



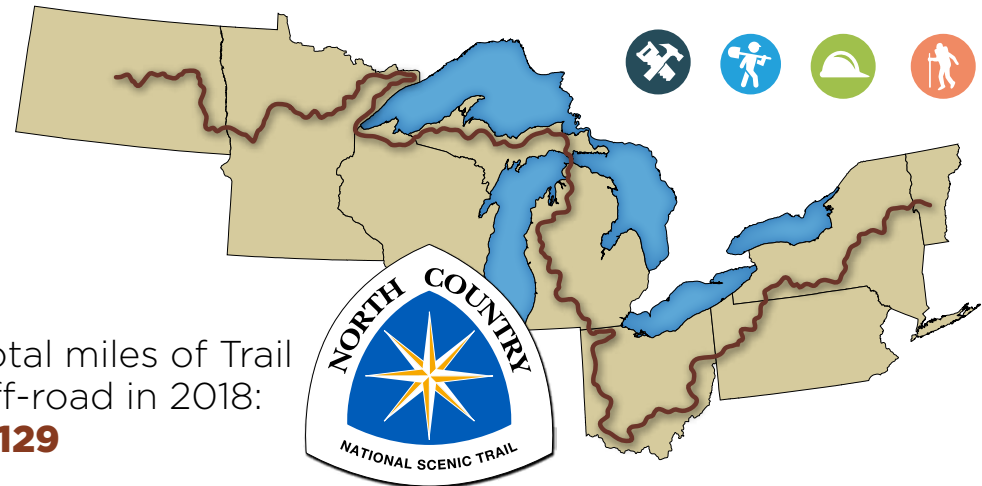
YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS NEARBY.

2018 ANNUAL REPORT





NCTA 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.



Total miles of Trail off-road in 2018:
3,129

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

991 volunteers contributed **66,834 hours**, representing an incredible **\$1,650,131** contribution to carrying out the mission of the North Country Trail.

PHOTOS

Top: Wampum, PA
Middle: Cazenovia, NY
Bottom: Harbor Springs, MI

- Built **51 new miles** of Trail and maintained **2,600** more.
- Acquired **24 new** Easements and Agreements with Landowners.
- Launched the **Next Generation Coalition** to engage young Trail supporters.
- **1,200 hikers** earned their Hike 50 patch, celebrating 50 years of the National Trails System.
- **Trained 50** new Crew Leaders
- Released downloadable **map series**, free to the public.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

2018 WAS AN INCREDIBLE YEAR.



Our volunteers worked harder than ever to build new sections of Trail and maintained thousands of miles of existing Trail. They built new structures, installed new signs, negotiated new easements and led hundreds of hikes to help people connect with the natural world by stepping onto the North Country National Scenic Trail.

NCTA began a new Crew Leader training program to provide the unique skills needed to lead groups of volunteers in the field. We launched the Next Generation Coalition, a group of 18-28 year olds that want to spread the word about the Trail through their networks. We celebrated the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act with the addition of a 50 mile challenge to our popular Hike 100 program. And we laid the groundwork for important legislation in US Congress that was passed in early 2019. We released our new technical map series for free download, making them accessible to more people and we continued to expand our network of trail users, partners and supporters which is growing larger every day.

2018 also brought new opportunities to diversify our funding as our donation and grant income continues to grow allowing us to fund more programs and trail projects. Our funding from the National Park Service is steady but our reliance on this funding is continuing to decrease as we grow our other sources of revenue, which gives us more security in an uncertain political climate.

Our donors, partners, volunteers and supporters made all of this possible.

You made it happen and we thank you.

Andrea Ketchmark
Executive Director

Tim Mowbray
President of the Board



FULFILLING OUR MISSION

"I completed part 2 of my three-part section hike of the Superior Hiking Trail. This year I started at Highway 301 trailhead and completed at the Lutsen Mountain Ski Resort." — Tom Hopper





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

VOLUNTEERISM

The North Country Trail simply could not exist without the dedication and passion of the volunteers who contribute their time and energy to the Trail.

- 991 Volunteers contributed 66,834 hours in 2018; a private sector value of \$1.6 million.
- Over 50 trainees participated in the new Crew Leader Training programs in Minnesota and Michigan. These new Crew Leaders will help lead Trail work projects and train other volunteers.
- 23 members joined NCTA's newly formed Next Generation Coalition, an effort to engage Generations Y & Z across the Trail.

Page 6: Allegheny National Forest, PA

Page 7: Left: Butler, PA, Right: Sturgeon River, MI

TRAIL BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE

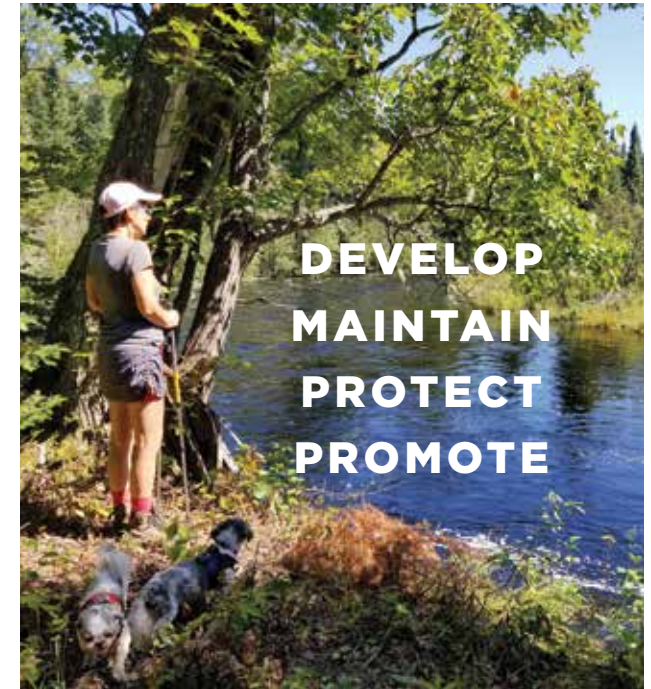
Maintaining the existing miles of Trail and building new and increasingly sustainable trail segments is one of our greatest accomplishments.

- We have recorded 3,129 miles of off-road trail, closer than ever to our 4,600-mile goal.
- Volunteers constructed 51 miles of new North Country National Scenic Trail in 2018 and improved 2,637 miles of the Trail through maintenance efforts.
- 7,644 feet of puncheon and boardwalk were improved during maintenance projects.
- 304 new kiosks and signs were installed across the Trail, providing better information for Trail users.

TRAIL PROTECTION

Our efforts in Trail Protection are growing year after year and we are doing more than ever before to ensure the Trail is permanently protected and future generations have access to the NCT.

- 24 new Trail Easements and Agreements were established with landowners.
- NCTA completed the Land Trust Alliance's 'Assess your Organization' process to get a more thorough understanding of the needs and successes of our Trail Protection efforts.
- NCTA, NPS and local volunteers celebrated the National Park Service's first land acquisition; protecting 1.5 miles of the Trail in Michigan.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was finalized between NCTA, the National Park Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources.



ADVOCACY

NCTA's Advocacy Team works across the Trail and in Washington DC to follow important legislation and issues affecting the Trail.

- The North Country Trail Route Adjustment Act was passed in the House of Representatives in 2018, which set the stage for its eventual passage in 2019.
- NCTA and partners continue to work closely with the Wayne National Forest to ensure the North Country Trail is considered in their Forest Plan Revision process, setting the standard for other Forests on the NCT.
- We continued to advocate for permanent authorization and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a critical program necessary to complete the National Scenic and Historic Trails.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

Sharing our story with the public allows us to introduce the Trail to new supporters and engage our community on a deeper level.

- NCTA Chapters and Affiliates led 245 hikes and hosted and attended 125 outreach events to promote the Trail.
- NCTA continues to strengthen its online and social media presence with more content that's more diverse, interesting, and engaging. At the end of 2018, the NCTA Facebook page had nearly 17,000 likes and followers. Our @northcountrytrail Instagram account had 4,000 followers and our website, northcountrytrail.org, supported nearly 17,000 active users per month.

TRAIL USE

As the nation's longest National Scenic Trail, the NCT can be easily accessed in 8 states and provides countless ways to enjoy and experience nature.

- 17 sets of Technical Series maps were published and made available for free download. The maps were downloaded 13,487 times in 2018.
- NCTA continued the Hike 100 program, encouraging hikers to log 100 miles on the NCT and added a Hike 50 program in 2018 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System Act. More than 1,000 people from 24 states earned their patches for completion and many more participated in the program.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, MI

Photo: Michael Palko

Insert photo: Lake Owen Peninsula, WI



THE NEXT GENERATION

The future of the Trail depends on those that come after us.

In 2018 the North Country Trail Association launched a Next Generation Coalition to connect a new generation of trail lovers with the goal of getting more young people involved in outreach, volunteerism and advocacy.

This initiative provides a peer to peer experience and offers great opportunity for the growth and development of the Trail and the organization as well as the personal and professional growth of members of the coalition. Next Generation Coalition members are learning how to connect with the NCT community and gain experience in communication, advocacy initiatives and getting boots-on-the-ground exposure on the Trail itself.

“Being involved with the NCTA has allowed me to share my ideas for connecting the next generation to the trail. We are a group of trail advocates looking to make the NCT a part of your next adventure—and we’d sure be willing to tag along on the occasion! Together we can Protect, Inspire, Lead & Live by growing and becoming more connected. See you on the trail!”

– LACIE TRYAN



“The prioritization and health of public land depends on the actions taken by the next generation of environmental stewards. Young people are at such an advantage to live in a time when communication is efficient, and the desire to do something for a cause is fierce. I believe young people will make a positive difference in an age where media and culture meet nature.”

– DELAINI DISHER
NCTA’s first Next Generation Outreach Intern



“I’m passionate about getting young people outside to experience the natural world—and to do so in a way that treads lightly on the land. The Trail gives us a place to let our minds and feet wander. I’m really excited to help the coalition bring more young people together to care for our amazing Trail.”

– JARON CRAMER



“To advance our mission and encourage the involvement of the next generation, we must continue to foster a meaningful relationship between our land and the public by broadening our outreach efforts to include diverse populations. Through advocacy, partnerships and social media, I believe we can expand our Trail community and secure the NCT for generations to come.”

– EMILY RODRIGUEZ
NCTA’s 2019 Next Generation Outreach Intern





DECADE
MEMBER
CLUB

Lake Ashtabula, ND



In 1981, the North Country Trail Association was incorporated as the official “friends” organization for the North Country National Scenic Trail. Since that time, thousands of individuals and households have been members. Some of those members have gone above and beyond, maintaining their membership and actively volunteering with the NCTA for decades.

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Manistee River, MI

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Superior Hiking Trail, MN





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We are grateful for all of our supporters who helped make 2018 the successful year it was. Without you we would not be able to share all the great accomplishments celebrated in this report.

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We have made every effort to make these lists as accurate as possible and to publicly acknowledge all of our donors in accordance to their wishes. If we have omitted or incorrectly reported your gift, please accept our apology and contact our Development Director, Greg McAleenan at (616) 897-5987 ext. 5.



Left: Manistee National Forest, MI
Right: On the Buckeye Trail. Camp Oty'Okwa, OH

TRIBUTE GIVING





“Completed 103 miles, with miles hiked on segments of all four Pennsylvania Chapters of the NCT.”
— Jeffrey Sunderman

Every year, many thoughtful trail supporters decide to honor their friends and family members with a gift in memory of, or in honor of those they care about. These gifts, known as “tribute” gifts are a growing part of the support that helps move the mission of the trail forward and honor loved ones at the same time.

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Bean and Bear Lakes, MN

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Pattison State Park, WI



Donations made through bequests and other planned giving vehicles are some of the most thoughtful and generous gifts to the North Country Trail Association. These gifts are critical to the future stability of our organization. Donors who plan for such “legacy” gifts become a part of our North Country Legacy Society and are recognized in perpetuity for their generosity.

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Jordan River Valley, MI

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND SUPPORT THE TRAIL

The North Country Trail Association and North Country National Scenic Trail are going strong because of the generosity of our many dedicated members and supporters. Isn't it time you joined this great group and got involved?

Thousands of hours of volunteer support are poured annually into trail building and maintenance, chapter leadership, and administrative help. And then there's the financial support that makes all of these physical improvements and the promotion of the Trail possible. Perhaps this Annual Report has inspired you to join the many others who support the Trail, and you would like to make a meaningful contribution. Take a look through the following list and consider getting involved in the Trail today. It truly will make a difference.

Become a Member Join the 3,500 members already involved nationwide. You can join a local chapter if you wish. The easiest way to sign up is at our website: www.northcountrytrail.org.

Volunteer Whether it's building trail or stuffing envelopes to get the message out, we need your help. Call us at (616) 897-5987 and let's discuss how we can match your interests to our needs.

Gifts of Cash Outright cash gifts benefit the Trail immediately and help us leverage other grants and funds for the work we need to do each year.

Gifts of Land and Stock A gift of land or stock is often a very tax-wise way to make a generous gift to the Trail and receive a significant tax benefit. Call Greg McAleenan, Director of Development to discuss this option.

Planned Gifts Deferred or planned gifts such as bequests, charitable remainder trusts or retained life estates can make great tax sense for you and your heirs, and benefit the mission of the NCTA well into the future. Talk with your tax or estate planner about this option.

Company Matching Gifts One great way to double or even triple your giving power is with matching gifts from the company you work for. It's easy to do. Check with your human resources department before you give your next gift.

Corporate Giving If you represent a corporation or work for a corporation that is interested in the mission of the NCTA and would like to support that mission there are a number of marketing and philanthropic opportunities that will give maximum exposure to your corporation.

If you still have questions or want to make a special donation to the NCTA but want to talk about the best way to go about making the gift, contact Greg McAleenan, our Director of Development, at gmcaleenan@northcountrytrail.org or call at (616) 897-5987 ext. 5.

2018 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The financial sustainability of the North Country Trail Association continued to grow stronger in 2018.

We saw growth in both overall membership numbers and amounts of major gifts. We've also increased our ability to build relationships with Foundations and Corporations and to seek government grants, all areas that performed well and improved from the previous year.

We have made significant progress on our goal to decrease our dependence on the National Park Service and those funds now make up only 33.1% of our revenue stream. We've also begun to build an Operating Reserve to strengthen the organization's ability to weather unexpected expenses or loss of income without cutting into our programs.

Our major program areas of trail awareness, advocacy, trail building, maintenance and protection were all well supported by our revenues. More money went out to the field and onto the Trail than ever before. Due to solid financial management and the significant charitable support of our many donors, the NCTA was able to fund and fulfill its mission and a quick look at our net income shows an organization that is moving into 2019 in a strong position.



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.

BALANCE SHEET

As of 12/31/2018, in \$1,000's

ASSETS

Checking / Savings	\$442.4
Investments	\$102.7
Accounts Receivable	\$55.5
Other Current Assets	\$5.7
Total Current Assets	\$606.3
Fixed Assets	\$20.0
TOTAL ASSETS	\$626.3

LIABILITIES

Other Current Liabilities	\$47.7
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$47.7
TOTAL EQUITY	\$578.6
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$626.3

INCOME AND EXPENSE

Year Ending 12/31/2018, in \$1,000's

INCOME

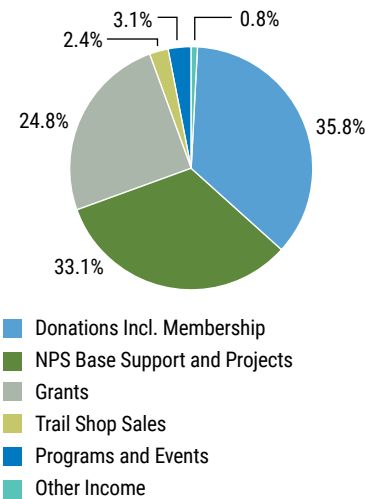
Donations Incl. Membership	\$424.4
NPS Base Support and Projects	\$391.8
Grants	\$294.2
Trail Shop Sales	\$27.9
Programs and Events	\$36.4
Other Income	\$9.9
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,184.6

EXPENSE

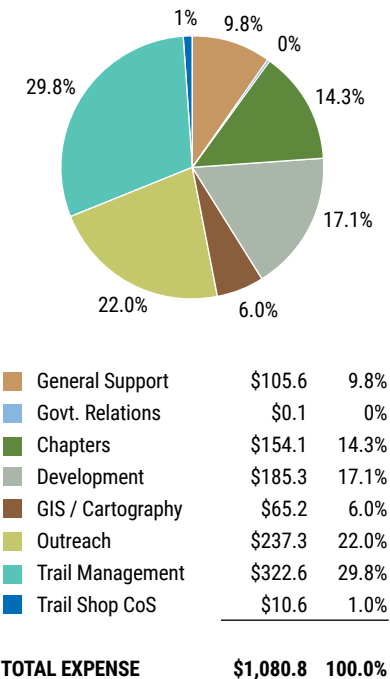
Salaries and Benefits	\$587.7
Administration	\$112.7
Communication and Outreach	\$125.5
Trail Shop Cost of Sales	\$10.6
Trail Management and Projects	\$191.8
Travel and Meetings	\$62.9
Advocacy	\$0.2
Depreciation	\$0
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$1,091.4

NET INCOME \$93.2

INCOME BY SOURCE



EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



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.

Official Federal Trail Partner

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Federal Land Management Partners

U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

State Land Management Partners

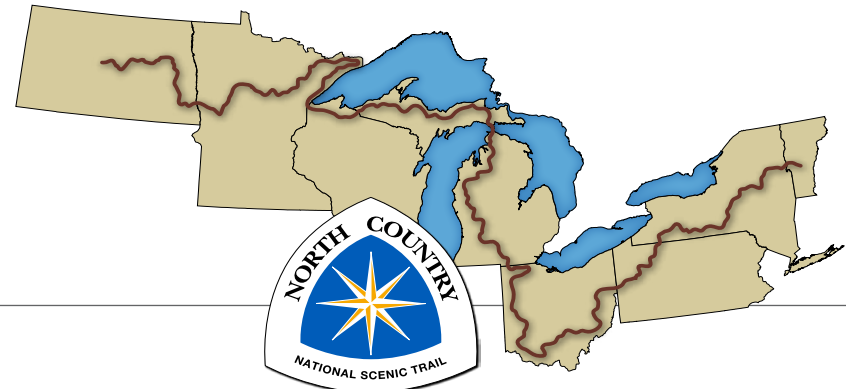
North Dakota Parks and Recreation
North Dakota Forest Service
North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Game Commission
New York Department of Environmental Conservation
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

North Country Trail Association National Board of Directors

Tim Mowbray, President, Minnesota
Jaron Nyhof, Vice President, Michigan
Mike Chapple, Treasurer, Indiana
Mark VanHornweder, VP West, Wisconsin
Dennis Garrett, VP East, Pennsylvania
Larry Pio, Secretary, Michigan
Ruth Dorough, Immediate Past President, New York
Josh Berlo, Minnesota
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Jerry Fennell, Wisconsin
Cheryl Kriendler, Kentucky
Derrick Passe, Minnesota
Jan Ulferts Stewart, North Dakota
Jeff VanWinkle, Michigan
Steve Walker, Ohio
Quinn Wright, New York

North Country Trail Association Staff

Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director
Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Development
Matt Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator – Minnesota/North Dakota
Tarin Hasper, Annual Fund Coordinator
Kate Lemon, Marketing and Communications
Greg McAleenan, Director of Development
Bill Menke, Regional Trail Coordinator – Wisconsin
Nicole Murphy, Administrative Assistant
Alison Myers, Administrative Assistant
Matt Rowbotham, GIS Coordinator
Lisa Senneker, Finance Administrator
Kenny Wawsczyk, Regional Trail Coordinator – Michigan



NCTA Chapters and Affiliates

NORTH DAKOTA

- Sheyenne River Valley Chapter
- Dakota Prairie Chapter

MINNESOTA

- Minnesota Waters and Prairie Chapter
- Star of the North Chapter
- Laurentian Lakes Chapter
- Itasca Moraine Chapter
- Arrowhead Chapter
- Kekekabic Trail Chapter
- Border Route Trail Association (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)
- Superior Hiking Trail Association (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)

WISCONSIN

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

MICHIGAN

- Ni-Miikanaake Chapter
- Peter Wolfe Chapter
- North Country Trail Hikers Chapter
- Superior Shoreline Chapter
- Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter
- Harbor Springs Chapter
- Jordan Valley 45° Chapter
- Friends of the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)
- Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter
- Spirit of the Woods Chapter
- Western Michigan Chapter
- Chief Noonday Chapter
- Chief Baw Beese Chapter

OHIO

- NW Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)
- Buckeye Trail Association (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)
- Great Trail-Sandy Beaver Canal Chapter

PENNSYLVANIA

- Wampum Chapter
- Butler County Chapter
- Butler Outdoor Club (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)
- Clarion County Chapter
- Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)
- Allegheny National Forest Chapter

NEW YORK

- Finger Lakes Trail Conference (Trail Maintaining Partner)
- Central New York Chapter
- Adirondack Mountain Club (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)

VERMONT

- Middlebury Area Land Trust (Trail Maintaining Affiliate)



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