



**For Immediate Release**

March 3, 2022

**Re:** Larry and Shannon Bell Clear a Path for the North Country Trail Association

**Contact:** Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director, [aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org](mailto:aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org), 616-987-0938

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is the recent recipient of a \$500,000 gift made possible by the Fidelity Charitable Donor Advised Fund as recommended by the Larry and Shannon Bell Charitable Fund.

The Bells' donation marks a new day for the Association - one that will elevate the efforts to complete the route and protect the valuable resources of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) for the next generation.

Motivated by a life changing experience, Larry Bell challenged himself to hike the entire Michigan section of the NCNST: 1,150 miles. Mile after mile, he experienced firsthand how spending time outdoors changes lives, and he wanted to share that opportunity with others. His experience on the Trail and conversations with NCTA staff and volunteers also helped him realize just how much work goes into building, maintaining, and protecting a National Scenic Trail for all to enjoy.

On why he supports the NCTA's work, Larry shared, "The North Country Trail has been a welcome tool for my physical and mental health in my post-cancer life. I am happy to help facilitate this contribution to the [North Country] Trail Association so that others may find the joy, beauty, and wellbeing that I know from hiking this path, and so that the Trail may be built out to its full potential."

"The Bells' gift allows us to build needed infrastructure and capacity to meet the ongoing demands of America's longest National Scenic Trail," said Andrea Ketchmark, NCTA Executive Director. "Larry has shown his trust in the Association as the stewards of the Trail. His vote of confidence is a boost of thanks to the thousands of volunteers who make it possible for everyone to have access to quality outdoor recreation experiences near them."

Bell was the recipient of the NCTA's Blue Blazes Benefactor Award in 2021, which recognizes individuals and families who demonstrate a vision and generosity for the Association and the Trail it serves.

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

One of 11 National Scenic Trails, the North Country Trail is the longest continuous trail in the United States, connecting eight states from North Dakota to Vermont. A diverse trail, sections of its 4,800 miles route through wilderness, prairie, wetlands, mountains, and both suburban and urban areas. The Association serves as stewards to the Trail and carries out its mission through a network of Trail Community partners, including the National Park Service, affiliated trail groups, and hundreds of volunteers.

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Larry Bell, founder of Bell's Brewing, hiking the North Country National Scenic Trail in Michigan. (Photo by Larry Bell.) *Original file available upon request of the North Country Trail Association.*

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