



# North Star

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

FALL 2024



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An evening at Straits State Park in St. Ignace, Michigan, during 2024 Celebration.

**Photo by** Jim Howell

# Trailhead

**JAN ULFERTS STEWART**, PRESIDENT,  
NCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Since December 2017, I've had the joy of serving on the NCTA Board of Directors. Today, I am profoundly honored and privileged to serve as board President, a position that not only challenges me, but inspires me to contribute to our shared vision of a *forever route* for the trail.

My role as President is driven by a steadfast belief in the future of this trail and the people who can make its forever route a reality. Our board of directors is now concentrating on the NCTA's trail protection and land stewardship capabilities. Every decision and action will be guided by the vision of a vibrant, sustainable future for the trail - one that enhances its value for all who experience it.

Through collaborative leadership and a commitment to excellence, I hope to inspire confidence in our collective ability to overcome challenges and seize new opportunities, ensuring that the trail forever remains the "premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States."

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the NCTA members and partners whose tireless efforts and unwavering commitment have laid the foundation for our successes and built a path for the future. Thank you to our volunteers whose strategic insights, and dedication are making an indelible mark on the NCTA mission. Thank you Andrea, our Executive Director, for the inspiration you continue to provide, and to the NCTA staff team for extraordinary service.

I am deeply grateful for the chance to guide our organization toward this campaign for the future. Please join our push to build this forever trail!

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The content theme of the Fall issue is *Trail Community*. You'll see volunteer recognition; event reflections; program and project successes; celebrations of partnership; and much more.

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# Trailhead

**ANDREA KETCHMARK**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Photo by**  
Andrea Ketchmark

The North Country National Scenic Trail didn't occur naturally or become what it is out of thin air. It's an immense labor of love, made by citizens and public servants who want to make the world a place they want to thrive in.

The trail is built and maintained by volunteers, but if that maintenance wanes, the route can disappear in **less than one season**. Agency

partners fund projects and help fund staff positions, but membership and donations leverage those funds **six times**. Beautiful sections of the trail cross many public lands, but we currently have hundreds of miles of trail on private land that **lack permanent agreement**.

This summer, the NCTA Board of Directors, staff, and partners came together for a strategic planning session to shape the future of our work. Our mission is clear and remains unchanged: to develop, maintain, protect, and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern United States. But while we've made tremendous progress over the trail's 44-year history, one area demands urgent attention as we look to the future: securing and protecting the trail corridor.

Each year, we lose trail sections due to the lack of formal agreements with landowners. This forces the trail back onto roadways. With 1,500 miles of gaps yet to close and increasing development pressures, time is running out. To address this, we must increase our capacity and enhance our resources to protect the trail corridor and its surrounding landscapes, or we may lose our chance forever. Our focus is not shifting from building, maintaining, and promoting the trail, but it's important we strengthen our ability to **safeguard** it for future generations.

Since that June planning session, we went on to develop strategies and identify the biggest drivers for success, to help us build a strong foundation to support growth in this area of work over the next few years. This work takes time, and the NCTA is currently focused on developing the details to ensure we're ready to put the plan in action in 2025.

As we embark on this vital journey, we ask you to join this labor of love. Whether you are a trail maintainer, a donor, or a landowner, your efforts can go a long way to ensuring the North Country National Scenic Trail remains a treasured path forever. More to come soon.

**CHRIS LOUDENSLAGER**, NCNST  
SUPERINTENDENT, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



**Photo by** Kate Lemon

We have 44 years and 3,500 miles worth of success stories to celebrate, and I am so very grateful for the incredible effort and energy our trail community, NCTA and NPS staff, affiliate organizations, and countless partners have contributed to get us so far in such a relatively short time. Our successes thus far are a true testament to

the dedication, skill, and tireless efforts that so many volunteers have invested over the years - studying maps, scouting potential routes, making plans, and building and maintaining relationships with landowners to secure opportunities for each new section of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

It is not lost on me that initiating contact with a prospective landowner to ask for their support and to host the trail on their property isn't easy work. In fact, I might suggest this is the hardest task of them all. It takes a special person with a special set of skills, tact, diplomacy, patience, and commitment to the North Country Trail to keep us moving forward. To those who have taken on this difficult but absolutely critical role over the years, you have my special thanks and admiration. Speaking both figuratively and literally, we wouldn't be where we are today without your efforts and what you have accomplished.

While the work of planning and protecting the North Country National Scenic Trail has never been easy, there should be little question that the work ahead of us isn't going to get any easier. But the difficult trail that lies ahead was already anticipated, and we've never been better positioned to meet these challenges.

We now have a Director of Land Protection with NCTA's Paul Gagnon, who has added critical skills, experience, and expertise to these efforts. The NPS is excited to welcome Marlena O'Connell, our new full-time Trail Planner, to our staff. In her revised position, Marlena will be focusing a lion's share of her time specifically to route planning, providing assistance to the NCTA Regional Trail Coordinators, Chapter volunteers, and Affiliates. Beyond this, NCTA and NPS staff have

been working collaboratively to greatly improve the planning process itself, so that we can better forecast volunteer needs, work these into formal annual work plans for our staff, and ensure that when new opportunities present themselves, we will know where to dedicate our time and resources.

Ultimately, in joint organization, both NPS and NCTA are actively working on land protection strategies to ensure the trail we all contribute to is permanently protected. Given the many responsibilities that come with land or easement ownership - which can be very different when comparing our two organizations - securing the property is not the end of the story. Additional work and planning are also underway to account for the new needs and responsibilities that come with lands, or easements we will surely need to pursue for trail protection in some instances, and this would not be possible without the

new staff positions we've created in recent history to help build our capabilities.

It is an incredibly exciting time for the North Country National Scenic Trail as we see our capabilities expand and our shared mission mature as we begin to become increasingly active in trail protection. As of this writing, we already have a small handful of projects underway - in addition to the two properties already owned and protected by the NPS - and it is hopeful that these will come to fruition in the next couple of years (if not sooner). These exceptional projects will not only be amazing additions to the North Country Trail, but will also provide us with a framework to further expand our efforts into the future, create new and exciting opportunities for our trail community, and demonstrate even more the magnificence of the trail and what our incredible partnership can achieve.

As a member your support goes a long way.

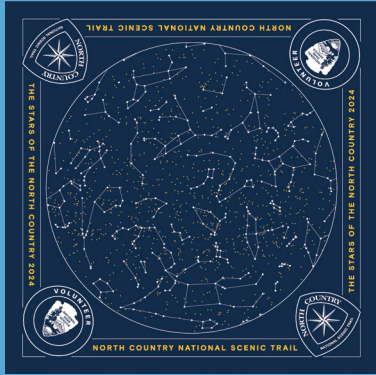
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VOLUNTEERS

# National Park Service Volunteer Recognition

BY NIC LOISEAU, NPS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER



This year's theme for the National Park Service volunteer bandanas celebrates the stars of the trail. You are the stars! The stars who build and maintain a trail that guides hikers on an adventure. The stars who provide opportunities for recreation, education, inspiration, solitude, and enjoyment. The stars who demonstrate unwavering

commitment and enthusiasm every single day. It's a privilege for the staff of the North Country National Scenic Trail to say *thank you*. Thank you for shining so brightly with such passion and dedication. We're pleased to highlight the following volunteers who have reached cumulative hour milestones this year.

---

## 10,000 HOURS

**Connie Julien**

Peter Wolfe Chapter (MI)

---

## 4,000 HOURS

**Mike Toole**

Allegheny National Forest Chapter (PA)

**Dave Galbreath**

Clarion County Chapter (PA)

---

## 2,500 HOURS

**Eric Campbell**

Kekekabic Trail Chapter (MN)

**Joe Kravetz**

Heritage Chapter (WI)

**Jeff Fleming**

Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Derrick Passe**

Kekekabic Trail Chapter (MN)

**Karen Stenberg**

Laurentian Lakes Chapter (MN)

---

## 1,000 HOURS

**Eric Maturi**

Arrowhead Chapter (MN)

**Mark Roberts**

Peter Wolfe Chapter (MI)

---

**Brad Stewart**

Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter (MI)

**Denise DeKett**

Jordan Valley 45° Chapter (MI)

**Tina Harkins**

Wampum Chapter (PA)

**Deb Charleson**

Wampum Chapter (PA)

**Jaron Nyhof**

Western Michigan Chapter

---

## 400 HOURS

**Michael Daly**

Central New York Chapter

**James DeKett**

Jordan Valley 45° Chapter (MI)

**Cindy Faust-Miller**

Chief Baw Beese Chapter (MI)

**Deborah Ferguson**

Ni-Miikanaake Chapter (MI)

**Alisha Glasgow**

Allegheny National Forest Chapter (PA)

**Yvette Jester**

Wampum Chapter (PA)

**William Lallman**

Allegheny National Forest Chapter (PA)

**Jerome Lemke**

Superior Hiking Trail Assoc. (MN)

---

**Jeff Manelick**

Allegheny National Forest Chapter (PA)

**Jon Maturi**

Arrowhead Chapter (MN)

**Deb Murphy**

Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Teresa Nelson**

Brule-St. Croix Chapter (WI)

**Matthew Patterson**

(OH)

**Katie Prindle**

Allegheny National Forest Chapter (PA)

**Shari Searles**

Harbor Springs Chapter (MI)

**Jeanne Sekely**

Marquette Area Chapter (MI)

**Richard Vehe**

Brule-St. Croix Chapter (MN)

**Margaret Whaley**

Central New York Chapter

**Sam Zembardo**

Allegheny National Forest Chapter (PA)

---

## 200 HOURS

**Steven Ashmead**

Western Michigan Chapter

**Joseph Baker**

Superior Hiking Trail Assoc. (MN)

**Gerry Berg**  
Dakota Prairie Chapter (ND)

**Denny Caneff**  
(MN)

**Joe Carter**  
(OH)

**Kelley Clark**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**Katarzyna Dec**  
Allegheny National Forest  
Chapter (PA)

**Nancy DeJong**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**Dan Dueweke**  
Jordan Valley 45° Chapter (MI)

**Charles Gallet**  
Superior Hiking Trail Assoc. (MN)

**Ken Garness**  
Itasca Moraine Chapter (MN)

**Jan Genaway**  
Butler County Chapter (PA)

**Nathan Guntrum**  
Allegheny National Forest  
Chapter (PA)

**Bob Harris**  
Border Route Trail Assoc. (MN)

**Dorien Howe**  
Peter Wolfe Chapter (MI)

**Michelle Lazar**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**Michael Mattson**  
Marquette Area Chapter (MI)

**Brett Mort**  
Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Linda Mraovic**  
Wampum Chapter (PA)

**Todd Olson**  
Marquette Area Chapter (MI)

**Joel Oravitz**  
Wampum Chapter (PA)

**Jim Penley**  
Allegheny National Forest  
Chapter (PA)

**Amy Seymour**  
Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Steve Sharkey**  
Superior Hiking Trail Assoc. (MN)

**Dominic Sosnowski**  
Brule-St. Croix Chapter (WI)

**Blair Sullivan**  
(KS)

**Chuck Thomas**  
Marquette Area Chapter (MI)

**Robert Traczyk**  
Heritage Chapter (WI)

**Bruce Ueland**  
Superior Hiking Trail Assoc.  
(MN)

**Nancy VanWinkle**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**Kevin Whitley**  
Jordan Valley 45° Chapter (MI)

**Nelson Whitling**  
Clarion County Chapter (PA)

---

## 100 HOURS

**Louis Allgeye**  
Star of the North Chapter (MN)

**Donna Bailey**  
Allegheny National Forest  
Chapter (PA)

**Erik Baron**  
Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore  
Chapter (MI)

**Rick Barta**  
Arrowhead Chapter (MN)

**Nannette Bell**  
Ni-Miikanaake Chapter (MI)

**Jay Benda**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**Dave Beyer**  
Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore  
Chapter (MI)

**Rashelle Brown**  
Itasca Moraine Chapter (MN)

**Ian Campbell**  
Allegheny National Forest  
Chapter

**Cynthia Clemens**  
Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Cliff Denay**  
Jordan Valley 45° Chapter (MI)

**Jane Denay**  
Jordan Valley 45° Chapter (MI)

**Dan Driesenga**  
Spirit of the Woods Chapter (MI)

**Tim Duffy**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**Sally Dykhuis**  
Grand Traverse Chapter (MI)

**Mark Evans**  
Itasca Moraine Chapter (MN)

**Russ Heathman**  
Ni-Miikanaake Chapter (MI)

**Ron Hendrickson**  
Brule-St. Croix Chapter (MN)

**Linda Hobbs**  
Chequamegon Chapter (WI)

**Lawrence Hogan**  
Marquette Area Chapter (MI)

**Christopher Jester**  
Wampum Chapter (OH)

**Nancy Manges**  
Buckeye Trail Assoc. (OH)

**Thomas Matthiae**  
Chequamegon Chapter (WI)

**Beth McIntyre**  
Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Holly McKnight**  
Star of the North Chapter (MN)

**Tom Piikkila**  
Chequamegon Chapter (WI)

**Dale Prey**  
Heritage Chapter (WI)

**Jeanne Rokos**  
Grand Traverse Chapter (MI)

**Thomas Ruprecht**  
Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Byron Sailor**  
Peter Wolfe Chapter (MI)

**Barbara Scott**  
Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter  
(MI)

**William Scott**  
Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter  
(MI)

**Trudy Snodgrass**  
Butler County Chapter (PA)

**Connie Soch**  
Laurentian Lakes Chapter (MN)

**Janice Springer**  
Itasca Moraine Chapter (MN)

**Josh Stangle**  
Superior Hiking Trail Assoc. (MN)

**Jeffrey Steele**  
Central New York Chapter

**Sarah Steele**  
Central New York Chapter

**Helena Surprenant**  
Chief Noonday Chapter (MI)

**Mark Swiontek**  
Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew

**Jerry Tillman**  
Superior Hiking Trail Assoc. (MN)

**Jeff VanWinkle**  
Western Michigan Chapter

**William Weber**  
Superior Shoreline Chapter (MI)

**Zack Wilk**  
Peter Wolfe Chapter (MI)



# 2024

## North Country Trail Association Volunteer Awards

*Together, let's celebrate this superb trail community that contributes so much to the enhancement of the North Country National Scenic Trail. The NCTA Awards Committee is delighted to recognize the following award recipients, as nominated by those who work alongside them and observe with admiration.*

---

### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



#### Gary Carlson

The Border Route Trail was planned and constructed in the early 1970s by a group called the Minnesota Rovers Outing Club. Around 1976, Gary joined that group and started volunteering. The trail was completed in 1993; the Border Route Trail Association was incorporated in 2004; and the trail officially became part of the North Country National Scenic Trail in 2019. Gary is mentioned in some of the earliest meeting notes; he became an official board member in 2011. Over the decades, he has been a leader in trail building and maintenance activities. Each spring, he organizes and leads a clearing trip in the non-wilderness section, during which he provides meals in appreciation for the volunteers who drive hundreds of miles to participate. Gary opens up his home to monthly board meetings. His vast knowledge of construction, woodcraft, signage, and agency collaboration, as well as his friendly and supportive demeanor, have helped make the Border Route Trail what it is today.



#### Deb Koeplin

Deb has been actively improving and promoting the North Country Trail for the past two decades at the Chapter, state, and national levels. She has made many, many contributions from time and mileage to philanthropic gifts and beyond. Deb has served on multiple NCTA committees and has held a variety of leadership roles within the Sheyenne River Valley Chapter, including President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Membership Chair. She also regularly volunteers for trail maintenance, and is often a trail representative at events across North Dakota. During the pandemic, alongside Regional Trail Coordinator Matt Davis, she hiked nearly the entire Sheyenne River Valley Chapter segment along Lake Ashtabula to perform a much-needed trail assessment. As if that wasn't enough North Country Trail in her life, Deb has participated in multiple Hike 100 Challenges and annual Celebrations. In fact, she was instrumental in planning two of those Celebrations (then called *conferences*) and, just this year, made a Chapter-level hike challenge a reality.



#### Tim Mowbray

When Tim first joined the Brule-St. Croix Chapter, it's unlikely he foresaw the leadership he would shoulder for decades to come. He was a trail adopter for a particularly challenging section; Chapter President for six years; and he served on both the Chapter's Executive Committee and the national Board of Directors. When a land parcel or easement is up for consideration to further protect the trail, Tim is often the one to approach the landowner, due to his abundance of friends and contacts. He led the Trail Town designation for Solon Springs, Wisconsin, then purchased and installed the signage at his own expense. He still maintains contact with area businesses that provide essential services to North Country Trail hikers, providing a local face for the trail in his community. Following Tim's service to the national board, he returned to the role of Chapter Treasurer. Whenever there is a need to table an event, transport equipment, or contact a local official, Tim is always ready to pitch in to advance the trail.



---

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE



### Mel Baughman

Mel thrives on volunteerism. His service extends beyond a decade with the North Country Trail to a search-and-rescue team, supervising conservation corps crews, and teaching trail building as far as Costa Rica and Puerto Rico. As a University of Minnesota professor emeritus, he has even written scholarly papers on recreational trail construction and maintenance. Mel is hardworking and reliable, attending nearly every Chequamegon Chapter workday. Through education, he ensures their work meets the highest standards. He has taught volunteers proper tool and saw use; adopted a wilderness segment that can only be maintained using hand tools; was instrumental in multiple reroute efforts; and currently serves on the national Board of Directors. If you can't find Mel in the Chequamegon National Forest or at a board meeting, he's likely with the Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew, with which he has accrued over 850 volunteer hours.



### John Kohlstedt

John served on the Superior Hiking Trail Association's Board of Directors for a total of 13 years, bringing a much-needed voice of volunteerism to the board. During his tenure, there was a tremendous amount of new trail construction and bridge building. John has been a dedicated section adopter since 1989, and as a more recent member of the Trail Committee, has provided much guidance. His meticulous attention to his section was an early inspiration for what other volunteers could do. John also led many guided hikes, particularly in winter. One notable snowshoe hike had participants sinking up to their thighs in the snow, but still loving it! His enthusiasm and welcoming spirit are as important a gift to the trail community as his expertise and dedication have been during his decades of service.



### Bill Dryborough

Whether the need is hanging one sign or flagging several miles of new trail, Bill has always been the person you could call to ask for help. And he would always say yes. Bill helped scout, flag, and GPS much of the Superior Hiking Trail in the Duluth area. He also scouted a significant reroute near Gooseberry Falls State Park - a former staff member recalls that he was the best all-around volunteer on that project. Bill also served on the Superior Hiking Trail Association board for five years, led hikes for over a decade, and has widely promoted the trail. He continues to help with events and transport gear for Hike Fest. His love for the trail and community has shone brightly through all he's done, and the Superior Hiking Trail would not be what it is today without his steady presence.

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## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE



### Duane Lawton

Duane has been a member of the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter since 2008 and served as its President for multiple years. He is currently on the national Board of Directors and serves on the Chapter Leadership Team, ensuring all trail projects are well-planned with drawings, material lists, and volunteers. Duane often uses his personal vehicle and shop to gather supplies and manufacture trail signs or structures, to which he brings a lifetime of building and engineering experience. He often hosts events and visitors at his home and attends many group hikes, contributing fun and friendliness. He also volunteers in other North Country Trail states and on the Florida Trail. His experience extends beyond building and maintenance, too: Duane has hiked the entirety of Michigan's North Country Trail.

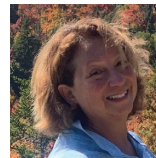


### Carol Wright

Is there anything Carol hasn't done for the Wampum Chapter? From serving as Secretary to chairing committees to her impressive outreach and fundraising efforts, Carol keeps things organized, accurate, on schedule, and moving forward. She oversees her Chapter's involvement in nearly 20 community events each year, organizing transportation, outreach materials, and more. Carol stewards volunteers, members, and trail users wonderfully by establishing personal connections via phone, email, mail, and in person. She even ensures new members are seated near long-time volunteers at Chapter meetings so everyone feels included. Her kindness, attention to detail, and true understanding of what *community* means are among the top reasons why Carol shines. Western Pennsylvania is brighter thanks to her welcoming smile and positive energy.

---

## LEADERSHIP



### JoAnn Mort

Since becoming a trail adopter after shortly "finding" the trail in 2021 and officially joining the Chief Noonday Chapter, JoAnn has become an invaluable member. Not one to idly stand by, she quickly accepted the challenge of coordinating outreach efforts, including the Chapter's participation in four parades and tabling a variety of festivals. In 2024, she accepted the role of Chapter President and started the year with aggressive goals. She participated in almost every event, from meetings to hikes to workdays. JoAnn has since stepped away from this position, as she and her husband are relocating to be closer to their daughter and grandchildren. Despite her physical absence, the improvements she made for this trail community will continue to be experienced for years to come.



VOLUNTEERS

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## LEADERSHIP

### Tom Walker



As stated by a fellow Chapter member, “Tom is one of those Presidents that will do everything if you let him.” That includes

scheduling and presiding over monthly Chapter meetings (and providing the pizza); leading hikes; covering the Treasurer position; and being an excellent liaison between NCTA staff, agency leaders, land managers, and Chapter volunteers. He is professional and knowledgeable when it comes to identifying and managing projects. He meets with stakeholders, estimates material requirements, arranges the order and delivery of said materials, and organizes the labor logistics. Tom is the primary hike coordinator, promoting the events far and wide, and was a critical part of the 2024 Celebration Committee. He wants nothing but the best for his fellow volunteers, the trail, and those using it. He has been and continues to be an exceptional leader.



### Becky Zrimsek

As current Board Chair for the Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA), Becky has traversed pandemic planning, implementation of a strategic plan,

executive director leadership transitions, and contentious project permitting. What she has tackled during these three years is not nearly as impressive as how she has handled it. She is a calm, thoughtful, and steady leader who builds bridges with everyone she meets. Becky has actually served on the SHTA Board of Directors since 2018, but her love for the trail started 30 years ago, as a hiker. Despite her busy professional life, she is generous with her time and expertise, and serves on multiple committees. As her Board Chair tenure comes to its end, Becky leaves a legacy of professionalism and positivity.

---

## BLUE BLAZES BENEFACTOR

### Patsy (Pat) Allen

Pat joined the NCTA in 1983 and she hasn't missed an annual gift since. Her love for this trail has literally filled books: In 1989, she co-authored *Backpacking in Michigan*, in which the North Country Trail is frequently mentioned. She also penned the first NCTA *Volunteer Guide* in 1984. Pat was the Board of Directors Secretary for many years and served as part-time Executive Director from 1993-1996. Former North Country Trail Superintendent Tom Gilbert credits\* her with securing the trail's first dedicated federal funding in 1990. She worked tirelessly with her local congressman to establish a National Park Service office in West Michigan, affording Tom the opportunity to hire staff. She is a member of the NCTA's major giving program, the Founders Circle, as well as its Legacy Society, which will continue her support in perpetuity through an endowment. Pat's vision contributes to the Association's healthy financial future, gives others a chance to experience the trail, and celebrates the hard work of volunteers.



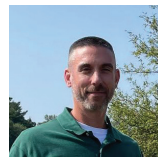
### Drs. William + Susan Smith

Four years ago, the Wampum Chapter sought to establish a bridge repair and replacement fund. The Smiths answered

that call with a gift; they provided the requested funding in its entirety. In the three years since, they have made identical gifts to keep the fund secure. When trail construction requires heavy machinery, the Smiths offer use of their bulldozer, front-end loader, and heavy-duty trailer, as well as the cost of fuel. This equipment is invaluable during projects such as trailhead parking lot construction and bridge building. Without their generosity, many trail bridges in Western Pennsylvania would be years away from the maintenance they need to provide hikers a safe and enjoyable experience.

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## FRIEND OF THE TRAIL



### Jon Harris

The North Country Trail will eventually pass through nearly 50 miles of the Douglas County Forest in Wisconsin. Already, 12 miles are on the ground:

approved and supported by Jon, Douglas County Forest (DCF) Administrator. His unwavering support has been instrumental for the Brule-St. Croix Chapter and the Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew. For nearly 25 years, he has generously allowed both crews to store project materials at a large DCF storage yard that is in a secure and centralized location. He has initiated and/or partnered with the NCTA and others to secure property for the trail - one of which provides over five miles for the trail and protects the Nemadji River watershed.

\*To hear the StoryCorps recording referenced, visit: [northcountrytrail.org/storycorps](http://northcountrytrail.org/storycorps).

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## FRIEND OF THE TRAIL



### Kathy Kline

Kathy is now retired from her role as Director of the North Trails Public Library, which is less than a mile from the trail in West Sunbury, Pennsylvania. But before she stepped down, when the Butler County Chapter turned to her library for help with outreach, Kathy was welcoming and enthusiastic. During the pandemic, the Chapter hosted two virtual hikes: Participants registered through the library, used the trail over a three-day period, and submitted their photos to the library for posting on social media. Hikers could then pick up an award packet from the library. Nearly 80 hikers participated in total. As the Chapter returned to gathering in-person, the library became a hub for events and even hosted a Chapter banner on the side of the building. Inside is a corner dedicated to the trail, and past issues of the *North Star* can be found in the periodical section. This alliance created fantastic momentum and refreshed the Chapter's energy, and Kathy continues to serve on the Outreach Committee.

### Katie LeMoine

Katie has worked with Wisconsin's Chequamegon Chapter for at least seven years as the primary liaison with the U.S. Forest Service. She is always ready to roll up her sleeves alongside volunteers, whether she's manning one end of a two-person saw, digging a new latrine, or helping move materials by snowmobile. She led volunteers from a local college on special workdays in the Rainbow Lake Wilderness, served as a chainsaw instructor, and groomed parts of the trail for cross-country skiers. She and her son Mitchell walked a shelter dog named Stoney during the Chapter's *Tails on the Trail* event in 2023. Katie is an effective advocate for the trail and is enthusiastic about its upkeep.



### Mitch Lundeen

Mitch is the supervisor of the Becker County Natural Resources Management Department in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. His department manages 75,000 acres,

through which much of the Laurentian Lakes Chapter's trail segment runs. He manages this land in an environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable manner. Thanks to his advocacy, his department purchased and donated trail maintenance equipment for the Chapter, and his staff continue to store and maintain it. Both in-person and contractually, he ensures logging companies provide the trail with a maximum-extent buffer zone while harvesting timber. Mitch is an unwavering champion of the Chapter and the trail in Minnesota.

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## FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

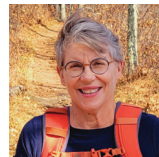


### Peter Wilson

Even before Peter became mayor of Lisbon, Ohio, he recognized the economic value of trails. Lisbon is fortunate to host both the North Country Trail and the Greenway Bike Trail. Peter's first-term election to office in 2020 coincided with the Wampum Chapter's responsibilities expanding into Ohio. He became quickly acquainted and involved. He never fails to visit the Chapter's booth at events or assist in landowner relations efforts. He actively promotes Lisbon as an official NCTA Trail Town and has brought tremendous awareness to the trail in Eastern Ohio.

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## VANGUARD



### Kathy DeCoster

It's impossible to name one person that made unit status possible for the North Country Trail, but Kathy was particularly critical. As Vice President for Federal Affairs at the Trust for Public Land, she was instrumental in getting the Land and Water Conservation Fund reauthorized and fully funded. Once she retired, she served as Interim Policy Director at the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) and served on the NCTA Advocacy Committee. Kathy drafted a strategy that identified key stakeholders; she attended every meeting and skillfully helped navigate the politics. Her experience with federal policy-making was indispensable, and she is one reason the trail is now a unit of the National Park System.

### Sydney Scott

While Senator Tammy Baldwin's leadership was instrumental in achieving unit status for the trail in 2023, it's the senator's staff that are often the unsung heroes. When faced with the likelihood that the legislation would not be successful that term, Sydney jumped into action. As Senator Baldwin's Legislative Assistant, she spent the next nine months developing messaging and collaborating with other staff to push for progress and get clear answers. Unit status was secured that December. Sydney's refusal to give up and insistence that the National Park Service be held accountable are two reasons the trail is now a unit of the National Park System.



## OUTSTANDING PRIVATE LANDOWNER

### Paul + Shirley Berg



The Berg Family granted an easement for 3.4 miles of trail on their land in 2015. They also authorized a campsite and a

trailhead to be constructed. Because it offers a gorgeous overlook of the Sheyenne River, as well as a diverse landscape, this trail segment is listed as one of the Dakota Prairie Chapter's premier hikes. Paul and Shirley's land is still a working cattle ranch, yet the family has been so accommodating and understanding of hikers. They are generous and hospitable, and have shown a consistent willingness to collaborate with the NCTA to ensure the sustainability and accessibility of the trail. The Bergs are a shining example of the vital role private landowners play in the success of the North Country Trail.



### William Lynch + Barbara Manger

The Peter Wolfe Chapter contacted the Manger-Lynch Family in the early 2000s, in an attempt to move the trail off the busy

US-41 highway in the Western Upper Peninsula. Not only did they say yes, but in 2022, they donated a permanent trail easement for this important section. Bill and Barbara also helped volunteers build a shelter here in memory of their two late sons, Matt and Luke, and they offer financial support through their family foundation. Bill and Barbara believe in the importance of conservation and recreation, and in leaving the world a better place for the next generation. Their actions have absolutely reflected those beliefs.



### Russell + Elizabeth Porterfield

In 2018, the Porterfields bought property in Western Pennsylvania that was already home to the trail. They became involved

members of the Wampum Chapter soon afterward. They allow volunteers use of their driveway, report maintenance issues, and even help clear downed trees from the trail. They ensure hiker safety by ensuring signage for hunting seasons. In 2022, development threatened the trail on an adjacent piece of property. The Porterfields purchased that land, eliminating the possibility of losing a mile and a half of trail to roadwalk.

## SWEEP



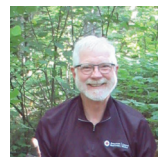
### Tim Bauer

Tim is a dedicated outdoorsman who hikes and rides a bike year-round in all types of weather (even North Dakota and Minnesota winters). Nearly a decade ago, one of his first volunteer jobs was working on a two-mile segment that was notoriously difficult to mow. This work eventually blossomed into Tim caring for a major segment of the 31 miles through the Sheyenne National Grassland. He mows it several times each summer, and recruits and manages additional volunteers. He participates in or manages a variety of other projects too, including stocking water caches, updating signage, and trail protection efforts. He is a leader not only for the Dakota Prairie Chapter, but the trail community statewide.



### Nancy Krefl

Nancy's organizational skills shine brightly in her roles as both Treasurer and Trail Crew Coordinator for the Marquette Area Chapter. She plans and maintains the budget, manages schedules, oversees communications, and reports volunteer hours. She invested countless hours updating the Chapter's online guides for its 30+ trail segments, complete with water sources, camping opportunities, and points of interest. She went the extra mile (literally) by traveling back roads to track the route with GPS, helping hikers navigate to remote trailheads. As if that isn't enough, Nancy is a trail adopter and joins trail crew expeditions. She helps plan monthly outreach hikes, as well as guiding the "Softies" each spring and fall, helping the group achieve their goal of completing their trek across Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Her behind-the-scenes work is significantly enhancing the enjoyment, protection, and promotion of the trail.



### Will Nordmark

Several years ago, the Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) proposed a new program: Trail Stewardship Teams. Will, who was already a campsite adopter, offered to be one of the first team leaders. Twice a year since then, he has recruited, organized, and led a group of up to 20 people to maintain 13 miles of trail and three campsites. Two years ago, he also volunteered to be Camp Cook, preparing meals for dozens of volunteers during multi-day projects. His cheerful presence makes others feel welcomed and appreciated for their service. Regardless of the hat he's wearing, Will builds community by bringing folks together and reminding them of their importance. He uses his volunteer efforts to support theirs.

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## BOOTS ON THE TRAIL



### Pat Wilson

Most of the Chief Noonday Chapter's hikes take place on its off-road segments. Pat lives over 40 miles away from those, in a region dominated by roadwalks. Here, she has made it her mission to introduce her neighbors to the trail. Pat independently organizes hikes for residents in and around Albion, Michigan - sometimes leading as many as 25 participants at a time. Thanks to her, there is increased and improved awareness of the North Country Trail in the many small towns it traverses in Southern Michigan.

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## OUTREACH



### Lisa Bertolasio

Lisa serves on the Wampum Chapter's Hiking Committee and Landowner Relations Committee; is the Trail Adopter Coordinator; and the Corresponding

Secretary. She gives presentations, tables events, and helps prioritize trail projects. She is the go-to volunteer when the need arises for fresh and creative ideas. Lisa has organized three ladies' hikes in the past year and connected with several establishments in trail towns to host the events. She created a new Chapter hike challenge this year, specifically geared toward drawing volunteers to trail maintenance events and growing membership. It was her idea to send landowners "thank you" notes when Chapter hikes utilized their land. She also sends sympathy and "get well soon" notes to members. Lisa embodies the spirit of the North Country Trail with a positive attitude, empathy, and dedication.



### Rennae Gruchalla

Rennae is the Dakota Prairie Chapter Vice President and Hiking/Outreach Coordinator, and organizes a wide variety of events each year to promote the trail.

She enlists volunteers to lead monthly hikes and leads many herself, and often provides creative options such as the *Hike Your Own Hike* event, *Hike Every Mile*, and the *North Dakota Challenge*. She kickstarted the *Three Chapter Celebration*: a three-day event focused on hiking different sections of the North Country Trail in North Dakota. That event is now in its third year. She coordinated publicity for the *Hike Every Mile* event, resulting in widespread radio, television, and newspaper coverage. Rennae has great vision for the big picture, but also ensures each individual is addressed at Chapter hikes. She has an outgoing personality, is partnership driven, and is a major player in the growth of the Dakota Prairie Chapter.

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## OUTREACH



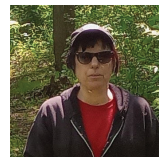
### Felicia Hokenstad

Felicia was the NCTA's Next Generation Coalition intern for several years. She created materials that were the building blocks of the program, built a social

media presence for it, and planned and led an in-person summit. She has served in leadership roles with both the Marquette Area Chapter in Michigan and the Border Route Trail Association in Minnesota, and is currently involved in the national Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Advocacy committees. She attended the annual Hike the Hill event in Washington DC in 2023. While on her Chapter board, she took an emotional risk in challenging others who were unknowingly discounting the value of input from younger people. In doing so, she helped the board take a big step in paying attention to DEI efforts. Felicia is a powerful voice for the Next Gen community and the National Trails System as a whole.

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## COMMUNICATOR



### Robyn Gallimore-Jones

Robyn has worked in graphic design for over 20 years and the Wampum Chapter has relied on her creativity since 2021. She designed the Chapter

hiking patch, a multitude of flyers for events, and new shirts for trail maintainers. She creates ads for local publications - one of which appeared in a traveler's guide that reached approximately 30,000 people in Ohio. Robyn is also a trail adopter and frequently attends outreach events. Her designs are always professional, and she does a wonderful job positively representing her fellow volunteers and the North Country Trail.



### Eric Longman

It seems as though every single day Eric is communicating with someone about the North Country Trail, from Chief Noonday Chapter members to hikers to

city officials to NCTA staff. If a tree is down, he is among the first to organize a team to take care of it. When newsworthy information arises, he shares it with his fellow members and volunteers. When someone has gone out of their way to do something good, Eric recognizes them. As Chapter Vice President, he has a wonderful grasp on broader goals, yet his attention to detail and prioritization of communication are truly what are helping advance the Chapter. The trail is absolutely better known and better cared for in Southern Michigan thanks to Eric's leadership and friendly nature.



VOLUNTEERS

## TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Peter Bennett



Peter is an incredibly dedicated trail maintainer and sawyer, having taken on many responsibilities

beyond caring for his own adopted section. In fact, he is responsible for training and coordinating all 19 trail adopters for the Spirit of the Woods Chapter. Pete spends countless hours mowing a majority of the Chapter's 80 trail miles. Should that mower need repair, he takes it upon himself to either fix it, or pay for the parts and service from his own pocket. Several times a year, he coordinates trail project priorities and approvals with the U.S. Forest Service, then recruits volunteers to help complete the work. Pete is an impressive trail ambassador, knowledgeable mentor, and all-around inspiring volunteer.



### Tammy + Tim Bohan

Since the birth of the Central Flyway Chapter in 2021, Tim and Tammy have been essential volunteers in the routing, signing, and mowing of the 12 miles

of trail through the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge. They travel 65 miles several times a year to mow this challenging section, weaving around wetlands and woods, and taking care in bird nesting areas. They have taken the initiative to maintain the mowers and purchase fuel at their own expense. When the Chapter received a riding brush mower last year, Tim was among the first volunteers to participate in the equipment training. Tammy and Tim are key reasons the Chapter has experienced success in hosting guided hikes in this section, and they continue to be an essential part of this team



### Jim Charvat

Nearly 20 years ago, Jim saw blue blazes along a trail and got curious. He has been hiking and maintaining it ever since. Since 2010, he has managed the

Western Michigan Chapter's tool trailer, keeping the equipment clean, sharp, and serviced. He also delivers these tools to worksites and usually stays to work alongside the crew. Jim is always focused on sustainable maintenance and making the trail easier to hike. To directly quote him: "If it's maintained well and easy to use, more individuals, families, and groups will want to hike and enjoy all the NCT has to offer."

## TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Jim Lindberg



Jim's first North Country Trail experience was a Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew project in 2019. Since then, he has participated in nine week-long

trail building trips, accumulating nearly 500 volunteer hours. Alongside the Brule-St. Croix Chapter, he helped build a 125-foot puncheon at the MacQuarrie Wetlands, reconstructed the kiosk at Lucius Woods County Park, and helped build the new State Line Trailhead kiosk. Frequently, he extends his trips to assist with the design of new segments. For nearly a decade now, Jim has hiked a remote section southwest of Solon Springs, at least twice each year, to check for maintenance needs. Though he is not the official adopter of this segment, he purchases materials and repairs rotted or damaged puncheon here.



### Jim + Marcia Mellen

Jim and Marcia Mellen were among the Chief Noonday Chapter's very first Trail Adopters. They have faithfully tended to their 1.6-mile section in Yankee Springs

Recreation Area for a quarter of a century. The trail here is mostly forested, with rolling hills, a wetland, a small lake, and a clear creek. It's popular, scenic, and impossible to get lost here, as Jim and Marcia work hard to keep it freshly blazed. They maintain a footbridge and a boardwalk, and as a certified sawyer and swamper team, they make short work of any fallen trees. While much of their work is behind the scenes, Marcia also leads hikes and attends outreach events. The North Country Trail is better for their devotion to stewardship.

## TRAIL BUILDER

### Pete Bock



Pete has maintained a three-mile segment for the Brule-St. Croix Chapter for at least nine years, and helps maintain an adjacent five-mile section.

Pete has also contributed over 500 volunteer hours on Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew projects. He has spent weeks building miles of trail, dozens of feet of puncheon, and numerous bridges of varying sizes all across Northern Wisconsin. Off-trail, Pete regularly attends Chapter meetings, providing valuable input and genuine camaraderie.

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## TRAIL BUILDER



### Steve Hatting

Steve has been a Trail Coordinator for the Western Michigan Chapter in Newaygo County for many, many years. He plans numerous work days each year, ensuring

the trail has solid tread, and that boardwalks and bridges are keeping hikers' feet high and dry. His planning skills and ability to connect with people have built a loyal and committed trail crew. When he's not on the trail, he serves on the Chapter board with a calm demeanor and invaluable wisdom.



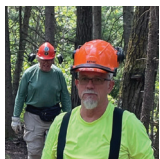
### Eric Maturi

Eric has invested over 1,000 hours helping the Arrowhead Chapter advance a major reroute project in Northern Minnesota.

He personally cleared almost the entire

18-mile trail corridor, sometimes working alone in remote areas during the winter but often, working alongside his father, Jon. He was instrumental in the construction of a 42-foot bridge and 200-foot puncheon last fall.

On the puncheon project, he carried over one hundred 12-foot timbers to the trail. He worked tirelessly on a five-mile urban signage project in 2023. Eric also serves on the Chapter's Trail Committee, planning future routes, communicating with landowners, and scouting and flagging. He can always be counted on to lend a hand to advance the trail.



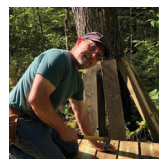
### Brad Stewart

Brad joined a Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew outing in 2019 and took off like a racehorse. He has participated in 15 week-long trail building trips, accumulating

nearly 750 volunteer hours. In 2024, with mentorship and encouragement from Bill Menke, he stepped into the role of Crew Leader. All of this work for Wisconsin, yet Brad actually lives in Michigan, where he is also involved with the Superior Shoreline and Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapters. His distance from Wisconsin does not diminish his commitment, though - Brad has already scheduled six week-long Rovers outings for 2024. He is impressively willing to continue learning new skills and assume leadership when called upon.

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## TRAIL BUILDER



### John Texter

Last year, John reached the milestone of 2,500 volunteer hours for the North Country Trail. Since 2017, he has been the Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter's

Roving Crew Leader and he never misses a beat. From everyday maintenance to large-scale trail improvements, John is almost always involved. He meets with agencies and stakeholders, estimates required materials, arranges logistics for volunteers, and coordinates youth corps. The Naomikong project is one of many the Chapter was able to complete thanks to John's expertise. Beyond the intensive building of puncheon, turnpike, steps, and retaining walls, it was the level of detail he put into the work that really made it shine. Simply put, John is a gold-star example of a trail builder.

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## RISING STAR



### Cheyenne Williams

From a young age, Cheyenne has wanted to become a Park Ranger for the National Park Service. A variety of family trips to national parks and monuments has

allowed her to speak with rangers about this career path, further solidifying her vision. She has hiked several sections of the North Country Trail near Lake Superior, and her family helps maintain the trail. Cheyenne herself has taken the lead for her family's trail adoption. She provides the Superior Shoreline Chapter with updates and work reports, and takes charge of reporting her volunteer hours. Cheyenne is enrolled for dual credit at Manistique High School and Bay College, with plans to attend Lake Superior State University to pursue a degree in Parks and Recreation.



VOLUNTEERS

# Leaving a Legacy

*The following volunteers have since passed away, but their legacy lives on in both the trail and their communities.*

## Betsy Duede

BY MIKE SCHAEFFER

We recently lost Betsy Duede, one of our very dear, long-time members. Despite battling cancer for several years, she remained an active member. Betsy joined in the early days of our Chapter's existence, when we were known as the Grand Traverse Hiking Club. She adopted the Muncie Lakes Pathway section and served there for almost 30 years.

In our Chapter's early days, most of our members didn't really know where to find the trail. Betsy went out exploring and located many access points. She then printed out a list of

trailheads with driving directions, so hikers could easily access the trail. This enabled our members to get out on the trail more often.

She became our Adopt-a-Trail Coordinator in 2005 and handled this job for many years. Whenever adopters moved away, retired, or otherwise stepped down, Betsy sought out new ones and almost always succeeded. On the rare occasions she wasn't able to find a replacement, she and her husband Steve adopted the open section themselves.

As recently as last October, Betsy helped us construct a short reroute on the Muncie Lakes Pathway that



Photo provided by  
Mike Schaeffer

removed a couple of very difficult and dangerous spots for skiing. Last spring, we hosted a memorial hike there for her. Despite the rain, 40 people attended - an indication of how much she meant to all of us.

## Al Larmann Jr.

BY JACK MILLER

A number of years ago, when Al Larmann was only in his early 90s, a bunch of Central New York Chapter volunteers and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) officials were making small talk after a meeting. Al stepped away to the restroom and someone remarked how Al was still plugging away at North Country Trail projects. One of the DEC guys, who knew Al well, laughed and said, "Aw, Al will outlive us all." Of course, this was not to be. The North Country Trail Association and its Central New York Chapter lost a long-time pillar with Al's passing away last fall, after a couple of years of declining health.

Al was a founding member of the Central New York Chapter, after being brought into its formation around 1996 by his wife and fellow NCTA stalwart, Mary Kunzler-Larmann. He stepped up to lead the Chapter as its second President and never slowed

down in Chapter leadership, even after relinquishing the gavel four years later. His mastery of the trail infrastructure building process was critical to the Chapter's successful construction of an astounding amount of trail within its first decade. Bridges and stairways were the result of his grantsmanship, engineering design ability, and negotiating chops with public and private landowners. A winning personality combined with a sharp mind were instrumental in the last of these. Al was a tough guy to say "no" to. During this time, he also produced a first-rate Chapter newsletter, accomplished by attending (and usually photographing) virtually every Chapter event.

On the national level, Al served on the NCTA Board of Directors for as long as allowed. He focused on advocacy, for which he had a natural talent. He made numerous trips to Capitol Hill for the annual Hike the Hill appropriations campaign, and he made many more to local



Photo provided by  
Joan Young

congressional, New York State, county, and town offices, advocating for both national and local NCTA issues. In 2009, he received an NCTA Lifetime Achievement Award, though he didn't slow down for the better part of another decade. He was also the first recipient of the National Park Service's award for 10,000 volunteer hours for the North Country National Scenic Trail. Al is remembered and missed not only for his accomplishments, but for his compassion for the folks with whom he worked.



## Glenn Oster

BY JOAN YOUNG

Glenn, who spent most of his life in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, died at age 98 on December 31, 2023. He was a lifetime member of the North Country Trail Association. He was a World War II veteran and a businessman, working with various companies in the Pittsburgh area, and receiving national recognition for his work.

He served for eight years on the NCTA Board of Directors, beginning around 1985. Early in the history of the NCTA, one goal was to have board members from organizations with similar missions. Glenn represented American Youth Hostels (AYH). He wrote an early guidebook to hiking through Pennsylvania, listing possible places to stay. The trail was being

developed, and the ever-present problem in Pennsylvania has been to camp legally, since the trail passes through many State Game Lands where camping is not allowed.

Glenn was also an avid adventurer. He hiked thousands of miles in Pennsylvania and Ohio, and was the second person to receive the Pennsylvania Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources' Hiking Award. He received all five hiking awards given by the Keystone Trails Association. He taught backpacking classes and completed a hike of the Appalachian Trail at age 73. He bicycled thousands of miles after retirement. A serious injury slowed him down at age 82, so he switched to an adult tricycle and rode another 22,000 miles.

Jim Ritchie of Pennsylvania said, "My very first organized group hike was led by a guy named Glenn Oster. We did a 10-mile hike on the Baker Trail - a rough, primitive, hilly trail in Western PA. I'd have to say Glenn hiked the soles off my boots."

Joyce Appel and Paul Henry, also of Pennsylvania, note his leadership (along with Bob Tait) in forming the state's four NCTA Chapters. Paul said, "We met Glenn in the early 1990s through the activities program of the AYH. We hiked, backpacked, and did trail work during that time. When I first heard about the North Country Trail, the first person I asked was Glenn."

Joyce adds, "I sum up Glenn Oster as an 'inspiration to all who knew and loved him in Pennsylvania.'"

## 10,000 Hours of Dedication

BY NIC LOISEAU, NPS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER



Photo provided by  
Connie Julien

In 1989, Connie Julien's unwavering dedication to the North Country Trail began. She joined the North Country Trail Association and has cherished that membership ever since, proudly displaying her first membership card in a frame on the wall of her home office.

As her sons left for college, Connie found the time to dedicate

herself to trail work. For 15 years, she has been an invaluable volunteer, contributing her talents and passion to the nation's longest national scenic trail. Connie has served as a trail maintainer, builder, and promoter. Within Michigan's Peter Wolfe Chapter, she took on roles as Trail Maintenance and Adopter Coordinator and Webmaster, and she pioneered the Chapter's Facebook page. When Connie stepped into the role of Chapter President, she set her sights on a goal: Finish rerouting the trail off nearly 14 miles of a busy road - a project that began in 2009. In 2023, the reroute was opened to the public. What an achievement!

When asked: "What is your favorite thing about volunteering for the NCT?" Connie shared that it's "working on the trail with a wonderful group of volunteers, and knowing we helped the many hikers on their walk across the Peter Wolfe Chapter. The actual work on the trail gives me a real sense of accomplishment at the end of each day on the trail - sometimes in perfect weather, sometimes in the rain or blistering heat, or even in the snow! I love it all!"

It was with immense honor for North Country National Scenic Trail staff to present Connie with the 10,000-hour award at the 2024 Celebration event. We are deeply grateful for her love and dedication to the North Country Trail, and for generously sharing her time and energy. On behalf of the National Park Service, thank you, Connie!



Photo by  
Connie Julien



EVENTS

# 2024 Celebration Recap

## Reflections

BY TOM WALKER, PRESIDENT, HIAWATHA SHORE-TO-SHORE CHAPTER



At the 2024 Celebration, we invited you to experience the community of Saint Ignace, along with the beauty, local culture and history of the Eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan (EUP). With the Little Bear Arena as our hub, we gathered for wonderful meals, workshops, and seminars. We hiked near and far across the EUP, were inspired by awards and speakers, and relaxed and made connections with North Country Trail enthusiasts from across the nation.

Over a year of planning and

preparation culminated in a marvelous time of celebration. Local Chapter volunteers worked hand-in-hand with the NCTA staff to bring everything together, choosing the venue, planning the hikes, finding hike leaders, choosing a caterer and the menu, transportation, keynote speaker, and workshop/seminar speakers. Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter volunteers also worked very hard to prepare the trail and to find local sponsors. All of that preparation and hard work helped the Celebration be a great Celebration. The City of Saint Ignace even provided fireworks on Saturday night after the NCTA Olympics to close out the Celebration!

A view of the Mackinac Bridge from the historic Lakeside Cemetery at the south end of St. Ignace. We hiked along this route during one of the city tour hikes.

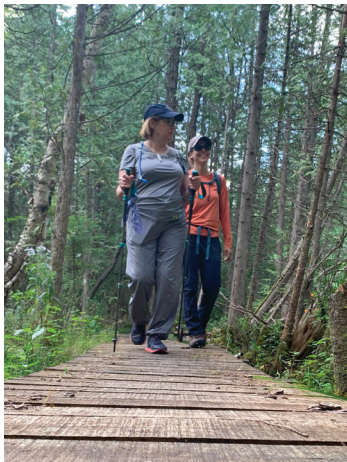
**Photo by**  
Tom Moberg

“  
**I loved the hikes. I loved meeting new people and some that I’ve met before. I’m stoked to become an advocate for the trail.”**

— JACK BURKLUND, MINNESOTA

“  
**This was my second Celebration. I met many great, committed, and motivated folks last year and continued to build these friendships at this year’s event. It’s inspiring to me, listening to people’s stories and sharing the love of our trail!”**

— JANET BALL, PENNSYLVANIA



Left: Evelyn Howell and Nic Loiseau on a hike.

Above: Lower Tahquamenon Falls.

**Photo by**  
Kate Lemon



Far left: A group of NCTA board members.

**Photo by**  
Nancy Brozek



Left: Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore President Tom Walker (left) with his daughter Erin. Tom was an extraordinary leader of this year's Celebration Committee.

**Photo by**  
Nancy Brozek



Hikers on the footbridge across the Two Hearted River.

**Photo by**  
Eric Baron



Hikers at the Niagara Escarpment.

**Photo by**  
Kate Lemon



A reroute project during the trail construction workshop.

**Photo by**  
Kenny Wawczyk

“This was my first Celebration and let me tell you: the bar has been set high! My fondest memory was having the opportunity to contribute to trail preparation beforehand. I discovered that I enjoy trail maintenance! Participating in the monthly work hikes as a group in June, July, and August also afforded me the opportunity to include my son. He is now hooked on trail maintenance, as well. I am very grateful to the Chapter and the NCTA as a whole for the experience.”

—Judy Fox, Michigan

“I really enjoyed hearing from Justin with the U.S. Forest Service about the suspension bridge near the Naomikong Overlook, built in partnership with the Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter. It's great to see those partnerships in action!”

—Heather Ertle, NCTA Database and Membership Administrator

“The most profound and rewarding part of the experience is the sense of belonging that I feel to be part of this incredible trail community spread out across eight northern border states. I discovered the great trail state of Michigan and intend to return often to explore more of that North Country Trail there.”

—Kevin Russell, Vermont

*Read more of Kevin's reflections at his blog [alongthemillbrook.com](http://alongthemillbrook.com).*

“

**Helping build a reroute was so awesome. I learned so many things that day and it was great getting to know the other volunteers.”**

— MARLENA O'CONNELL,  
TRAIL PLANNER, NATIONAL  
PARK SERVICE



EVENTS

**Photo by**  
Bill Courtois

Far right:  
NCTA staff  
members (left  
to right): Val  
Bader, Heather  
Ertle, Lauren  
Kennedy-Little,  
Paul Gagnon,  
Nancy Brozek,  
and Matt  
Rowbotham.



“I enjoyed spending time with people who have common interests and are passionate about the North Country Trail. It was great to connect in person with those I’ve only worked with virtually, plus make new friendships. I was thrilled to explore two new sections of trail in the Eastern UP - both are within five miles of my family cottage and it was a treat to hike them. I was impressed by how well everything was planned, coordinated, and managed by the NCTA staff. They did a great job!”

—Cheryl McGrath, Michigan

“I loved being able to introduce hikers from out-of-town to some of the most beautiful trails in my home state, as well as sharing stories while on the trail. On the final evening of Celebration, one of the hikers came looking for me to say how much he enjoyed the hike and our conversation. He was from North Dakota, and was compelled to introduce me to his wife so I could share a bit about our trail conversation with her. I was really touched by that gesture, and I’ll carry their kind words with me on the trail.”

—April Willbur, Michigan

“

**I enjoy meeting others with the same passion for hiking and love of the outdoors. I enjoyed being a Michigander for a week.”**

— DEB FLEISHMAN, IOWA

“

**Reconnecting with members I have met at past Celebrations [made it feel] like a family reunion! Also, our Chief Noonday Chapter had many new members in attendance I had not yet met. A great way to connect on hikes, at meals, and on the long bus rides.”**

— JANE NORTON, MICHIGAN



Keynote speaker Stacy Bare, Executive Director, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks.

**Photo by**  
Val Bader



Euchre tournament participants.

**Photo by**  
Kate Lemon

Top: Celebration Headquarters: Little Bear Arena

**Photo by**  
Kate Lemon



Top: Patrick Wawsczyk (left) practices with Bob Courtois for the washers tournament.

**Photo by**  
Nancy Brozek

Hike leaders Bill Wawsczyk (left) and Bob Courtois ensure all participants are accounted for.

**Photo by**  
Matt Rowbotham

Marc, a retired baker from Mackinac Island, created a custom granola for Celebration attendees with ingredients derived from each of the eight NCT states.

**Photo by**  
Kate Lemon

Top: Dan Dueweke presents the *After the Storm* workshop.

**Photo by**  
Bill Courtois

“

I caught a glimpse of Ken Gackler and his grandson, while Ken was pointing at a map and talking about the trail. It touched my heart to see that, whatever their conversation was.”

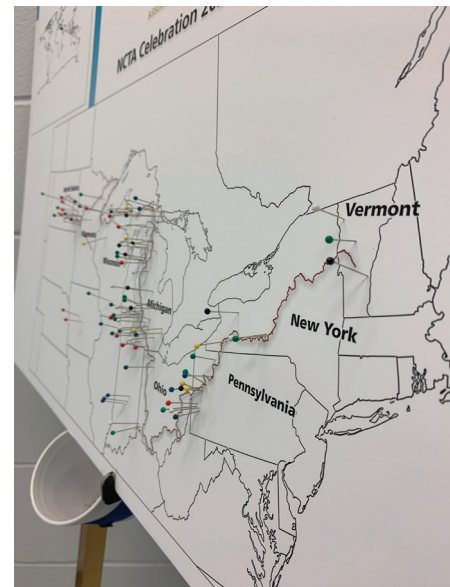
— ALISON SANCHEZ, NCTA ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

*Ken Gackler is one of the original members of the NCTA: Member #2, to be exact.*

“

Didn't think I could do a 5.5-mile hike, but with a group, it seems easier or motivates you to keep going.”

— MICKEY BURNS, MICHIGAN



Attendees represented 12 states and even multiple countries.

“The keynote speaker on Friday evening was very good. A hike with friends on Saturday was excellent, with beautiful terrain and a surface of pine needles and leaves most of the way. Everyone was so friendly whether they knew me or not.”  
—Gail Rogne, North Dakota

“This was our second Celebration. We enjoyed the hikes through the beautiful Michigan forests - so very different from the wide-open prairies and vistas of North Dakota!”  
—Glee Mayer and Mark Zimmerman, North Dakota



EVENTS



Photo by  
Matt Davis

Right: Blazing during the trail construction workshop.

Photo by  
Kenny Wawsczyk

“  
Nothing beats  
hiking along the  
shore of Lake  
Superior. She is  
magnificent.”

— SAGE HEGDAL,  
MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

“  
Did things not  
go exactly as  
planned? Yes. Did  
one bus get stuck  
and another blow  
a tire? Yes. Did we  
lose a person on  
a group hike? No.  
So overall, a huge  
success!”

— KENNY WAWSCZYK,  
NCTA REGIONAL TRAIL  
COORDINATOR



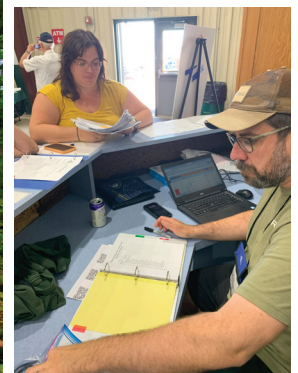
Euchre  
tournament  
participants.

Photo by  
Kate Lemon



The ingenuity of  
our volunteers  
saved the day  
when this hiker  
transport got  
stuck in deep  
sand.

Photo by  
Matt Davis



Top: Tom Gilbert (left)  
and Ken Gackler. Tom  
was the first [NPS]  
Superintendent for the  
trail, and Ken is Member  
#2 of the NCTA.

Photo by  
Kate Lemon

Above: NCTA staff  
Val Bader (left) and  
Matt Rowbotham lead  
logistics for the event's  
hike transportation.

Photo by  
Kate Lemon



Photo by  
Matt Davis

“I had the unique experience of being sort of an outsider looking in, with my immobility. When Celebration was in motion, I could watch both NCTA staff and Chapter members mesh together, working so well side-by-side. When mishaps happened (e.g. one bus got a flat tire, another got stuck in the sand), I watched these people put their heads together, figuring it out as the Celebration continued hiking along smoothly. Job well done.”

—Merri Carol Wozniak, Michigan

# Sponsor Spotlight: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

BY HEATHER JOHNSON DUROCHER, TRAILS AND RESOURCES WRITER AND EDITOR, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)



Heather Johnson Durocher of the DNR stands on the bridge at the Mouth of the Two Hearted River State Forest Campground. A 9.5-mile hike that was part of 2024 Celebration began on a section of the NCT that runs through this rustic campground.

**Photo provided by**  
Heather Durocher

It's mid-morning. The savory smells of sizzling bacon and campfire coffee are lingering in the air as my campground neighbors sit at picnic tables finishing their breakfasts. I realize I'd better get moving before the day's forecasted humidity and full sun make my planned adventure unbearable.

Thankfully, I'm heading from my tent site to shaded trails for a three-mile run. I'm eager to explore this new-to-me area; this will be my first time exploring the wooded dirt path winding through Straits State Park in Michigan's Eastern Upper Peninsula (UP).

These trails, I've recently learned, are not only routes crisscrossing this picturesque state park at the Straits of Mackinac in St. Ignace. They're also part of the North Country National Scenic Trail, which spans 4,800 miles across eight states.

Another fun fact I've come to know about this trail: Michigan is home to 1,200 of those miles, which travel through state game areas, forests, and parks. The state is also home to 12 North Country Trail Association (NCTA) Chapters, all led by volunteers.

"Michigan holds more miles than any of the eight states the trail traverses," said Kenny Wawsczyk, NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator.

Wawsczyk and his NCTA teammates are also here in the Eastern UP during this long weekend in late-August, taking part in the Association's annual Celebration event. I've come here with several of my Michigan DNR colleagues to learn more about this national scenic trail in this part of Michigan. We're connecting with, and recognizing, the hundreds of volunteers who help maintain thousands of miles of the North Country Trail, throughout Michigan and in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

Over these four days, we'll take part in educational sessions — I'm particularly excited about one on hammock camping along the trail — and we'll hear from several special speakers during our nightly dinners. Mostly, we're hopping onto charter and school buses first thing in the mornings, and traveling to a variety of North Country Trail segments.

But first, this morning's plan is to discover what awaits on the path strewn with roots and pine needles, not far from my campsite.

## Power of Partnerships

The North Country National Scenic Trail is America's longest national scenic trail. At almost 5,000 miles, it's nearly longer than the Appalachian and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails combined. The National Park Service and its nonprofit partner, the North Country Trail Association, alongside hundreds of volunteers and dozens of partner organizations (including the Michigan DNR) strive to improve the trail so hikers have the best experience possible.

"Of these many partnerships, the Michigan DNR always stands out as a shining example of what partnership is meant to be," said Andrea Ketchmark, NCTA Executive Director. "DNR staff are innovative in their approach to projects and always look for opportunities to elevate the good work being done in the field. It's truly an honor to work alongside them to make the North Country Trail the best it can be."

## Choosing Your Own Adventure

Hikers on the North Country Trail are treated to a wide variety of landscapes, including wilderness, prairie, wetlands, mountains, farmland, and urban communities. Last year, 309 hikes were led by NCTA volunteers, with



PARTNERSHIP

over 6,100 total participants.

“The North Country National Scenic Trail is unique in that it can provide an experience for anyone, from long-distance hikers to day users,” said Wawsczyk. “And you don’t have to

consider yourself a hiker to use the trail either. You can follow paved pathways, sidewalks through town, a natural-surface path through the woods adjacent to a city or in a super remote area away from civilization. Regardless, you’re hiking the North Country Trail, choosing your own adventure.”

Here in Michigan, a large portion of the trail is also known as the hiking route of the state’s Iron Belle Trail, which includes two routes - one for cycling, another for hiking – and totals more than 2,000 miles of trail between Belle Isle Park in Detroit and Ironwood in the Western UP. It is the longest state-designated trail in the nation.

“The DNR is proud to work alongside the North Country Trail Association in caring for these many miles of trails that cross both peninsulas and the Mackinac Bridge,” said Tim Novak, State Trails Coordinator for the DNR’s Parks and Recreation Division. “Together, our organizations are committed to providing world-class hiking for residents and visitors alike, whether they’re accessing a trail while at a state park – from the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in the Western UP to Muskallonge, Straits, and Tahquamenon



A hiker makes his way along a Lake Superior stretch of the NCT.

**Photo by**  
Heather Durocher

Falls state parks to the east, and numerous parks and state forest campgrounds all across the state – or deep in the woods and traveling through towns on the Iron Belle Trail.”

### Keep Moving Forward

Back at my campsite, I’ve changed into shorts and a tank top, laced up my orange running shoes, and I’m heading for the trail. I decide to let my feet and mood steer me. I’ve glanced at a trail map, but don’t determine any specific route.

I head toward the other side of the lower campground, turning right at the road leading to the campground’s entrance. I follow this for just a bit before seeing the trailhead that I soon discover takes me through the woods and up an incline that, at the top, opens to an incredible view of the Mackinac Bridge.

A breeze rustles through the leaves and cools my sticky, sweaty skin, leaving temporary goosebumps in its wake. The trees sway. I turn my face toward the sun. I can’t stop smiling.

*Learn more about Michigan’s thousands of miles of trails, and access trail maps and other resources, at [michigan.gov/DNRtrails](http://michigan.gov/DNRtrails).*

## Mark Your Calendar



### NOVEMBER 25

is the official end-of-year appeal launch date.



### DECEMBER 3

is Giving Tuesday, a 24-hour event during which the NCTA strives to raise \$90,000. There will be a match challenge (\$10,000 and growing!) so when you participate, your gift will be doubled for the trail.



### DECEMBER 31

is when your end-of-year gift or membership must be received to count toward the current tax year.

[northcountrytrail.org/donate](http://northcountrytrail.org/donate)  
[northcountrytrail.org/join-renew](http://northcountrytrail.org/join-renew)



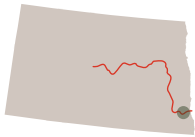


Jack Norland on a new fence stile near Ekre Trailhead property in Richland County, ND.

**Photo provided by**  
Jan Ulferts Stewart

## Persistence Pays Off

BY JACK NORLAND, DAKOTA PRAIRIE CHAPTER PRESIDENT, AND JAN ULFERTS STEWART, NCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESIDENT



This trail protection success story began about 15 years ago, when the NCTA Dakota Prairie Chapter established the Albert Ekre Grassland Preserve Trailhead on

three acres of land in Richland County, North Dakota. County administrators approved the project, since there were no immediate plans for this land. However, no further action was taken to secure an easement or formal agreement.

It soon became a favorite trailhead; easy to access. Our Chapter volunteers installed a bench and a kiosk, and started many group hikes here. But then, a buyer approached the county, who planned an auction to sell the land. We were faced with the reality of losing access to the trail.

With advice from Paul Gagnon, NCTA Director of Trail Protection, we developed a plan to protect this segment. Ed Gruchalla, former NCTA board member and retired state legislator, reached out to the Chair of the County Commission. He explained the significance of having a National Scenic Trail in our backyard. He described how valuable this piece of property was to trail users. Based on



**Photo by**  
Jack Norland

their discussions, moments before the auction was set to begin, the commissioners agreed not to sell the property.

Next up: the easement! Paul provided us with an initial draft. Jim Stewart, Chapter board member and retired attorney, worked with the county's attorney to finalize the agreement. At the next commission meeting, Jim presented the document and an offer to pay for the easement. He included a letter from our Chapter's leadership too, expressing appreciation for the commission's willingness to ensure continued use of the trailhead and access to the North Country Trail.

The commissioners unanimously granted the easement. In addition, they declined the payment, stating that "the best use of this property is the trailhead."

The lesson learned here is to continue to rely on persistence as a trail protection strategy because as with much of life, persistence pays off.

## Kekekabic Trail History

BY TERRY BERNHARDT, KEKEKABIC TRAIL CHAPTER



The Kekekabic Trail is located in Minnesota's Superior National Forest, primarily within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Its 39 miles are part of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

The late Bill Rom was a member of one of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) crews that completed building the Kek in the late 1930s. These crews completed the trail in order to link and provide access to four USFS fire watch towers. Using only hand tools and working out of tent camps, the crews cleared a path, built boardwalks across wet areas, and completed several lake portages. Their story is one of endurance, grit, comradeship, and dedication by young men eager to be employed during the Great Depression.

Bill's daughter Becky, of Ely, Minnesota, recently published a succinct, fact-filled history of the trail's completion. It is centered on her father's story and his photographs from this time. Becky describes the role her father played in inspiring the renewal of the Kekekabic Trail.

[The Historic Kekekabic Trail: Bill Rom's Forest Service Years 1937-1940](#) is available for a \$20 contribution to the Kekekabic Trail Chapter. If interested, please contact Terry Bernhardt at [tbernhardt1@comcast.net](mailto:tbernhardt1@comcast.net).



TRAIL  
WORK



# Building Trail and Partnership in Ohio

BY LAUREN KENNEDY-LITTLE, NCTA REGIONAL TRAIL COORDINATOR



The Student Conservation Association (SCA) teamed up with the NCTA Wampum Chapter in Ohio this summer for a beginner-friendly day of trail maintenance. The SCA is a national nonprofit focused on “building the next generation of conservation

leaders by connecting young people to hands-on service projects, often on public land,” explained Elyria Little, SCA Community Program Manager for Northeast Ohio. She is focused on connecting youth with work and service opportunities throughout the state.

The North Country Trail stretches more than 1,000 miles across Ohio and intersects with numerous public lands. Wampum Chapter volunteers manage about 80\* miles of the North Country Trail in Eastern Ohio, from Zoar to the Pennsylvania state line. NCTA trail management staff aim to meet the needs of public land partners, and trail users and volunteers. Therefore, identifying outside partners who can supplement trail maintenance and Chapter-led projects is a necessary benefit for the trail.

“Here in Northeast Ohio, SCA teams focus on increasing and caring for the urban tree canopy, managing invasive species, and building and maintaining our local

*\*The Wampum Chapter maintains an additional 44 miles of trail in Western Pennsylvania, from the Ohio state line to Butler County, just east of McConnells Mill State Park.*

trail network,” Elyria explained. “In an attempt to identify organizations around the state that can support year-round service work, teaming up with the NCTA fulfills that need while achieving the goals of both organizations.”

This is not the first time the Wampum Chapter has partnered with the SCA, though. For several years, the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps (a state-funded program administered by the SCA) has supported trail maintenance projects along the North Country trail in Pennsylvania’s McConnells Mill State Park.

Last fall, the SCA applied for a JEDI Mini-Grant from the NCTA, to help support travel and staff support for a nearby service project. As part of the NCTA’s commitment to just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive (JEDI) trail access and experiences, its mini-grants are intended to support JEDI-focused affinity groups leading experiences on the North Country Trail. Workshops, programs, day hikes, overnight trips, and other opportunities connecting people to the Trail are eligible for funding between \$500 and \$1,000.

All of the planning and preparation culminated in a one-day event addressing trail improvements at



Above: The crew after a workday.

**All photos provided by the SCA**



A meeting to discuss trails, volunteers, and partnership. Left to right: Elyria Little (SCA), Rick “Handlebar” Osterheimer (Wampum Chapter), Karl Mattern (Beaver Creek State Park), and Chynna Ingram (SCA).

**All photos provided by**  
the SCA

Beaver Creek State Park in East Liverpool, Ohio. In total, six young adults from the greater Cleveland area traveled to meet with three Wampum Chapter volunteers for several hours of digging in the dirt. Attendees de-bermed and improved the bench on more than a half-mile of trail, and learned how to incorporate drainage into existing trail. Rich “Handlebar” Osterheimer was the volunteer point of contact from the Wampum Chapter. He helped coordinate the work with Karl Matter, the Beaver Creek State Park manager, and Chynna Ingram, the SCA Community Engagement Fellow. I shared some North Country Trail history, and the SCA crew left with brochures and swag. Gratitude for a (cool) 80° day and Mother Nature’s blessings were shared. Elyria and I walked away from this experience with refreshed excitement about this partnership, hopeful it’s the beginning of something sustainable and beneficial for everyone involved.

*The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is the country’s largest provider of environmental conservation programs for young people. However, SCA programs are open to participants of all ages, and not subject to those only in school. Visit [thesca.org](https://thesca.org) to learn more.*

## Preserve Your Path

As we reflect on another year of progress and achievement, the North Country Trail Association is deeply grateful for the steady support from you: our dedicated members, volunteers, and partners. Your contributions are instrumental in our significant strides toward preserving, protecting, and promoting the longest national scenic hiking trail in the country. Throughout the year, we have:

- **Maintained the trail.** Volunteers have tirelessly worked on sections of the North Country Trail, sustaining its legacy as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States.
- **Enhanced trail infrastructure.** The trail community has invested in essential bridges, shelters, and signage to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for hikers.
- **Protected the trail.** The NCTA staff and board of directors have identified a new strategic plan and approved policies to dramatically improve the Association’s capabilities to protect the trail’s corridor and surrounding landscape. This is a crucial step toward the goal of providing future generations with a continuous, forever trail from Vermont to North Dakota.
- **Engaged with communities.** Local communities and Affiliate organizations have partnered with the NCTA to promote the trail as a valuable economic asset and recreational resource.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we are excited about the opportunities to advance this mission. However, we can only achieve our goals with your continued support. Your generous contributions are not just appreciated - they are essential to success. With your help, we can:

- **Support the trail.** Provide volunteers with necessary resources to continue improving existing trail segments.
- **Protect trail lands.** Build capacity to acquire critical land parcels to safeguard the trail’s future.
- **Enhance trail experiences.** Support trail users by offering accurate maps, blazed trail, and opportunities to connect deeper through programs like the Hike 100 Challenge.
- **Educate and inspire.** Showcase and better publicize the trail and its benefits to a broader audience.

Participating in the NCTA’s end-of-year appeal is investing in a lasting legacy for future generations. Your support helps conserve the trail’s natural beauty, and ensures that it remains a treasured resource for hikers, nature enthusiasts, and communities alike. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the North Country Trail!



TRAIL  
USE

# Trail Topography in New York

BY WILLIAM COFFIN

“The contiguous United States are divided into physiographic provinces according to their geomorphology. Geomorphology refers to the physical features and processes of landforms, and their relation to geologic structures. The climate, underlying geology, and the geologic history of an area affect the modern topography. Some areas have been scraped flat by glaciers, others are dominated by towering mountains, and still others are subject to changing sea levels and coastal processes. Every province has its own beauty, and its own cultural and geologic heritage highlighted by the National Park System.” (National Park Service)

Hiking the North Country National Scenic Trail through New York State will lead you across six major physiographic provinces. Take a closer look with an armchair hike - no blisters, guaranteed!



Physiographic provinces of New York, excluding Long Island (modified from Lyford and others, 1984).

**Photo provided by** researchgate.net, Barry P. Baldigo



## **Allegheny Plateau, 450 trail miles:**

From the Pennsylvania-New York state line at the beautifully spacious Allegany State Park to the scenic Finger Lakes, the trail traverses a broad plateau. It is part of the Appalachian Mountain Range, though only in New York have these ancient peaks been shaved down to hills by glaciation. This is wine country. This stretch of trail includes Watkins Glen State Park and a spectacular waterfall town at the south end of Seneca Lake. Seneca is one of the 11 famous Finger Lakes that all flow north to Lake Ontario.



## **Ontario Lowlands, 20 trail miles:**

Near Canastota, the trail descends steeply. These flat, sandy lowlands are where the easiest digging of the Erie Canal first began, and the historic towpath here is followed by North Country Trail hikers to connect with the Adirondack foothills. This region is known locally as the Rome Sand Plains. It was once the floor of a huge glacial lake.



Above: View from the Allegheny Plateau. Oneida Lake is in the distance, and beyond that is the Tug Hill Plateau.

Highland High Peaks

**Photo by** Mary Coffin

**Photo by** Bill Coffin



**Tug Hill Plateau, 20 trail miles:**

Hiking north to Boonville brings you to the eastern Tug Hill Plateau boundary. It is marked by steep glacial terrain versus the ancient lake bottom earth seen at Rome. Tug

Hill is not a real geologic plateau, but a ground-down, glaciated area.



Crown Point, New York, at Lake Champlain.

**Photo by**  
Stephanie Campbell



**Highland Western Hills, 60 trail miles:**

Around 500 miles into New York's North Country Trail (coming from Pennsylvania), you will cross what is called the Blue Line. This is the Adirondack Park boundary.

The park is six million acres in size; half is state-protected forest and half is state-zoned private lands. The elevation approaches 1,000 feet with glacial till blocking natural drainage. Regrowth hardwood forest has replaced spruce that was removed during the logging boom.



Allegheny Plateau

**Photo by**  
Bill Coffin



**Highland Low Mountains, 50 trail miles:**

The North Country Trail is the only trail through the Adirondacks that crosses both the east and west Blue Line boundaries, then travels the more remote climbs at lower altitudes.

This is an advantage for those seeking mountain viewing while aiming to avoid the heavily traveled and impacted High Peak trails. Here is an ecosystem of mountains, streams, ponds, and much more. Mixed tree species of hardwoods and conifers change abruptly with altitude.



**Highland Mountain Peaks, 65 trail miles:**

The Adirondacks are the southern tip of the Canadian Shield. This bedrock is ancient but the uplift is recent, and instead of an uplifted ridge series, it is a dome

of peaks. One central Adirondack peak, named The Dome, is geologically unique and not part of Vermont's Green Mountains, which are Appalachians. The Lake Champlain Valley descends at Crown Point, abruptly ending this province. Lake Champlain is the remains of a longer, collapsed valley bottom, and a former (and much larger) body of water.

**Hike It.  
Build It.  
Love It.**

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

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



Learn more about physiographic provinces across the U.S. and National Trails System with an interactive map at [nps.gov/subjects/geology/physiographic-provinces.htm](http://nps.gov/subjects/geology/physiographic-provinces.htm).



TRAIL  
PROTECTION

# A New Destination Fueled by History

BY AIDAN REAGH, MARKETING AND OFFICE  
COORDINATOR, BUCKEYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION



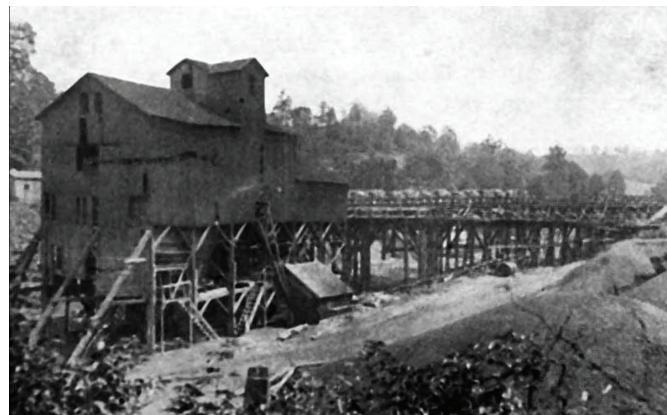
The story of Southeastern Ohio often ends with the word *recovering*. It's a fair word to use. This was once a land of old-growth forest, where squirrels could peacefully jump from tree to tree without ever touching the ground. As settlers from the East moved into the region, the lumber

became a commodity too good to pass up. Ohio's timber industry in the 1800s was among the best in the young United States, but as unsustainable logging continued, the trees disappeared.

The resources underneath became the next chapter of economic success for the local Appalachian region. In line with the Civil War, some of the best salt mines emerged in Southeastern Ohio. The counties in the area were also lush with black diamonds (coal) and had seen extractions of this resource as early as 1800. The mining operations were financially successful, but there was a lack of regulation. The land became devastated through deforestation and pollutants into water sources.

Above: Tecumseh Lake, former site of the XX Mine tippie.

**Photo by**  
Aidan Reagh



XX Mine tippie. A tippie is a structure used at a mine to load the product for transport.

**Photo by**  
Little Cities of Black Diamonds

Throughout the early 1900s, mines began to shut down. While this industry had collapsed, its little cities remained. Shawnee is home to the Buckeye Trail Association (BTA) headquarters. Shawnee saw the local XX Mine, or #20 Mine, shut down in 1907 due to the New Straitsville Mine Fire burning over into XX Mine. The story of XX Mine's shutdown involves miners digging through a wall and finding themselves in a room of flames. In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) entered the mines to fill the holes with fire brick and clay. They tried other fireproofing strategies as well, but legend has it the mine still burns today.

Always determined, the local community decided to reclaim the land in the 1950s through the building of Tecumseh Lake: a recreational area three minutes from Main Street for the community to relax and enjoy the outdoors.

Southeastern Ohio has endured hardships since the industrial departures, but there is plenty of reason for optimism. While the BTA has been leading a number of improvements in the area through recent years, few are as exciting as the work being done toward the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant for major trail projects, in coordination with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Mineral Resources and the Wayne National Forest.

In 2022, the AMLER grant application was successful and \$2.4 million in funding was awarded to support establishing a 100-mile backpacking destination in Athens, Perry, and Morgan Counties. The BTA will build 16 miles of new trail with support from youth conservation organizations including the Student Conservation Association (SCA), American Conservation Experience (ACE), and the American Conservation Coalition (ACC). Volunteers from the BTA and North Country Trail Association will join in, as well. These 16



Today, Tecumseh Lake serves as a trailhead for the North Country, Buckeye, and American Discovery Trails.

**Photo by**  
Aidan Reagh

miles are only possible to be built thanks to partners such as the Wayne National Forest, Wallace O'Dowd Wildlife Area, Burr Oak State Park, CCU Mining, and private landowners.

Since this project began, we have established the optimal route for trail relocation; worked alongside consultants for bridge-site development (bridges will be professionally engineered for water crossings spanning 40-80 feet); and surveying for sensitive species and cultural artifacts to ensure the project's sustainability by limiting potential negative impacts.

About 20 miles of on-road Buckeye Trail / North Country Trail will be relocated. The new 100-mile backpacking trail will connect the Wildcat Hollow Hiking Trail (Wayne National Forest) and Burr Oak State Park to the Stone Church Horseback Riding Trail System, allowing you to adventure into the popular Old Man's Cave area of Hocking Hills State Park and beyond. New map and interpretive signage will be created accordingly. Additionally, the AMLER grant will allow funding for the Tecumseh Lake Trailhead, to better serve trail users and the local community of Shawnee.

As this major recreational asset is developed into the largest backpacking destination in Ohio, the North Country Trail and Buckeye Trail will further serve as a green backbone connecting communities, recreational experiences, local businesses, and individuals to one another. This experience can show the true power of green infrastructure for economic development, and transform Ohio's Little Cities of Black Diamonds region from *recovering* to *revitalized*.



## HIKE 100 CHALLENGE

“Took my 16-year-old son on a backpacking trip from Mellen to Solon Springs in Wisconsin. Took eight days of hiking and it rained a lot. We both got blisters, but got to see black bears! Ticks and mosquitoes were too numerous to imagine. Both my son and I would do it again.”

—Timothy Kempowski

### SHARE YOUR ADVENTURES LIKE TIMOTHY!

Learn more, sign up, or submit your completion form at [northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge](https://northcountrytrail.org/hike-100-challenge).



# North Star

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Permit 340



## Reach Out!

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

Wisconsin's northern counties are well-known for scenic waterfalls, and the North Country Trail provides public access to many. The proposed name for this waterfall in the Iron County Forest is Latimer Falls. Charles Latimer and Edward Foster (Foster Falls) were business partners of a timber company that employed 500 men across almost 50 camps from Hurley to Mellen.

**Photo by** Matt Davis