has allowed us to actively pursue several important land purchases and conservation easements to create new, permanently protected Trail, and assure permanent protection for some sections of existing Trail. Through the

temporary funding we are forecasted to receive, the National Park Service intends to staff a Lands/Realty Specialist, a Natural Resources Specialist, and an additional Compliance Specialist who will assist with the added number of projects needing evaluation on lands acquired by the National Park Service. Because the funding is limited and temporary, each of these positions are projected to be two-year term positions, and they will be brought on board sequentially as we move through the process of acquiring properties, developing management plans, and then finally implementing these plans. As we move forward with the acquisition of additional lands and conservation easements for the Trail, we will be working very closely with the North Country Trail Association (NCTA), local NCTA Chapters, and potentially new additional partners to develop the plan for these properties and further expand the opportunities available to our trail community to include resource stewardship and conservation, land protection and monitoring, and education and interpretation, just to name a few.

While change may indeed be constant, the changes on our horizon represent great success, as well as incredible opportunities born of your amazing work and incredible contributions. If this is to be the face of change, I welcome it with open arms and give you my sincere thanks for making it all possible.

MIKE CHAPPLE (CONTINUED)

Speaking of that trail community, we have so many great partnerships with like-minded organizations. We have some great Affiliates: the Border Route Trail Association, Superior Hiking Trail Association, Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association, Buckeye Trail Association, Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Adirondack Mountain Club, and the Middlebury Area Land Trust. They maintain portions of the NCNST where our trails share a corridor. We also benefit from working with other trail organizations under the umbrella of the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS). PNTS provides leadership to the trail community and helps us more effectively advocate for our interests in Washington DC.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank you. Each and every NCTA member is a partner with our trail in some way. Whether you volunteer your time, share your financial resources, tell the story of the Trail to your friends, or simply smile at those that you pass by in the great outdoors, you are our partner in this great undertaking called the North Country Trail. Thank you!



You're Invited

This is a sampling of events you are welcome to participate in across the North Country National Scenic Trail. Find a full, searchable list at northcountrytrail.org/events. NCTA Chapters, Affiliate organizations, and partners are encouraged to submit their events to be featured on this online calendar.

HIKE

Schuyler County Hike Series, Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC)



Schuyler County, New York
May 20, June 17, July 15, August 19, and September 16, 2023

Each year the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) leads a County Hike Series in one of the New York counties traversed by the Finger Lakes Trail. Each series continues where the previous year ended. Starting in May, the hikes will cover about 45 miles of the hills, deep valleys, ravines, and gorges of Schuyler County. Hike through two state forests, the length of the amazing Watkins Glen State Park, through the fun village of Watkins Glen, around the south end of Seneca Lake, and through a portion of the Finger Lakes National Forest - the only national forest in the state of New York. Hikers are divided into groups according to hiking pace. We accommodate all speeds and each group has an experienced hike leader and a sweep. Hikers should be able to hike 10 miles over varied terrain, including up and down plenty of hills. The registration fee covers bus transportation to shuttle hikers. Everyone who completes the hike series by December 31, 2023 will receive a patch and a certificate. The last hike will coincide with the 2023 FLTC Fall Weekend Festival in Watkins Glen. Contact Deb Nero, Cross-County Hike Coordinator, with inquiries at dn13@cornell.edu.

HIKE / TRAIL PROJECT

National Trails Day

Trailwide
June 3, 2023

A Day of Service for Hometown Trails and the People Who Love Them. Taking place on the first Saturday in June, National Trails Day® is a day of public events aimed at advocacy and trail service. Thousands of trail users, builders, and supporters come together in partnership to enjoy, advocate for, maintain, and clean up public lands and trails. Whether you're interested in a hike, volunteer opportunities, or support via membership, there is an NCTA Chapter nearby that welcomes you. Find events and activities at northcountrytrail.org/events.

TRAINING

Chainsaw Training, National Park Service (NPS)

Lowell and Marquette, Michigan
June 3-12, 2023



These NPS chainsaw trainings are open to North Country National Scenic Trail volunteers. For information on each, please contact Nic Loiseau, NPS Volunteer Program Manager, at nicole_loiseau@nps.gov. The trainings have limited attendance. Additional trainings are available; visit northcountrytrail.org/events for details.

- Saturday, June 3 and Sunday, June 4 in Lowell, Mich.
- Saturday, June 3 and Monday, June 5 in Lowell, Mich.
- Saturday, June 10 and Sunday, June 11 in Marquette (Mich.) area
- Saturday, June 10 and Monday, June 12 in Marquette (Mich.) area

HIKE

Hike the J45, NCTA Jordan Valley 45° Chapter

Northern Lower Michigan
September 8-12, 2023



Join the NCTA Jordan Valley 45° Chapter as we hike our 80-mile section: Michigan NCNST miles 607.4 to 686.8, and across the 45th Parallel! Enjoy Northern Lower Michigan, backpacking over five days and four nights, with the option of slackpacking of course. Bring your own tent, camping gear, and food. We have a shelter reserved for one night and a state forest campground site for another. For more information and to sign up, email Duane Lawton at delawton@torchlake.com.

HIKE / MEETING

2023 Celebration, North Country Trail Association (NCTA)

Chestertown, New York
September 27 - October 1, 2023



Come celebrate the North Country National Scenic Trail, and all those who care for it and are interested in getting involved with the trails community. The NCTA coordinates this annual event. This year, will be in Chestertown, New York - a wonderful access point to both the Adirondack and Green Mountains. The Trail offers a multitude of hiking experiences across its 700-mile segment in New York and 40-mile segment in Vermont. A wide variety of activities are offered to Celebration participants, including many guided hiking opportunities, skills workshops, engaging presentations, and much more. Learn more, connect with the NCTA, and register at northcountrytrail.org/celebration.



Randy spent time filming on the shared corridor of NCNST / Superior Hiking Trail.

Photo by
Randy
Cadwell

NCNST Featured on PBS

Randy Cadwell of Lakeland PBS in north-central Minnesota dedicated many weeks to the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) in 2022 to produce a half-hour segment for the program Common Ground. He even attended the North Country Trail Association's 2022 Celebration in Walker, Minn. to collect footage and share in the camaraderie.

"Everyone that I reached out to for interviews or information about the Trail went far and above to help and provide information," said Randy. "You can tell how proud they are of this wonderful outdoor asset. The volunteers were so impressive, and they are so excited to be out on the Trail and to introduce



Randy hiked and filmed with NCNST thru-hiker Aaron "Soda" Landon.

Photo by Randy Cadwell

"See the majestic and vernal landscapes of the North Country National Scenic Trail as we hike the Minnesota section. Adventure across the plains of western Minnesota, into the wilderness along the Canadian border and then follow Lake Superior south, crossing into Wisconsin."

it to others. Every day I went out with my camera, on any part of the Trail, was a highlight. To see how well it is taken care of and the wonderful places it takes hikers was eye opening."

Watch the segment online at lptv.org/cg-1410. It'll be available via the Common Ground PBS Facebook too - be sure to share your favorite place with your friends!

Want to highlight your favorite NCNST section in your own backyard? Connect with your local PBS or NPR station and see how you can collaborate.



Randy hiked and filmed with NCNST thru-hiker Joan Young.

Photo by Randy Cadwell



PARTNERSHIP



Wren West Partnership

Mel Baughman (right) works with and trains the WisCorps crew.

Photo by
Matt Davis



BY MATT DAVIS, NCTA REGIONAL TRAIL COORDINATOR FOR NORTH DAKOTA, MINNESOTA, AND WISCONSIN

A new, significant five-mile section of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) was completed last fall in Northern Wisconsin, thanks to existing volunteer horsepower, and a team of young people from WisCorps, a conservation corps.

This new segment between Wisconsin State Highway 169 and Porcupine Hill was completed by a combination of NCTA Heritage Chapter volunteer work weekends, six week-long projects by the NCTA Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew (the Rovers), and a four-week WisCorps crew. The impending relocation of Enbridge's Line 5 petroleum pipeline meant that the forest roads sharing corridor with the Trail in the area were all going to be construction access roads, which had the potential to impact the experience of NCNST hikers. NCTA staff worked with the Chapter and volunteers to set an ambitious schedule that would have the Trail constructed ahead of this potential conflict.

According to NCTA volunteer Bill Menke, during discussions between NCTA staff, NCTA Chapter leaders, and the Rovers, it was decided that we could reach this completion deadline using our own players if we redirected all the Rovers from planned work near the Minnesota-Wisconsin border to this Wren West project. Consequently, the Heritage Chapter renewed

“
Having the opportunity to leave a lasting mark on the North Country [National Scenic] Trail and make this resource accessible to more hikers was fun work, but it also felt like soul work... Our world can get loud, busy, and chaotic, so finding the quiet side of life is important especially if you're overwhelmed. For me, the North Country Trail was that place.”

— WISCORPS CREW MEMBER, FREDa

their efforts during the summer of 2022, so the Rovers were able to spend all six of their 2022 outings working at Wren West, and a WisCorps crew was brought in for a full month in the fall.

NCTA board member and Chequamegon Chapter member Mel Baughman provided the WisCorps crew with some initial trail building training. He shared NCTA expectations and then spent several days working alongside the crew. Additionally, Heritage Chapter volunteers provided supervision during many WisCorps days and helped them feel at home in the area. Through this partnership, by early November, the Wren West project was completed (for all practical purposes).

- The NCTA Heritage Chapter built 1.7 miles of Trail, rough-brushed another mile, and blazed 2.3 miles.
- The WisCorps crew built one mile of Trail.
- The Rovers built 2.75 miles of Trail, two campsites, two 20-foot bridges, and 675 feet of puncheon, and blazed 3.2 miles.

While this project presented several complexities, the cooperative effort was very successful and there is now a new 5.5-mile segment of off-road NCNST ready for hikers.

“I was taught trail building wisdom that only comes with years of experience and a passion for working outside,” reflected Freda, a WisCorps crew member. “Spending time with NCTA volunteers inspired me to find a job working on trails in a different part of the country. Having the opportunity to leave a lasting mark on the North Country [National Scenic] Trail and make this resource accessible to more hikers was fun work, but it also felt like soul work. I was doing something that let more people find joy in nature and feel more connected to the environment around them. Our world can get loud, busy, and chaotic, so finding the quiet side of life is important especially if you're overwhelmed. For me, the North Country Trail was that place.”

“Each field season, WisCorps' Crew Program supports approximately 25 different land management agencies, including but not limited to city, county, state, federal, and NGOs,” explained Eric Robertson, Director of Conservation Corps Programs. “Our ongoing partnership with the North Country Trail Association has elevated our program. It is partnerships like this that directly give back to our communities and allow both parties to become stronger. Our five-person, young adult, all-AmeriCorps crew was fortunate enough to leave their mark by constructing one mile of brand new Trail. We cannot say thank you enough to the NCTA Chapter volunteers and regional staff members for guiding the four-week project.”

We would like to extend a hearty thank you to all the Heritage Chapter volunteers, all the Rovers crew



Top Left: Brad Stewart muscles a sill for puncheon.

Top right: Connie DeSautelle and Rich Vehe working on trail tread.

Above: John DeSautelle and Jerry Fennell cutting and hauling deck boards for a long puncheon.

Photos by Bill Menke

members, and WisCorps for sending us a great crew. Special individual thank-yous are also needed for Bethany Thomas and Joe Kravetz of the Heritage Chapter, Bill Menke of the Rovers, and Mel Baughman for his engagement with the WisCorps crew.

Learn more about WisCorps at [wiscorps.org](https://www.wiscorps.org) and plan your exploration of this area on the free NCTA maps at northcountrytrail.org/trail-map-and-downloads.



PARTNERSHIP

The National Side of this National Scenic Trail

The cooperative management structure between the National Park Service and the North Country Trail Association is crucial. Together, we share the goal of providing you with a safe and premier hiking path.

To the average American, the management of public land units like national parks might be considered pretty straightforward: One group of staff members, maybe a federal agency, takes care of the land and ensures people use it responsibly. While this is true in many situations, there is often a complex web of partnership going on behind the scenes - a cooperative management structure. Nonprofit organizations and volunteers play a significant role in maintaining these lands and ensuring their availability for all to enjoy. Considering a 4,800-mile trail is not contained within one static area, let alone one state, the management of the North Country National Scenic Trail is indeed a bit more complex than that of a park, yet many similarities remain.

The National Trails System Act of 1968 called for “establishing trails in both urban and rural settings for people of all ages, interests, skills, and physical abilities. The act promotes the enjoyment and appreciation of trails while encouraging greater public access. It establishes four classes of trails: National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails, National Recreation Trails, and side and connecting trails. National Scenic Trails are to be continuous, extended routes of outdoor recreation within protected corridors.” (nps.gov)

The first two National Scenic Trails established under this Act were the Appalachian and the Pacific Crest. Congress authorized the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) in March 1980, officially adding it to the National Trails System. The National Park Service (NPS) now administers the NCNST, meaning their staff provide management oversight to the entire Trail by working with other federal agencies, state and local governments, private organizations, and landowners and land users. The NPS provides funding for trail projects and essential operations

to the fullest extent possible; as well as planning and decisions on trail routing, trail tools and protective equipment, supplies and signage for volunteers, and trail standards and certification guidelines. They also provide guidance to the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) by establishing standards for safety, construction, signage, and maintenance.

The NCTA was formed in March 1981 by 12 volunteers in West Michigan, to be the major nonprofit partner of the National Park Service in building, maintaining, protecting, and promoting the NCNST. Guided by a Board of Directors who set policy, program direction, and financial oversight, NCTA staff provide direct support and resources to the volunteers who make the Trail a reality. As of March 2023, there are over a dozen NCTA staff, including those who manage and maintain trail operations, marketing and development efforts, mapping and GIS data, and database and administrative duties. Four NPS staff are assigned to the NCNST:



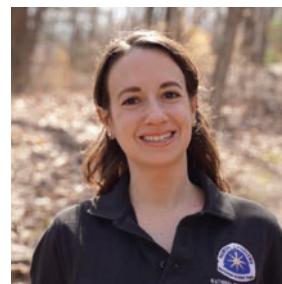
Chris Loudenslager is the **Superintendent**. He works in close partnership with NCTA, Affiliate leaders, and others to develop strategic plans. In cooperation with trail partners, he establishes processes and policies

to meet the wide array of responsibilities and requirements associated with the management and administration of the NCNST. Chris is also currently responsible for making decisions regarding NPS land acquisitions; developing land management, resource protection, and stewardship plans and regulations for lands owned by the NPS; and is the Trail’s chainsaw policy director.



Ken Hendrickson is the **Trail Manager**. He is responsible for cooperative agreements with partnering organizations (the NCTA) and organizing a response plan for third-party project proposals that may affect the Trail

(e.g. cell towers, pipelines, or timber management). Ken works with the NCTA Director of Trail Operations and Regional Trail Coordinators to support our volunteer community, provide for volunteer needs, and resolve any issues that might arise.



Steph Liguori is the **Compliance Program Manager**. She reviews proposed projects to develop plans that ensure work is in compliance with federal laws, regulations, and permit requirements that protect natural,

cultural, and historic resources that may be affected by our actions. Steph also fields questions about how to protect historic resources, threatened and endangered species, and respecting Tribal interests.



Nic Loiseau is the **Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) Program Manager**. She is responsible for all matters regarding the VIP program including volunteer agreements, NPS volunteer training, equipment and supply

requests, volunteer safety, and accident reports.

These NPS staff work closely with NCTA staff on a daily basis to provide hundreds of volunteers with the safest, most effective guidance and resources they need to keep this trail up to its National Scenic Trail standards - a treasure for you to use when you need it.

“The administration and management of the North Country National Scenic Trail is truly an example of cooperative management in every sense of the word,” said Chris. “I am reliant on our partnership not only for its crucial role of building

and maintaining the Trail, but also to make informed decisions for the Trail and ensure our workforce has what they need to be successful and safe in all that they do. Even with a phenomenal staff, I cannot possibly know all there is to know about 4,800 miles of trail, what makes a certain section of the Trail truly remarkable, or what the local needs or challenges may be. The National Park Service cannot do this alone - we were not meant to do this alone - so the Trail’s collective success, forged through the enduring passion and commitment of thousands of volunteers working side by side with the National Park Service since the very beginning, is a testament to the gravity, importance, and value National Trails hold with the public we serve.”

CELEBRATION 2023

SEPTEMBER 27 - OCTOBER 1



CHESTERTOWN, NEW YORK
ADIRONDACKS + GREEN MOUNTAINS

“I have enjoyed the NCTA Annual Celebrations for many years. I enjoy coming together with like-minded trail folks, meeting new friends, and the camaraderie of old friends renewed annually. It is invigorating to share North Country Trail experiences. I come home feeling good about the Trail and North Country Trail Community.”

—Mary Coffin, New York

Register this spring at
northcountrytrail.org/celebration

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2023 SPONSORS, INCLUDING

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PARTNERSHIP

Closing the Gooseberry Gap

BY LISA LUOKKALA, SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Adam and Mica Harju of Dirt Candy LLC are the contractors who completed the job for the SHTA.

Photo by
Superior Hiking
Trail Association

The Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) has officially opened a newly constructed 4.59-mile section of trail that officially closes the infamous Gooseberry Gap.

The Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), which shares over 300 miles of corridor with the North Country National Scenic Trail, is known to intimately and immersively connect people to some of the most scenic wild spaces in Minnesota. So when access was lost on a private land parcel north of Gooseberry State Park in 2015, and subsequently detoured trail users on a roadwalk and a paved state trail, the trail community was devastated. We often take for granted that the trail is a series of social contracts between landowners and managers who allow trail users to access their property. When one parcel is lost, it can greatly diminish the user's experience.

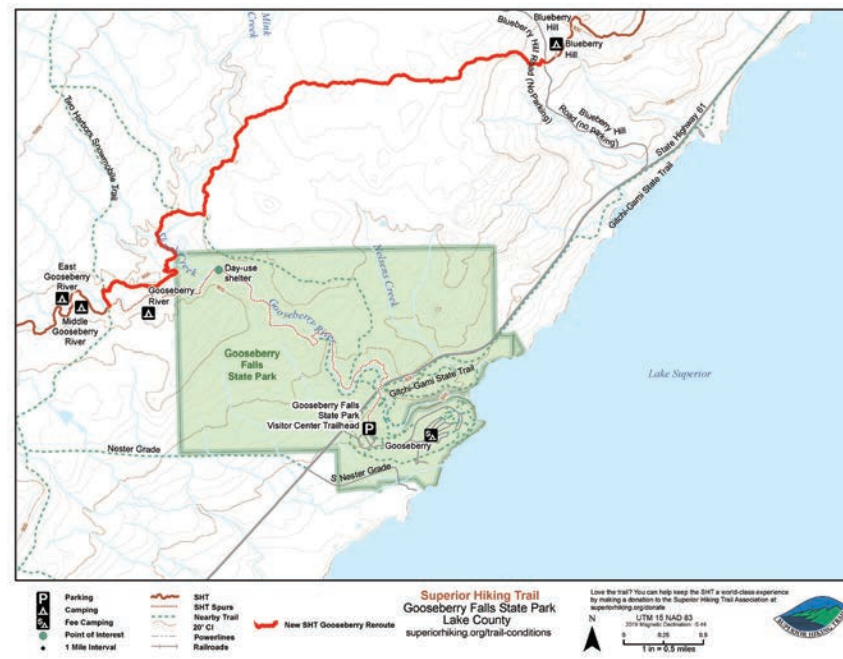
Staring down a four-plus-mile gap, which quickly was coined the Gooseberry Gap, the SHTA had only one option: Adapt our plans! (Something we do pretty well as trail folks.) Staff, volunteers, and public land managers worked together to help identify a new alignment that would traverse solely

on public lands. The trickiest issue was wetlands. Holding true to our Association's values to minimize the impacts to the adjacent land and water of the trail, we wanted to develop the very best possible trail alignment. Building new trail in sensitive areas requires a lot of forethought and review, and obtaining the right permits. We called in help from our friends at Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and obtained additional support from Critical Connections Ecological Services.

Once the final alignment was identified in late 2020, we needed to obtain permission from both the two public land managers: the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Lake County Planning and Zoning. Lake County fielded some community criticism that arose from the alignment of the trail. We listened, and proposed ways in which we could work with the county to address those concerns.

The final phase was building. Our Trails Operations Director Tamer Ibrahim definitely had his work cut out for him when the project was greenlighted in the winter of 2021. In a terrible coincidence, material prices skyrocketed and lead times were mere suggestions. Tamer jokingly said at one point that he had bought up every available board of tamarack along the North Shore. An excavating contractor broke ground on Phase I in 2021 and completed Phase II in 2022. The new segment then needed to be signed and blue blazed, and maps needed to be updated.

In the trail community, projects of this size and scope don't have just one champion. Along each phase of the project were SHTA staff, board members, and volunteers who picked up the baton and ran with it. At the center of the work were former SHTA Executive Directors Gayle Coyer and Denny Caneff. Gayle addressed the immediate challenges that came with the loss of a critical section of Trail. Denny led the environmental review of the potential new alignment and secured funding for its first phase of construction. SHTA staff and volunteers spent countless hours studying route alternatives, ground truthing the alignment, fundraising, and working with land managers to secure the permissions needed to make



Top: Adam and Mica Harju of Dirt Candy LLC are the contractors who completed the job for the SHTA.

Photo by Superior
Hiking Trail Association

this project happen.

To date, this is the largest reroute ever undertaken by the SHTA. It likely will not be our last, but we hope any future reroute is driven by the desire to improve and enhance the sustainability of the trail and reduce its impacts on the adjacent land and water - and not caused by a loss of an easement or by competing development. Seven years and hundreds of thousands of dollars later, this project is wrapping up and we couldn't be more thrilled. As current caretakers of the Superior Hiking Trail, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to those who stepped by when called on to help with this project.

Visit superiorhiking.org to learn more about the Superior Hiking Trail Association and to find great navigation resources for the Superior Hiking Trail.

Closing the Gooseberry Gap

"As part of our Big Bad Five trail assessment work, Bill Menke and I offered some suggestions on the new SHT route that had been identified," said Matt Davis, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator for Minnesota. Bill Menke is a former NCTA staff member. "The new route was going to solve the private land issue, but would have led to future sustainability concerns. The combination of poor drainage and heavy use would lead to more mud issues. Along with Tamer Ibrahim (SHTA) and Derrick Passe (NCTA volunteer and Lake County SWCD staff), we walked the section and had a great discussion about choosing a different route."



Derrick Passe, Bill Menke, Tamer Ibrahim, and Matt Davis (photographer) survey potential trail corridor.

Photo by Matt Davis



PARTNERSHIP

Hello, Green Mountains

BY STEPHANIE CAMPBELL, NCTA REGIONAL TRAIL COORDINATOR FOR NEW YORK AND VERMONT



The route of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) within the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont was recently approved by both the Green Mountain National Forest and the Green Mountain Club.

Although the Trail was formally extended into Vermont by congressional law in 2019, the route and new Eastern Terminus weren't finalized until 2023. The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) follows best practices for partnership, which includes crafting Memorandums of Understanding, and supporting internal approval processes of our partner organizations - such as the Green Mountain Club - to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding trail building and management. Following these best practices often results in a delay to make the route available to the public, but the wait is well worth it when solid partnership and clear trail management are results.

This route update is decades in the making, historically marking the NCNST's new Eastern Terminus at Maine Junction, where it connects with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Vermont's Long Trail.

"The Green Mountain Club is excited to welcome the extension of the North Country National Scenic Trail into Vermont, and support the nexus of three iconic hiking trails at Maine Junction," said Mike DeBonis, Executive Director of the Green Mountain Club, which manages the

The view from Chipman Hill in Middlebury, Vermont.

Photo by Stephanie Campbell

Long Trail System in Vermont. "As the oldest long-distance hiking trail in the nation, it is fitting that the Long Trail can help link the NCNST with the Appalachian [National Scenic] Trail, creating a new set of long-distance hiking opportunities."

The NCTA continues to grow and celebrate our Vermont partnerships with the Green Mountain National Forest, Middlebury Area Land Trust, and Green Mountain Club. Projects underway as of Spring 2023 include creating interpretive signage to highlight the significant connections between trails at Maine Junction, as well as starting a process to determine a monument at Maine Junction to celebrate the new Eastern Terminus of the NCNST.

Look for more exciting updates on the NCNST in Vermont this summer. Additionally, the NCTA will be celebrating this extension into Vermont at this year's 2023 Celebration in New York's Champlain Valley region. NCTA map products will soon be updated to reflect the new location, as well.

See the updated map at northcountrytrail.org/trail-map-and-downloads. Find details about the 2023 Celebration at northcountrytrail.org/celebration.



Moosalamoo National Recreation Area to the Long Trail

Photo by Kevin Russell

The NCNST on FarOut Guides

BY MATT ROWBOTHAM, NCTA GIS PROGRAM MANAGER

If you've spent any amount of time around long-distance hikers at, say, an Appalachian Trail shelter or Pacific Crest Trail campsite, there's no doubt you've heard the conversation turn toward the FarOut Guides app (formerly Guthook). This app has reached the status of *essential gear* on some of the more heavily traveled long-distance trails in America.

FarOut has let us know that the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) has been highly requested by their users for a number of years. Late last year, the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) signed an agreement, licensing our data for use in the FarOut platform. This agreement is significant in that it means FarOut will only use data provided by the NCTA. This allows the NCTA to ensure the information shown in the FarOut app aligns with the shared management goals of the National Park Service and our other partners. This will also allow us to keep the information shown in the app in sync with the other NCTA mapping resources and data, each time the NCTA publishes trail updates.

As of March 30, 2023, we've delivered our data to the developers at FarOut. This means you should see an NCNST guide on the FarOut platform this summer. Beyond this initial release, we will continue to look for opportunities to evolve our all of map information to better meet the needs of the trail and hikers.

The FarOut app is available on iOS and Android devices, as well as desktop browsers: faroutguides.com. The information that will be used in the FarOut app, is the exact same information shown on the NCTA maps. The NCTA will continue to make this information available through our online, interactive map and the downloadable, printable maps (northcountrytrail.org/trail-map-and-downloads), and as downloads on the Avenza Maps store: store.avenza.com. Remember, there's no substitute for hardcopy maps, and the NCTA offers them to you for free download.



Why FarOut?

BY MATT ROWBOTHAM, NCTA GIS PROGRAM MANAGER

What makes FarOut Guides different? Trail users have had the ability to download various NCTA maps onto mobile devices since 2014. We've been able to track our location on these maps, and see features like parking and camping along the Trail. While the FarOut app offers this functionality too, it goes beyond in a couple ways that, I think, are the reason it's so popular.

- **Routing**
The app will display the distance to your next waypoints, such as parking, campsite, or water.
- **Community comments**
Other FarOut app users are able to leave comments on the waypoints shown in the app. For example, a user might report that a water pump handle has been removed for the season or that a campground is full.
- **Expanded views**
The FarOut app offers a couple different views into the trail, including an elevation profile.

Learn more about the functionality of the app and how you can utilize it at faroutguides.com.

NCTA Map Update Schedule

BY MATT ROWBOTHAM, NCTA GIS PROGRAM MANAGER

Historically, the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) has published its map updates as needed. Starting this year, we're moving to a more consistent publication schedule: Updates to all NCTA maps across our eight states - the online, interactive map and the downloadable, printable maps - will be released twice a year: Once in March and once in September.

Volunteers are encouraged to continue submitting updates to me and their state's NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator any time during the year. Internally, we will work year-round to update and improve our data. Chapters can also coordinate with NCTA staff to determine if an update can wait until the next scheduled publication date, or if interim steps need to be taken. These steps could include things like posting an online trail alert or, in more urgent cases, publishing a supplemental map update.

We're hopeful this effort will help clarify when new maps will be available to our trail users. We're very aware

Continued on page 17



VOLUNTEERS

Larry Pio Reaches 10,000-Hour Milestone

BY NIC LOISEAU, NPS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER



Larry Pio (left) received his 10,000-hour award from Chris Loudenslager (right) at NCTA Celebration 2022.

Photo by NCTA

The National Park Service would like to recognize and thank Larry Pio of the NCTA Chief Noonday Chapter for his extraordinary service and dedication to the North Country National Scenic Trail. For more than two decades, Larry has been instrumental in building, protecting, and promoting the Trail, and has donated more than 10,000 hours of service.

When Larry was asked why he volunteers for the Trail, he said, “Since

I was in college, I have backpacked with friends and family on a lot of trails in Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska that were built by others, mostly in remote areas. This is my way of paying it forward for other folks to enjoy our trail, which has the opportunity to serve many more people because of the location.”

Larry enjoys volunteering because he’s met many great people, made friends, and

can serve in a variety of ways. Not only has Larry been a trail adopter, Chapter President, and member of the Chief Noonday Chapter’s Trail Protection Committee, he also assists with monthly guided hikes, building projects, and leading many initiatives on behalf of the Trail. Additionally, Larry has served on NCTA’s Board of Directors, and chaired the NCTA Awards Committee.

“Larry has been fantastic to work with and has contributed so much to the Trail at every level of our partnership,” said Chris Loudenslager, National Park Service Superintendent for the NCNST. “I am very grateful for your tremendous dedication to the Trail’s success, Larry, and greatly appreciate the generosity of your time, your valuable insights and leadership, and your enduring efforts for the benefit of the Trail and its users.”

Report the time and service you dedicate to the North Country National Scenic Trail, to ensure you’re celebrated too: northcountrytrail.org/report-volunteer-hours.



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

In Memoriam

We thank the following for their dedication to our Trail Community. Please consider taking a hike on the North Country Trail in their memory.

Walter Zane Baird, Michigan

Garrett (Garry) Dill, Ohio

Eugene Elzinga Jr., Michigan

Charles Krammin, Michigan

Rob McCready, Pennsylvania

Joe Smith, Pennsylvania

Jerome Wieland, North Dakota

If the NCTA has inadvertently overlooked anyone, we apologize, and please let us know: hq@northcountrytrail.org.

NCTA Map Update Continued

that users often reference the half-mile waypoints on our maps for trip planning, or may have printed a large number of PDF maps and downloaded data. We’re aiming to strike a balance between not making these resources obsolete, and keeping an accurate representation of the Trail and any changes publicly available. It is our goal to keep all NCTA navigational resources in sync, including the forthcoming inclusion of the NCNST on the FarOut Guides app.

The first of these trailwide updates was published on March 23, 2023. Already, we are looking at two supplemental updates this summer, and we will likely need to republish maps to coincide with the expanded waypoints shown on FarOut. (Spoiler alert: Water sources!) We’ve had some positive moves in Vermont that will allow us to expand our map coverage east of Middlebury, along the Long Trail to the Eastern Terminus at Maine Junction on the Appalachian Trail. We also have plans to add additional features and functionality to the online map this summer. None of these updates will change the existing numbering of the half-mile waypoints.

Find the best map resources for you at northcountrytrail.org/trail-map-and-downloads and keep an eye on FarOut Guides this summer for the North Country National Scenic Trail: faroutguides.com.

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Awake, Still Dreaming

Finding connection in Michigan cities and wilderness

BY LAURA BRANDON

Moments fly past like birds diving through view, across my window and the city skyline. Black wings turn and lift air as they rise above red brick buildings outside, carrying the moment I learned to fly by way of rain-soaked boots and the distance felt by two eyes. Moments I spent years preparing for dance now in my mind, attempting to be more than memory by ignoring the concept of time. Surrounded by concrete, sirens, and heartbeats, I long for the places that enveloped me in trees. Their pulse felt through bark as the heartbeats I left when I embarked on a four-month journey outside, hiking further away each day from the city and people I left behind. I'm nostalgic for those days when voices would fade to wind whispering over the edges of a stream. Then I'd see this veil lifting, or a reminder of an epiphany I had gazing miles into the past at a hazy group of giant hills, I remember realizing I could never truly be alone. I could never detach from the people I love: my parents, my partner, my siblings, friends and neighbors. Every day spent without their company was an opportunity to reflect on their importance to me. It was healthy to disconnect, to escape conversation and obligation and unwind deep in the woods. But I've never, nor do I want to, disconnect from love and humanity.

It doesn't matter how physically isolated I am, I am always in the presence of others. Whether it's in thought or through the passing of time, through objects touched,

like the arrowhead I held and felt the heat from. Heat from the hand that held it before mine, before it fell to the ground and became coated in mud, swept by rain and left to bake in the sun. Energy transferred through time, through minds, through the actions of displacement and transformation. The arrowhead I learned from...

I left Detroit to backpack the state of Michigan as a personal challenge, as a statement — an act of defiance against any thought that said I couldn't — and as a declaration of my commitment to the common good. I didn't walk those 1,160 miles alone to distance myself from people, rather as a way to nourish my bonds with them. The experiences I've had on the trail better equip me to teach others. My stories help me connect, they help me bare my soul with the world, through music, poetry, and pictures. The places I've hiked through and slept in have built within a repertoire of adventures to share with the world. The people I met along the way, those bold, brave, compassionate goers and volunteers of the North Country National Scenic Trail, they inspire my future self, a woman who continues, relentlessly, to chase her loudest dreams.

My life goal is to help other people experience the sense of autonomy and freedom that I felt backpacking alone, particularly those individuals who have not had the opportunities or the encouragement I've had to

Opposite page:
A Great Lakes
shoreline.

Left: Laura hiking
in the Ottawa
National Forest
in Michigan's
upper peninsula.

Right: A
Michigan sunset.

Photos by Laura
Brandon



explore outdoors. Throughout this country, people of color have been excluded from outdoor spaces and recreation. Lack of access, resources, education, environmental injustices, racism, generational trauma - these are all factors that may deter individuals from seeking enjoyment in outdoors spaces. Organizations that are doing the work to alleviate these issues here in Detroit are role models for me. Detroit's Black to the Land Coalition, "a coalition of Black, Indigenous and People of Color nature enthusiasts, intent on helping fellow BIPOC actively engage in meaningful outdoor adventures," hosts events throughout the year aimed at promoting outdoor skills and exploration for city residents. Detroit Inspiring Connections Outdoors, "an outdoor adventure and environmental education program of the Sierra Club, [which] provides urban youth with positive outdoor experiences," has inspired some of my connections with nature enthusiasts here in the city and on the trail. I'll never forget the day I ran into the program's director along the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. There I was, coated in sweat and sand after hiking the Lake Superior shoreline for days. And there they were, my fellow Detroiters, youth leaders, and the pre-teens they brought to experience backpacking for the first time along Michigan's famed lakeshore. Their expedition was officially part of a

partner program with the Metro Detroit YMCA BOLD & GOLD Program and the Detroit Outdoors Collaborative. They offered candy and animated stories of their travels in the woods. I offered tunes on the wooden flute I carry, and showed a few how to play her. This interaction reignited my wonder and viridity, feelings I thrived on for weeks.

After my thru-hike of the state of Michigan, when I settled back home in Detroit, I felt myself losing focus throughout the day. I was worried I'd lost my ability to connect with the present, until I recognized that my mind was straining to connect with silence; shadows and sunrays and clouds forming under pressure. I listened to the spaces between the notes, to the stillness between the fullness of an active environment and found my way back to brief periods of isolation on the trail. Empowering loneliness, I call those moments - strength embodied by the physical absence of other humans and the presence of their memory. Soon I recognized the freedom I felt on the trail here, in work and in chores, during my 10-mile bike ride to the office, flying beside cars on Gratiot like a goose on the flank of a mighty flock, vacuuming at home and hearing music in the hum. I am awake, still dreaming, in every meditative moment of existence, be it surrounded by trees or surrounded by the city. My hope is that more people around me may experience this enhanced sense of wellbeing, this adventurous being, and find their power outdoors. The North Country National Scenic Trail, and the volunteers who create and maintain this national treasure, provided me with these means to connect. Maybe one day soon, you can for someone too.

“The people I met along the way, those bold, brave, compassionate goers and volunteers of the North Country National Scenic Trail, they inspire my future self, a woman who continues, relentlessly, to chase her loudest dreams.

— LAURA BRANDON

Laura Bailey “LB” Brandon is a poet, musician, and community organizer in Detroit, Mich. You may find her NCNST log entries from 2022 under the trail name “Bunnies,” a name earned by her relationship with four rabbit housemates. Visit her website awakestilldreaming.com to read stories about her adventures, helpful tips for promoting awareness and social justice, and hear her spoken word and flute melodies from the trail. Learn more about the organizations Laura listed at blacktothelandcoalition.com and sierraclub.org/michigan/detroit-ico.



The Naomikong Project in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

BY KENNY WAWSCZYK, NCTA REGIONAL TRAIL COORDINATOR FOR MICHIGAN



Located just a few trail miles southeast of Tahquamenon Falls State Park in Michigan's Eastern Upper Peninsula lies a popular section of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). It's tucked between the Curley Lewis Memorial Highway and Lake Superior, and with multiple parking lots, easy access, and scenic views, it's a well-used section. There are a few creeks and wetlands along the route too, which means structures like stairs and puncheon are necessary. Those of us who maintain trail know that at some point, those will need to be replaced.



Left to right: Bob McNamara, Lucy Evashevski, Pat McNamara, Tom Walker.

Photos provided by Tom Walker

One area in particular where this held true was the section of Trail below the Naomikong Overlook to the recently rebuilt suspension bridge spanning Naomikong Creek. Topography, seeping water from the hillside, wetlands, and potential cultural resources all hindered the NCTA Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter's maintenance plans. Fortunately, these volunteers are used to working closely alongside staff from the Hiawatha National Forest (East Zone). Standard federal studies were completed and after an extensive review and site visits from the National Forest cultural resources staff, designs and procedures were approved to bring this section of Trail up to standard.

“The quality of the work that the Chapter did here was notable... Their work on these boardwalk sections will ensure that the Trail is sustainably located for years into the future.”

— VALERIE BADER, NCTA DIRECTOR OF TRAIL OPERATIONS



Work began in 2022: Hauling in material, leveling the ground, and replacing or building an astounding 1,100 total feet of boardwalk.

“The quality of the work that the Chapter did here was notable,” shared Valerie Bader, NCTA Director of Trail Operations. “Most trail builders are thrilled at the opportunity to build new structures, and the Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter was no different. They did not shy away from this chance to solve a trail issue with hard work and dedication. Their work on these boardwalk sections will ensure that the Trail is sustainably located for years into the future.”

The Chapter received some much-appreciated assistance from the Great Lakes Climate Corps (GLCC), with a little over three weeks of their help. Much of the material used in 2022 was purchased with a grant from the Michigan Trails Fund, a nonprofit that has been a great partner, providing



After
Photos provided by Tom Walker

funding to improve many sections of the NCNST throughout Michigan. But, with an estimated 600 more feet of boardwalk or turnpike needed, we will be diving into the funds provided by a Rural Schools Grant, via the U.S. Forest Service. This grant also allowed the NCTA to pay for the GLCC time last year, as well as three new interpretive panels to be placed at various locations along the Trail, and the gravel for a new trailhead at Trout Brook Pond.

Sound like a lot of work? It is. Lucky for you, the Chapter often says, “We have a tool that will fit your hand!” If you'd like to help out later this summer or in early fall, please reach out to them at hss@northcountrytrail.org.



Cotton Lake Meets Crown Lake

BY JAN ULFERTS STEWART

This is the story of how two oak tree slabs ended up 85 miles away.

My husband Jim is an attorney in Fargo, North Dakota, who fuels his creative side by hiking or having fun in his woodshop. During the 2022 NCTA Celebration in Walker, Minn., he took advantage of both the hiking and the workshop opportunities. We were both very pleased to participate in a hike that would pick up where we left off on our quest to cross Minnesota.

Interpreting that hike was Harlan Liljequist, who has maintained that section of Trail for over 20 years. He is a member and volunteer with the NCTA Star of the North Chapter. Harlan spoke about bushwhacking through the Paul Bunyan State Forest in the 1980s with a map, compass, and orange tape, scouting for where the future North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) could go. He remembered aloud bringing his own lawnmower to groom the Trail, telling us it was easy to lift it up over blowdowns. As our group neared the end of our hike that day, we stopped at the campsite he helped build in 1992, near Crown Lake.

Back at Celebration headquarters, Jim enjoyed the hands-on session of making

a Leopold bench. On our Minnesota hikes, we've become very fond of these unique benches. After a full day of carrying a backpack, it is pure joy to sit on a stable bench with a backrest and a level table to do a crossword, set up your stove, and scour the map for tomorrow's route. These benches always seem to be in the perfect location for viewing the scenery and wildlife. After years of enjoying these backpacker delights, we learned of the bench's name.

The Leopold bench was named for Aldo Leopold, an American writer, philosopher, and professor at the University of Wisconsin. Considered the father of wildlife ecology, he began his career with the National Forest Service in the early 1900s. Among his many honors, the first Wilderness area in the U.S. Forest Service's National Wilderness Preservation System* is now named after him. Leopold's book, A Sand County Almanac, became a monument in America's conservation movement.

At last! A perfect project for our oak! Jim brought the plans home from Celebration and quickly built a Leopold bench using our two slabs and an old bridge plank. He set it up in the backyard where it sat until early March this year, when we got the "OK" to place the bench on the lovely campsite at Crown Lake.

But there was one snag: 56 inches of snow in our backyard. We used the snowblower to carve the bench out of the snow. Then we disassembled the bench and loaded onto two Paris Expedition snow sleds. As winter campers, we are used to snowshoeing with our sleds harnessed to our waists, hauling our gear.



**The 200,000+ acre Aldo Leopold Wilderness is part of New Mexico's Gila National Forest. It was designated in 1980, the same year the North Country National Scenic Trail was authorized by Congress.*



Following the Harlan's sharp blue blazes, we trudged through the deep snow to the campsite. There, we assembled the bench and signed the guest book. Naturally, we sat, hung our packs on the bench hooks, set our water bottles on the table, and contemplated the beauty and peace of the Trail.

Leaving the campsite and pulling much lighter sleds, we were filled with gratitude for Harlan. The Crown Lake campsite is part of his legacy. He, like so many NCTA volunteers, cares deeply about the Trail. Their efforts personify Henry David Thoreau's words: "I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees." Their dedication makes the North Country National Scenic Trail a welcoming, world-class footpath.

HIKE 100 CHALLENGE

Share your adventures like Matt!



"[At the end of January] I hit 100 miles for 2023. Most of my miles have come from running, starting on New Year's Day. This included 59 new-to-me miles in Ohio, and the rest closer to home in Southwest Michigan. I love every second of my time spent on the North Country Trail! Thank you to everyone who helps make it possible!"

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

Welcoming Lauren Kennedy-Little



This April, the North Country Trail Association staff grew by one Regional Trail Coordinator (RTC). Lauren Kennedy-Little is now responsible for trail management, and Chapter support and direction in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Combined, these two states host over 1,200 miles* of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Lauren's professional experience includes work with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) since 2018. She held various outdoor leadership titles, and traveled all over the country for trail building projects. She still performs contract work with SCA as a Conservation Work Skills Instructor. She attended Washington & Jefferson College with a B.A. in biology and concentration in graphic design. She recently became

a certified Forest Therapy Guide.

Lauren is passionate about trail design and loves teaching people technical skills. Her hobbies include kayaking, backpacking, gardening, yoga, and nature wandering. She resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with her husband Drew. You can contact her at lkennedy-little@northcountrytrail.org.

**About 1,000 miles in Ohio shares corridor with the Buckeye Trail.*



North Star

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The NCTA headquarters office and Trail Shop are located at **229 E. Main St. in Lowell, Mich.** Find more information at northcountrytrail.org/contact. (866) HikeNCT • (616) 897-5987

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

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

“Visitors that we don’t normally get during our Northwoods trail work came to inspect our work in Iowa County, Wisc., where we were building a bridge for the Driftless Trail. These Scottish Highland cattle are trying to figure out what that strange contraption in front of them is—they’re more used to seeing tractors and other farm machinery. They were gentle beasts and fun to see, but in just a short while, the landowner put up an electric fence to keep them more removed from our work site.”

Photo and quote by Bill Menke,
NCTA volunteer