Welcome to the North Country Trail Association

2021 Annual Report

Let's Celebrate!

Your Adventure Starts Nearby.
The North Country Trail Association achieved a milestone in 2021, serving as steward for the North Country National Scenic Trail for 40 years.

We are a united community of individuals and partners who embrace the spirit, peace, and beauty found along the Trail.

**MISSION**

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.

**VISION**

Our vision for the North Country 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.

**OUR COMMUNITY’S CORE VALUES**

- **Accountability** We take ownership and responsibility for our actions, policies and decisions. We engage in wise stewardship of public and private resources.
- **Collaboration** We value the spirit of cooperation between staff, volunteers, all partners and landowners, and are committed to building and maintaining this culture of collaboration. Service is the backbone of our organization.
- **Excellence** We strive for exceptional quality and safety, both in the work we do in building and maintaining the Trail and in the experiences of the users of this world-class trail.
- **Inclusion** We are committed to ensuring that everyone is respected, included and valued for their contributions to our mission and culture. We actively welcome people of different backgrounds, perspectives, thoughts and beliefs.
Our future is bright!

Looking back on our history, it’s amazing to see how far we’ve come. From our humble beginning of a small group of visionaries, sitting around the kitchen table at a schoolhouse in Michigan, to more than 30 Chapters and Affiliate organizations and more than 3,000 miles of Trail on the ground. The dream of bringing the North Country National Scenic Trail to life has grown into a reality.

As the Trail grows, so does the workload and need for sustainable funding. We’re continuing to seek more agency grants for trail projects, and have increased our individual and foundation giving 3% over the previous year. Thank you!

Sustaining our volunteer community is also critical to our future. In 2021, the NCTA hosted its first Leadership Summit: A series of workshops that brought together leaders from across our community to learn from experts about generational shifts, succession planning, why diversity matters, and how we can create room for the next generation of leaders. We welcomed a new cohort of our Next Generation Coalition, and we funded four community-led organizations to have experiences on the Trail through our JEDI Mini-Grant program.

Our collective efforts in outreach to new communities and support for our volunteers are paying off; as we are seeing new faces step into leadership roles every day. Your support for our mission is support for them. It not only builds the North Country National Scenic Trail now, but it ensures that others will be here to continue that work for years to come. You are the reason I have great hope for a bright future!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

Jaron Nyhof
Board President

Andrea Ketchmark
Executive Director

NCTA REMAINS FOCUSED ON JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (JEDI) EFFORTS ACROSS THE TRAIL

The JEDI Committee is comprised of NCTA and NPS staff, Board of Directors members, and Chapter Leaders. The Committee’s most successful project in 2021 was the implementation of the JEDI Mini-Grant program. This program offers grants to JEDI-focused affinity groups who seek experiences on the NCNST. In 2021, four grants were awarded. NCTA hopes to grow this grant program to more participants and to form deeper relationships with existing grant recipients. In addition to the grant program, NCTA has also offered board, staff, and volunteer training and workshop opportunities on JEDI topics.
In 2021, we put $292,000 directly on the Trail through construction projects, and another $692,000 supporting trail planning, volunteer support, and training. To accomplish the work, we're continuing to seek more agency grants for trail projects, seeing a 61% increase in funding in 2020, and have increased our individual and foundation giving 3% over the previous year.

**INCOME AND EXPENSE**

**Year ending 12/31/2021, in $1,000’s**

**INCOME**
- Donations Incl. Membership $700.2
- Foundation and Corporate 155.0
- NPS Base Support and Projects 432.7
- Agency Grants 212.3
- Trail Shop Sales 27.6
- Programs and Events 14.9
- Other Income 66.2
- **TOTAL INCOME** $1,608.9

**EXPENSES**
- Programs and Services
  - Public Service, Education, Cartography $82.1
  - Trail Work and Planning 676.1
  - Volunteer Support 308.0
- Supporting Activities
  - Management and General 170.5
  - Fundraising 162.2
- **TOTAL EXPENSE** $1,398.9

**NET INCOME** $210.0

**INCOME BY SOURCE**

- Donations and Membership 10%
- Foundation and Corporate 13%
- NPS Base Support and Projects 44%
- Agency Grants 27%
- Trail Shop Sales 6%
- Programs and Events 12%
- Other Income 4%

**INCOME AND EXPENSE**

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<th>INCOME</th>
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**EXPENSES BY CATEGORY**

- Public Service, Education, Cartography 6%
- Trail Work and Planning 48%
- Volunteer Support 22%
- Management and General 12%
- Fundraising 6%

North Country Trail Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our most recent audited financial statements and tax return can be found at northcountrytrail.org, or provided upon request.
Thank you to our Chapters, Affiliates, and Trail Partners

We celebrate the many accomplishments being made thanks to strong partnerships.

NORTH DAKOTA
- Central Flyway Chapter
- Sheyenne River Valley Chapter
- Dakota Prairie Chapter

MINNESOTA
- Minnesota Waters and Prairie Chapter
- Laurentian Lakes Chapter
- Itasca Moraine Chapter
- Star of the North Chapter
- Arrowhead Chapter
- Kekkabic Trail Chapter
- Border Route Trail Association
- Superior Hiking Trail Association

MICHIGAN, LOWER PENINSULA
- Harbor Springs Chapter
- Jordan Valley 45° Chapter
- Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter
- Spirit of the Woods Chapter
- Western Michigan Chapter
- Chief Noonday Chapter
- Chief Baw Beese Chapter

OHIO
- Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association
- Buckeye Trail Association
- Wampum Chapter

WISCONSIN
- Brule-St. Croix Chapter
- Chequamegon Chapter
- Heritage Chapter

MICHIGAN, UPPER PENINSULA
- Ni-Miikanaake Chapter
- Peter Wolfe Chapter
- Marquette Area Chapter
- Superior Shoreline Chapter
- Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter

PENNSYLVANIA
- Wampum Chapter
- Butler County Chapter
- Clarion County Chapter
- Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy
- Allegheny National Forest Chapter

NEW YORK
- Finger Lakes Trail Conference
- Central New York Chapter
- Adirondack Mountain Club

VERMONT
- Middlebury Area Land Trust

FEDERAL AGENCY PARTNERS

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
As the officially administering agency for the North Country National Scenic Trail, the National Park Service has a long history of supporting NCTA through a Cooperative Agreement that funds a portion of our operations along with select special projects.

USDA FOREST SERVICE
As a major land management partner, the Forest Service supports critical volunteer training like NCTA’s Crew Leader program and community programs like Trail Towns.

NCTA partners with more than 160 state and local land management partners across the Trail. These partnerships support NCTA’s capacity, field projects, volunteer training and more.
Celebrate Our Mission

Building and Maintaining the Trail

542 volunteers contributed 54,236 hours of time to the North Country Trail in 2021; a value of $1,547,895

NCTA Chapters and Affiliates built 44.75 miles of the NCNST and helped to maintain 4,093* miles of existing Trail

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

3,188 miles of off-road Trail

46 bridges installed and/or repaired

378.45 miles of Trail were freshly blazed

6,048 linear feet of puncheon and boardwalk was built and maintained

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH CREW PARTNERSHIPS

The North Country Trail Association has a rich history of working with Youth Crews. These hands-on experiences give youth the opportunity to get involved in making meaningful change for the Trail. From Scouts to college course extra credit, these partnerships are the perfect pairing. In 2021, the SEEDS EcoCorps worked on multiple projects throughout Michigan to improve and expand the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Huron-Manistee National Forest: Partnered with the NCTA Spirit of the Woods Chapter, renovated bridges, install erosion control features, clear storm debris, and improve tread.

Porcupine Mountains and Ottawa National Forest: Partnered with the NCTA Ni-Mikanaake Chapter, constructed nearly one mile of new NCNST corridor, and benched trail (removed dirt from a hillside to create a sustainable walking path).

L’Anse, Baraga County: Collaborated with the NCTA Peter Wolfe Chapter, rerouted trail, pulled stumps, performed tread work, and benched trail.
NEXT GENERATION COALITION IS GOING STRONG

The Next Generation Coalition engages 18-35 year old NCNST community members in activities based on the Coalition's pillars: trail building and maintenance, marketing and outreach, and advocacy. Twelve members participated in the 2021 cohort. Coalition members connected with NCTA Chapters and Affiliates on trail projects, events and promotion throughout the year. Members also connected with the National Trails community by attending the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) Virtual Workshop and Hike the Hill, where they joined Andrea Ketchmark and members of the NCTA Advocacy Committee in representing the NCNST.

FIELD GRANTS MAKE LASTING IMPACT

Since its 1998 inception, the Field Grant Program has funded more than 419 projects across the Trail. Funding for the program is made possible, in part, through Association memberships. Field grants are awarded to Chapters, Affiliates, and Trail Councils.

Some of the 12 Field Grant projects that were awarded in 2021:
- Crown Point Replacement Interpretive Panels (NY)
- NCTA Chapter tool trailer and tools (MN)
- Blackbridge bridge repair (MI)
- Penokee Ski Trail Bog Bridges (WI)
- Jackson Boardwalk rebuild (VT)
Celebrate OUR Mission

Trail Protection and Advocacy

UNIT STATUS MATTERS

“The number-one priority for the NCTA Advocacy Committee is achieving Unit Status. In 2021, the Parity Act was introduced in the United States Senate and through the efforts of the NCTA Advocacy Committee. There are nine cosponsors with a hearing scheduled in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Unit Status is actively supported throughout the trail community with documented support from the Partnership for the National Trails System, the American Hiking Society and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. NCTA advocacy is a grassroots effort with real impact in Washington D.C.”

— Brad Slagle
NCTA Advocacy Committee Chair

TRAIL PROTECTION SPOTLIGHT

In 2021, the Association celebrated the documentation and acquisition of 16 easements and agreements. We celebrate and thank all who were a part of these efforts. These achievements require tenaciousness, trust, and true partnerships to see them materialize over time.

The November 2019, North Country Trail adoption of the Minnesota Arrowhead Reroute was the beginning of a vital three-year process that became a reality in 2021. Volunteer Derrick Passe began planning a route that would extend the Kekekabic Trail section from Snowbank Lake Road to the town of Ely. With focused efforts being given to routes that placed the Trail on public land, inevitably, there would be a segment that would lie on private property, owned by the Sturgeon Family Trust. Derrick remained diligent in his communication and in late 2020, at the height of the real estate boom, the Sturgeon Family decided to sell their 160 acres of remote, near-wilderness land. Negotiating an agreement with the land owner became an urgent matter for the NCTA Kekekabic Trail Chapter, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and National Park Service (NPS).

Without this easement, a large position of the Trail would have to be closed until a major reroute could be created, taking many years to complete. This would not be a viable option, so the USFS provided NCTA with resources to help seal the deal.

The Trail is ever-changing from acquiring easements to eliminating on road miles. In 2021, 45.13 road miles were eliminated.
Promoting the Trail

Building Awareness

MY NCT MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The second year of the My NCT program gave membership a big boost, with more than 980 people who joined or renewed their membership during the month of September. The 2021 featured artist was Leah Yellowbird of Minnesota. “I’m Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, Algonquin, and Métis,” explained Leah. “What I do in the style I paint is nature, or my interpretation of nature, or the Ojibwe interpretation of nature.

Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Grants Awarded: 4
Virtual Celebration 2021: 349 Registrations with 26 attending for their first time
Hike 100 Challenge Completed: 1,704 people (and 300 pets)
PDF Map Downloads from Website (June - December): 31,727
Online Map Views: 224,096
Avenza Map Downloads: 19,182

BELL’S MINI KEG FEATURES THE NCNST

This year, Bell’s Brewery of Michigan partnered with the Association in a most refreshing way. The Bell’s Brewery Oberon beer mini keg featured information on and an artist rendering of the North Country National Scenic Trail. This limited edition mini keg was available in locations across the nation, raising awareness of the Trail for each glass poured.

“I wanted to do a butterfly because to me, it’s just floating around — it’s beautiful; it’s here, it’s there, that’s the Trail.”

— Leah Yellowbird, artist

Total 2021 Memberships

4,188

Photo: Matt Davis
Thank you to those who are paying it forward by leaving a legacy

**LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS**

Anonymous (1)
Pat Allen
Loren Bach and Dave Martus
Karen and Steve Bade
Michael and Lee Ann Chaffee
Mike* and Renee Chapple
William W. Currie
Cecil Dobbins* and Joanne Dobbins†
Thomas Funke
Thomas and Janis Gilbert
Lois Goldstein and John Heiam
Robert and Sheridan Haack
Ronald Horn†
Lorana Jinkerson
Martha Jones†
Betty A. Lewis†
Beth Keloneva and James Mitchell
Peggy and Rod MacRae†
Bruce and Linda Matthews

Tom and Mary Moberg
Tim* and Sue Mowbray
Jaron* and Vicki Nyhof
Eileen Oehler†
Bob Papp and Annette Hollister-Papp
Gerald Phillips'
Carol J. Smith'
Ronald and Linda Sootsman
Walter Srogi†
Harmon Strong†
Irene Szabo
Jere Thompson'
Roger and Becky Tuuk
Elizabeth Wheatley'
Joan Young

* Board Member
† Deceased

**OUR PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM**

- Recommend NCTA through your Donor Advised Fund
- Name NCTA as a beneficiary on a retirement or life insurance policy
- Donate stock or give through your IRA
- Name NCTA in your will or estate

For more information contact Nancy Brozek, Director of Development and Communications: nbrozek@northcountrytrail.org. (231) 685-0711 ext. 5.
We honor those who have touched the lives of our Trail Community

The North Country Trail Association is filled with appreciation and recognition for those honored and remembered this past year.

MADE IN HONOR OF

Adam Manninen
Bob Stein
Bradford Slagle
Casey Jo McMillan
Charles Homeyer
Charles Johnson
Charles R. Parker
Chief Noonday Chapter
Christopher McMullen
Colin Alworth
David Miller
Ed Scurry
Ellie Williams
Eric Longman
Frank Lynn
Harbor Springs Chapter
Hiawatha Shore to Shore Chapter
Jan Ulferts Stewart
Jane Ryan
Jeff Ekola

Jerry Fennell
Jim Smrz
Joe Crain
Karl Golicz
Kent Larsen
Kristie Guthrie
Matthew Davis
NCTA
North Country Trail Hikers
Pam Houtteman
Peter Ford
Robert Ida
Roger Kudelka
Sara Cockrell
Tammy McCaughey
Tena Hop
Thomas and Phyllis Scott
Trail Volunteers

MADE IN MEMORY OF

Arlen Matson
Bruce A. Pandoff
Calvin Kangas
Daniel Willshire
Doug Welker
Ed T. Chappel
Jack A. Love
James W. Davis
Jean Lamoreaux
Jim Durm
John Johnson
John Tremore
Joseph R. Clewley
Muffin, the West Highland Terrier who enjoyed hiking the trail

Mike R. Boshnyak
Mitch Krause
Adeline Brozek
Peggy Keeney
Ralph E. Ramey
Rob Rausch
Ronald Wiley
Shirley LaBonte
Steve Trangsrud
The Sextons
Tom Duverndack
Nancy Strang

Thank you to all our contributors
STAFF
Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director
Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Operations
Nancy Brozek, Director of Development & Communications
Stephanie Campbell, Regional Trail Coordinator
Matthew Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator
Heather Ertle, Database & Membership Administrator
Kate Lemon, Marketing & Communications Coordinator
Tom Moutsos, Regional Trail Coordinator
Matthew Rowbotham, GIS Program Manager
Alison Sanchez, Administrative Assistant
Becky VanDyke, Data Entry Specialist
Kenny Wawsczyk, Regional Trail Coordinator
Abby Whittington, Annual Events Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Jaron Nyhof, President
Tim Mowbray, Immediate Past President
Mike Chapple, Vice President
Dennis Garrett, Secretary
Mark VanHornweder, Treasurer
Mel Baughman (WI)
Josh Berlo (MN)
Sue Harvey Brown (MI)
Duane Lawton (MI)
Derrick Passe (MN)
Larry Pio (MI)
Sharon Ray (NY)
Kevin Russell (At-Large)
Brad Slagle (MI)
Jo Swanson (MN)
Jan Ulferts Stewart (ND)
Tina Toole (PA)
Jeff VanWinkle (MI)
Steve Walker (OH)
Quinn Wright (NY)

CONTACT
NORTHCOUNTRYTRAIL.ORG

229 E. Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331
hq@northcountrytrail.org
(616) 897-5987 | (866) 445-3628 (toll free)

The North Country Trail Association holds the “Accredited Charity” rating from the Better Business Bureau. The rating means that the NCTA maintains or exceeds the Wise Giving Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB. The standards measure financial and programmatic data, as well as fundraising and administrative practices looking for certain standards in disclosure, transparency, program and fundraising cost ratios and solid financial management.

North Country Trail Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our most recent audited financial statements and tax return can be found at northcountrytrail.org, or provided upon request.
In 2021, the North Country Trail Association celebrated its 40th Anniversary so we asked our Trail Management staff to share three words that describe the impact your support has made possible this past year.

For Michigan:
RESILIENCE, TOGETHERNESS, COLLABORATION
— Kenny Wawszczk

For New York and Vermont:
COLLABORATION, PARTNERSHIP, NOURISHING
— Stephanie Campbell

For North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin:
RESUMPTION IN ACTIVITY
— Matt Davis

For the Trail as a whole:
COMMUNITY, NATURE, CONNECTIVITY
— Valerie Bader

Special thanks to those who shared their stories, provided financial support and gave of their time in 2021.

We are a united community of individuals and partners who embrace the spirit, peace, and beauty found along the Trail.
Thank You.

We are grateful for all of our supporters who helped make 2021 the successful year it was. These accomplishments are the result of your generous support.

Thank You.