



TRAIL WALKER

NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE • CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE SINCE 1920

Trail Connectivity Plan Envisions a Protected Green Corridor, Improved Access to Nature

The Trail Conference is proud to partner with the Open Space Institute and the Orange County Land Trust on the Highlands West Trail Connectivity Plan, a long-term initiative to conserve open space and support accessible outdoor recreation in New York's western Hudson Highlands region. The plan establishes a regional vision for recreation, conservation, and local economic development in a region that has seen increasing residential, commercial, and industrial development pressures.

STEVE AARON



Schunnefunk State Park is one of six state parks that would be connected through this plan.

Unveiled Feb. 22, the plan highlights a range of opportunities to permanently protect and enhance the landscape, working toward the creation of a connected, regional trail network. This green corridor will provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, protect critical wildlife habitat, and safeguard local watersheds. It strategically coordinates partners to identify, acquire, and protect parcels in eastern Orange County in a way that ensures permanently preserved routes for long-distance trails—the heart of the Trail Conference's conservation efforts for decades. It is, in fact, the four major

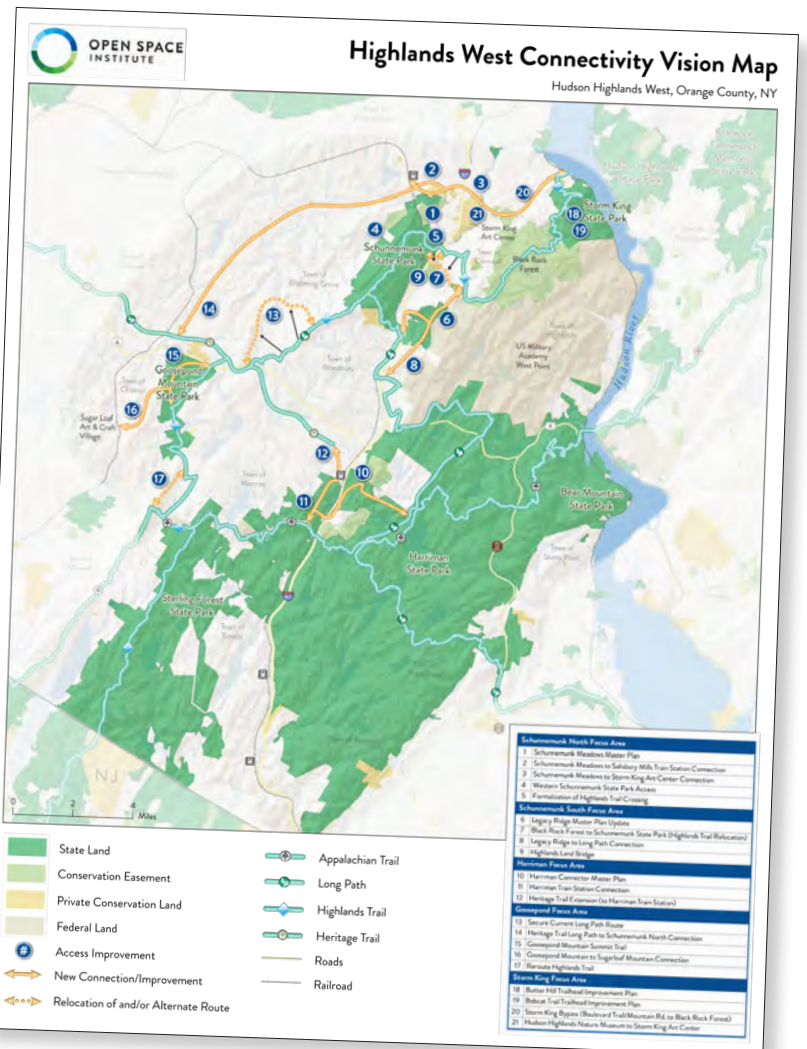
long-distance trails that converge in the western Hudson Highlands—the Appalachian Trail, Long Path, Highlands Trail, and Orange County Heritage Trail—that serve as the basis and inspiration for this expanded and enhanced network.

Ultimately, six state parks—from Storm King in the north to Sterling Forest in the south—would be connected through this plan. Spanning more than 93,000 acres, the area also includes Harriman, Bear Mountain, Goosepond Mountain, and Schunnefunk state parks, as well as privately

protected lands such as Black Rock Forest and Storm King Art Center.

The Highlands West Trail Connectivity Plan includes recommendations that will make access to outdoor spaces more widely available. Already, many recreational opportunities in the area exist within a one-hour drive or train ride from New York City. The plan proposes new trail connections that will link popular town centers, train stations, and bus stops to nearby state parks and protected lands.

"It's easy to focus on building new sections of trail, but



this plan demonstrates the type of big-picture thinking needed to make smaller projects into something greater than the sum of their parts," says Peter Dolan, Trail Conference Trail Program Manager. "By connecting preserved lands and ensuring public access along them, we seek to create long-distance trails that open up brand new ways for people to connect with nature. Perhaps someday, thanks to this plan, residents of the Hudson Highlands will look at the Highlands Trail and Long Path with the same recognition and reverence that the Appalachian Trail enjoys."

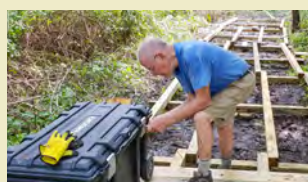
The Hudson Highlands West Trail Connectivity Plan is the product of more than two years of planning, meetings, and interviews. Stakeholders including elected officials, nonprofit organizations, and

state and local agencies were consulted to develop a regional vision and identify opportunities for meaningful open space protection and trail linkages. It builds on the progress the Trail Conference has made over the last several decades preserving land from Sterling Forest east toward Storm King.

Proposed projects include new trail creation; realignment and safety improvements for existing trails; planning for new park and trail areas to help reduce crowding at more popular state parks in the area; and trailhead improvements at existing parks to better welcome and direct visitors. Information on these projects, the Trail Conference's involvement, and ways to get involved will be posted at nynjtc.org.

Read the full Hudson Highlands West Trail Connectivity Plan at bit.ly/tc-hwtcp.

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News in Brief

Thanks and Congrats to the Liberty Family

Congratulations to Rick DeSilva Jr. of Liberty Subaru for winning the well-deserved honor of the 2021 TIME Dealer of the Year! Rick has



been a strong supporter of the Trail Conference and other local charities.

Through the Subaru Share the Love Event, the Liberty Family of Dealerships donated \$41,000 to the Trail Conference in 2020 and will be

donating more than \$47,000 this year.

As a member of the Mahwah community, Rick was delighted to see the Trail Conference save the Darlington Schoolhouse and wanted to support our organization's work in the parks.

The Trail Conference and

local community are grateful for your generosity and all you do, Rick!

Members Meeting Slated for April 25

Our Spring Members Meeting will be held on

Sunday, April 25. At press time, the agenda had not yet been set. If you have agenda items to suggest, please email them to kbezik@nynjtc.org. Meeting information and materials will be provided in advance. More details will be posted to nynjtc.org as they become available.

Management of Metro Trails Transitions to NYC Partners

As the Trail Conference entered its centennial year, we reflected on the possibilities for our programs—including our involvement in the care of trails throughout the Metro (NYC) Region. New York City has been part of our history from the beginning, and ensuring that access to nature is available in the five boroughs is a priority for the Trail Conference. However, the needs and management of the Metro trails program has drastically evolved over the last century, pushing us to rework management of the region multiple times in an effort to keep the program strong. What is now best for Metro trails is to transition the program to our partners at the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) and NYC Parks.

Since 2017, the NAC and NYC Parks have partnered as the Citywide Trails Team. This team is composed of environmental professionals who are dedicated to formalizing and improving New York City's network of over 300 miles of nature trails. The Citywide Trails Team runs the Trail Maintainer subset of the city's volunteer Super Steward Program, which Trail Conference maintainers already needed to complete to receive the certification required to work on NYC trails. The Super Steward program gives volunteers the independence to work on their own, lead other volunteers in projects and work trips, apply



The management of volunteer trail maintenance in New York City will be fully folded into the Super Steward Program run by the Natural Areas Conservancy and NYC Parks.

for mini-grants, network with other volunteers, and get a peek at the inner-workings of the NYC Parks system. Due to these restrictions and regulations, handing over management of Metro trails is a decision that helps to streamline the process of volunteer trail maintenance in NYC.

"The NAC has been an incredibly important partner in ensuring safe, enjoyable access to nature throughout New York City," said Trail Conference Executive Director Joshua Howard. "While they were happy to continue an on-the-ground partnership with us, it became clear that our long-term involvement within the

Super Steward program isn't essential for these trails to receive the quality of care they deserve. We are giving our full support to the NAC's efforts through this transition and are excited for the next evolution of our partnership in stewarding the lands of the greater New York metropolitan region."

"The Trail Conference has always been a champion of stewarding nature in the New York-New Jersey region, and we've been thrilled to have them as a partner on the launch of trail formalization in New York City," said Elizabeth Jaeger, the NAC's Deputy Director of Programs and

Operations. "We'll continue to champion and enjoy their work in keeping trails safe and accessible in the New York region and thank them for their support as we aim to create a world-class trail system in New York City."

The Trail Conference is already in the process of transitioning existing Metro volunteers fully over to NAC and the Super Steward Program. We will continue to collaborate with the NAC and the NYC Parks Stewardship Team on trail projects and workshops when needed. Light promotion of the program will continue on our website, and our Service Engagement Team will be directing any volunteer interest in NYC trails received by the Trail Conference over to the NAC.

For info on the Super Steward Program, visit naturalareasnyc.org/get-outside. Questions regarding the transition can be directed to our Service Engagement Team at volunteer@nynjtc.org.

Committed to the Best Care for Trails

For many years, trails in New York City had been considered part of our East Hudson region—a very large area with very different management requirements throughout. In 2018, the Trail Conference had found an answer to our challenges managing the specific needs of the Metro (NYC) region through the leadership of volunteer Mk Moore.

An Air Force veteran and retired clinical psychologist, Mk Moore quickly demonstrated initiative and the ability to



Moore

manage both the trails of NYC and the volunteers eager to care for them. Unfortunately, in mid-2020, Mk had to step down from his volunteer responsibilities when he was called back to active duty. After his exit, it became apparent that the efficient management of Metro requires greater time and resources than the Trail Conference is able to dedicate to the region without such a strong presence in the role of Trail Chair.

Given the circumstances, the Trail Conference determined that the Metro trail program is best served by a full transition to the NAC and NYC Parks. At a time when we are seeing unprecedented trail use and volunteer interest, this allows the NAC to do what they do best in the five boroughs while we ensure our other regions have the resources needed to meet demand.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer-powered organization that builds, maintains, and protects public trails. Together with our partners, we strive to ensure that the trails and natural areas we share are sustainable and accessible for all to enjoy for generations to come.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer, non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization.

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FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

The Power of People

This Trail Walker is about people—the people of the Trail Conference, and the people we serve. When I think about this organization, I am astounded by the dedication of our volunteers, staff, Board, and supporters. And when I think about outdoor recreation these days, I am blown away by the number of people I see.

There are new people who have fallen in love with the outdoors for the first time. New hikers, new walkers; there are grandparents and children discovering the wonders of our natural world. I also see people who are rediscovering the power of being outside, enthralled by the magic of con-



necting with nature.

I can speak from personal experience as my 7-year-old daughter

and 12-year-old son have fallen in love with the trails in our local nature preserve and those in the hills and mountains surrounding our home in Westchester County. During our trips outside, I marvel at how many people are enjoying the outdoors with us. Perhaps even more exciting is how they represent our greater community—one of the most diverse regions in the nation. We

are white, Black, and brown, young and old, all outside, all experiencing the joys of nature.

As I have written before, now more than ever, it is vital that we have healthy natural areas open and accessible for everyone to enjoy. The need for nature has become essential for our self-preservation.

The experience of going outside to walk or hike is more than just following a well-maintained trail—it's an experience in natural history. Being in a healthy forest, without invasive species choking out native plants and disrupting the habitat of the birds and animals that belong there, is part of that experience. Having clean air and water to support the sustainability of our planet is something that we can't take for granted.

With this boom in new vis-



Now more than ever, it is vital that we have healthy natural areas open and accessible for everyone to enjoy. The need for nature has become essential for our self-preservation.

Howard



itors to the outdoors, the Trail Conference's role in providing safe and beautiful spaces to find nature is paramount. However, as the number of visitors to our parks and trails grows, so do the demands on our organization.

New stewards are needed for these natural areas.

Elected officials need to hear from new faces advocating for the protection of our parks and the natural resources surrounding them.

New tools and techniques are going to be required to make our recreation on these natural areas sustainable.

We should welcome all these new visitors to the trails under our care. We need to ask for their help to strengthen our ability to be better stewards of the lands and waters that support the ecosystems we recreate in. When we play outdoors, we must always ensure our impact on the land is a positive one. That includes extending a hand to our new friends on the trails and inviting them to join us in making a difference.

Joshua Howard

Executive Director
executivedirector@nynjtc.org

Working to Create an Inclusive Outdoors

In January 2020, the Trail Conference Board approved the organization's first formalized Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy. In June, we further acknowledged the need to make our organization more representative of the diversity of the region in which we live. With a mostly white staff and volunteer leadership, we are missing the voices and experiences of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities as we attempt to accomplish our mission. Board, staff, and

volunteers that resemble the faces of our region—encompassing all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, nationalities, and socioeconomic classes—allow us to better understand the needs of all trail users, particularly the challenges that stand in the way of safe, enjoyable access to nature. It allows us to better connect with people who are underrepresented and to engage them more meaningfully in protecting the land they love.

The Trail Conference's DEI


Working Group, formed in July, is building our foundation for this change, including defining organizational goals. The working group meets monthly and is comprised of various Board members, staff members, and frequent special guests. To better educate ourselves and help others understand what we are working towards, we have been compiling a collection of resources at nynjtc.org/content/diversity-outdoors.

Additionally, a group of Trail Conference staff mem-

bers and our Board Chair are attending a new anti-racism training series designed and led by Yancey Consulting in partnership with the Dodge Foundation. This series is a five-month collective journey designed to provide invaluable tools and a prioritized action plan to guide our organization's commitment to change into transformative action.

The Trail Conference has also formed an internal discussion group to create opportunities to increase awareness and build an inclusive culture.

Participants are members of the organization's staff, Board, and volunteer community. Readings have included *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo, and *Black Faces, White Space: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* by Carolyn Finney.

The work is difficult. There is no roadmap that makes an organization more diverse, equitable, and inclusive overnight, but we will continue to put in the effort to make real improvements.  Joshua Howard

Trail Conference Elects Patsy Wooters Board Chair

The Trail Conference is pleased to announce that Patsy Wooters has been elected Board Chair. Patsy has been an active member of the organization since the 1980s, and a member of our Board of Directors since 2014.

Patsy is a retired teacher who worked in New York City's public schools for 26 years. Her fascination with wildlife and ecology drives her to protect natural areas and access to them. She first found the Trail Conference through her father, who volunteered with the organization as an attorney in the 1970s; she has been a member herself since 1984. Patsy, of Suffern, N.Y., spent her much of her childhood near the mountains and grew up hiking and camping at 4H camp and Girl Scout camp in Harriman State Park.

"I'm very attached to the mountain forest, and as a Board member, I hope to help preserve it for the long term," Patsy said. "Trails allow us to connect with true wilderness. Hikers are critical for protecting lands that would otherwise be developed."

Patsy has been active in conservation advocacy since 2000, when she joined Torne



Valley Preservation Association to help defeat proposals for two power plants in Torne Valley. From 2005 to 2014 she chaired the Ramapo Highlands Coalition, working to protect mountain forest along the Ramapo Pass.

She is a member of the Adirondack Mountain Club and a regular and winter member of the Catskill 3500 Club. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto and a master's from Lehman College. Patsy is a Trail Conference Life Member.

"Patsy has been a champion of the Trail Conference for decades," said Executive Director Joshua Howard. "Her commitment to protecting open space and ensuring that everyone is welcomed outdoors will be key to the organization's ongoing success."

JOHN MAGERLEIN

has been elected Trail Conference Board Vice Chair. John has been a Board member since 2015. He is also chair of the Policy Council and serves on the Governance Committee. John retired as a physicist from the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center after 37 years in a variety of technical and managerial positions. Since 1992, he has been a Trail Conference Supervisor for Fahnestock State Park, where he has led the construction of new trails and bridges and is a certified chain sawyer. John set up the first online registration system for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Biennial Conference as a registrar in 2007. He is an ATC and Adirondack Mountain Club member. He holds a bachelor's from Kalamazoo College and a doctorate from the University of Michigan. He is a Trail Conference Life Member.

Beth Ravit will continue to serve as Board Treasurer and Ken Posner will continue to serve as Board Secretary.

Staff Update

Welcome Andrew and Patrick

Andrew Blair joined the Trail Conference as **Finance & Operations Senior Associate**

in February. Growing up in Mahwah, N.J., Andrew spent much of his youth hiking and running on the trails that the Trail Conference maintains. He received degrees in accounting and finance from Boston College. After working for several financial institutions in Boston and New York City, Andrew transitioned into the nonprofit sector. He spent 4 1/2 years working for ICAP at Columbia University, a global public health organization focused on improving the health care systems of countries and communities in most need. An accounting and finance professional by day, Andrew also enjoys playing guitar, painting, and a good cup of coffee.

Patrick Hunsberger joined the Trail Conference in March as the **Trail Steward Program Coordinator**. He grew up with the woods in

his backyard in Bethlehem, Pa. He pursued a bachelor's

degree in speech, language, and hearing sciences from Temple University. Upon graduating, he entered a decade-long tenure within the hospitality industry, when he served as lead bartender/supervisor at a well-established restaurant in Philadelphia. This led to an interest in enology. He studied through various wine certification programs and taught classes at a local wine shop. His studies landed him in numerous wine regions across the U.S. With each trip, he found himself reserving time to hike the trails of New York, California, Oregon, and Washington State. His love for connecting with the outdoors and educating the public came full circle in 2020 when he served as an AmeriCorps member with the Trail Conference Conservation Corps, taking on the duties of Trail Education and Outreach Steward. In addition to hiking, he is a voiceover artist, singer, writer, avid runner, and lifelong Philadelphia sports fan.



Staff's Role in a Volunteer-Powered Organization



PETER DOLAN
TRAIL PROGRAM
MANAGER

The Trail Conference always has been, and always will be, a volunteer-powered organization. That means more than volunteer work on the ground—it means volunteers in leadership roles, setting regional priorities and executing planning at the highest levels. In that case, it's reasonable to wonder: What role do staff play in the organization? And why has our staffing increased so much in the past 10 years?

We cover more miles than ever before. In 1990, we maintained less than 1,000 miles of trails. By 2010, that was up to 1,750 miles. Currently, our network of maintained trails spans over 2,100 miles. All that mileage requires an enormous number of volunteer leadership positions to be filled at all times to keep trails maintained and park partners happy. While staff members are never intended to replace volunteer roles, they do step in and cover vacant positions—after all, just because a volunteer retires doesn't mean that the needs of local parks retire with them. At any given moment, staff are responsible for filling in as trail chairs, supervisors, or whatever else is needed to keep the organization running. That means collecting reports, answering public questions, responding to partner needs, and generally keeping the ship afloat while finding and training new volunteer leaders to step in and assume command. The more miles we cover, the more roles need to be temporarily assumed by staff.

Our work as stewards of the land has expanded. Trail adoption and maintenance has always been the backbone of the Trail Conference's work, and it continues to be our largest volunteer program today. But as the nature of trail use changes, other programs have been created to address new needs: the Invasives Strike Force to address emerging



Trail Conference staff provide the support that allows our volunteers to accomplish so much good work.

threats to local ecosystems; Conservation Corps to provide a full-time trail building workforce in response to heavy use; Trail Stewards to educate and guide the ever-growing number of new visitors, and more. Each of these programs involves volunteers, but also requires dedicated staff management on the backend.

Modern insurance and liability practices place new demands on us. Running a volunteer program involves much more than just showing up to work. Increasingly, land managers can only allow volunteers to work in their parks with extensive formal signed agreements, liability waivers, and insurance documentation. All of these require regular renewal, which—over a network that spans roughly 200 different parks—places a significant administrative burden on the Trail Conference. Additionally, modern trail work often involves time-intensive permits, engineering, and approvals that staff usually handle behind-the-scenes so volunteers can continue doing their good work. Our staff also process volunteer expense reports, maintain our 501(c)(3)

status with annual audits, and engage supporters to secure funding for volunteer projects and programs. As this administrative load has grown over the years, our staffing has had to grow in response so volunteers can continue to perform the more enjoyable elements of the work on the ground.

The nature of volunteerism is changing. Increasingly, people are seeking ad-hoc volunteer opportunities that they can join on short notice without commitments. That's a challenge for an organization that has traditionally relied on long-term volunteers to adopt trail segments, become expert trail crew members, or serve in leadership roles. A growing population is also looking to volunteerism as a social opportunity—something that our “individual maintainer” model doesn't accomplish. As we look to engage new and younger volunteers, we need to provide more facilitated group opportunities. While many volunteer leaders do a great job providing these social outings, not all regions have the ability to do so. It often falls to staff to run these kinds of opportunities.



The organization's decisions and priorities are informed by the feedback received from our volunteers.

2020 Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Results

In November 2020, we solicited feedback from our more than 2,000 volunteers. This input is critical to our programs' health, and our volunteers' responses inform the next year's priorities and decisions. Below are highlights from the latest Annual Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. For the full report, visit bit.ly/tc-2020Survey.

Overall Satisfaction and Volunteer Program Progress in 2020

- ▶ Overall volunteer satisfaction continued to be high at 96% in 2020. Dissatisfaction increased slightly (4% in 2020 vs. 2% in 2019) but respondents who were “very satisfied” increased by 9% in 2020 (77%) compared to 2019 (68%).
- ▶ Despite the pandemic, 38% of respondents perceived that the volunteer program improved in the last year. Additionally, those satisfied with staff support were increasingly “very satisfied” (73%) compared to 2019 (66%) and 2018 (61%). Overall satisfaction with staff support continued to be high at 93%. Volunteer leaders specifically commented that they felt increased support in 2020.
- ▶ One of our biggest successes this year was our Digital Engagement Initiative: 96% of respondents who attended webinars found them to be useful and 94% want us to continue webinars.
- ▶ Of those respondents who attended group events under our COVID-19 protocols, the vast majority (97%) felt comfortable.
- ▶ More volunteers “strongly agreed” that the Trail Conference widely articulates applicable policies and procedures in 2020 (59%) compared to 2018 and '19 (44%). Overall agreement was high at 90%.

Areas for Improvement Identified

- ▶ Volunteer training and skills building is an area we

will continue improving; 94% of those who attended a webinar want to see the program continue and have online learning be built out. Additionally, many volunteers continue to request more opportunities for growth and learning. We are evaluating how to refine digital learning and our catalogue of in-person workshop opportunities.

▶ Many volunteers noted they feel disconnected because they don't have a volunteer leader for their region or their current leader is not communicative. Recruitment to fill vacant leadership positions will be a key priority in 2021. We hope this will improve not only the disconnect felt by those with no leader, but also that these open positions will provide the growth opportunities so many are looking for. In addition to recruitment, we will also improve the onboarding and training of leaders since there is not a sufficiently structured and streamlined process. A more robust onboarding process will set new leaders up for success and ensure they all know expectations of the role, such as proactively and openly communicating with their team members.

▶ Feelings of appreciation from the Trail Conference organization as a whole increased by 10.6% from 2019 (42%) to 2020 (53%), however this percentage needs to continue to grow so that all volunteers know just how much we value them. In response to 2019 survey recommendations, we had planned more social events and appreciation initiatives in 2020; however, due to the pandemic, we were unable to implement these events like we had planned. If conditions improve in 2021 and we are able to more safely gather in larger groups, we will revisit those plans. In lieu of in-person events, we will continue to find digital ways to demonstrate our gratitude.

In Memoriam

PATRICK COLANGELO

Patrick A. Colangelo, 81, passed away on Feb. 22, 2021, at his home in Stamford, Conn. He was born in the Bronx and received degrees from Fordham University and Baruch College. Pat started his career as a CPA, followed by 10 years as Chief Financial Officer at Greenwich Hospital, then 20 years as Senior VP, Finance and Treasurer of Stamford



Health System until his retirement in 2002. He was active all his life; he traveled the world fly-fishing and was an avid hiker, especially in his treasured Catskills. Patrick was one of the original trail crew members for the Trail Conference's Ward Pound Ridge Trail Crew, now the

East Westchester Trail Crew. Since 2014, he had been an A.T. Corridor Monitor in East Hudson. He was a member of the Rip Van Winkle Hikers and completed the Catskill Mountain Club Catskills Grid 420 challenge. Never one to seek out the spotlight, he quietly and generously gave his counsel and support to many charitable organizations. He will be missed.

Volunteer COVID-19 Protocol Updates

In 2020, 97% of volunteers who attended group events felt safe under our COVID-19 protocols. Our volunteer protocols will continue to evolve as the situation does, and we will continue to put the health

and safety of our people first. Starting March 2021, we are excited to reopen outdoor group events to the public instead of only to existing and experienced volunteers. This means we will be able to have in-person workshops

and work trips starting this spring!

Crew leaders will have the choice of whether or not to open their work trips to the public or keep it to their regular participants. No volunteer or staff member

will be forced into a situation they are uncomfortable with or deem unsafe.

Our latest protocols can always be found at bit.ly/tc-covid-19. If you have questions, please email volunteer@nynjtc.org.

Take Your Love of Nature One Step Further



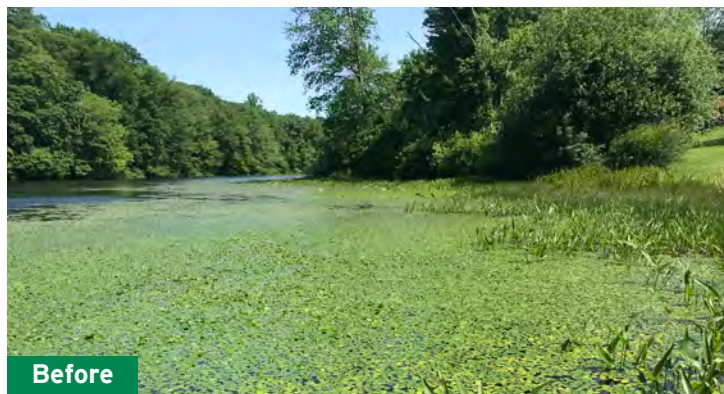
BRENT BOSCARINO
INVASIVE SPECIES CITIZEN
SCIENCE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Ask any outdoorsperson, and they will probably tell you of a place they visited as a child that inspired their love of nature. We recall running through meadows of wildflowers, climbing into towering tree canopies, or admiring a breathtaking view on a mountain peak. But for so many of us, the story becomes a lament about how these natural spaces are no longer what they once were. Too often, they are now degraded or overrun by invasive vegetation.

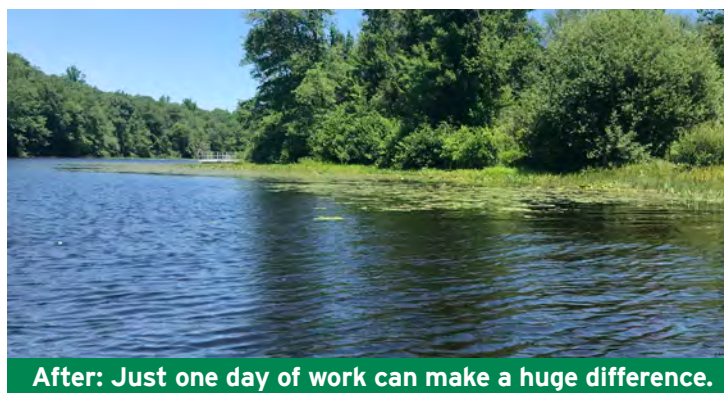
One of the fond memories I had as a child, and now as a father, is packing GORP, a sandwich, and some water and enjoying a picnic with my family after a good hike. Unfortunately, many picnic areas and natural spaces in Pennsylvania and New Jersey are being spoiled by the invasive insect pest, spotted lanternfly (SLF). The sticky residue that SLF swarms leave behind is driving families

away from these areas and ruining these special moments in nature. As a community, we all need to band together to keep these pests out of our region's natural areas to avoid a similar fate. Early detection is key! You can take action by volunteering to help spot these early invaders before they can become established through our Invasives Strike Force Survey Program. Our ISF survey program will also continue to focus on invasive plants this year, but starting in 2021, we will also have a program to detect SLF.

Not only is this early detection work essential to preserving ecological integrity, but it's also fun and rewarding! So many of our volunteers have shared that learning how to identify and appreciate the details of the plants and animals they are seeing along the trails has completely transformed the outdoor experience for them. It truly brings the respect and gratitude for our natural areas to a whole new level. Perhaps some of your favor-



Before



After: Just one day of work can make a huge difference.

ite nature moments involved swimming in a pristine lake on a hot summer day. Now that lake, which was once so clear you could see straight to the bottom, is entirely covered in floating mats of water chestnut. The Aquatic Invasives Strike Force (AISF) spends their summer working to bring back a small part of what so many of us have lost: refreshing places to go for a dip, increased accessibility in lakes and rivers, and healthier habitats for our native fish and wildlife. You too can join the AISF Crew on a water chestnut removal day in July, leaving these treasured habitats in much better shape than you found them.

If you prefer to stay on land, but still want to get your hands dirty, the Invasives Strike Force

Crew will also be running a series of volunteer work days on weekends from May through October, removing invasive plants in parks throughout northern New Jersey and the Lower Hudson Valley. Our Habitat Helpers volunteer crew takes caring for our environment one step further by growing, planting, and maintaining native habitats. Be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities in the coming months!

Spend just one day volunteering with us, and you can see what a difference a pair of hands and a positive attitude can make in restoring balance in our vital natural habitats. Interested in any of the above opportunities? Please contact us at invasives@nynjtc.org to learn more.

Walkkill Puncheon Restoration Project Complete on Appalachian Trail in New Jersey

The West Jersey Trail Crew replaced 107 deteriorated planks identified as in need of replacement along the 1,600-foot-long puncheon walkway on the Appalachian Trail between Lake Walkkill Road and the Walkkill Wildlife Refuge near Vernon, N.J. Approximately 90 sleepers (the foundation on which the tread planks rest) were also replaced using sections of donated utility poles.

While not a highly technical or complex project, this extensive work has added many years of additional life to this important trail stretch, directly adjacent to the section of Walkkill National Wildlife Refuge slated for a new bridge and boardwalk sometime in the years to come, pending final engineering and approvals.

This Appalachian Trail project has been made possible by a grant from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) through funding from L.L. Bean. Without the support of L.L. Bean and ATC, this important work would not have been possible.

Peter Dolan

Bergen County Greenspace Permanently Protected

The Trail Conference is celebrating another conservation win in Bergen County, N.J., thanks to the efforts of our partners at The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC).

In February, TLC announced the purchase of 40 acres of undeveloped land in Mahwah from the New Jersey Department of Transportation. This key parcel—an important wildlife habitat and watershed—buffers 13,000 acres of county and state parkland that comprises the largest area of undeveloped land in Bergen County.

“The Land Conservancy is thrilled to permanently preserve this remarkable property, one of the largest unprotected properties remaining in Bergen County, and add it to our Ramapo Mountain Preserve,” said David Epstein, President of The Land Conser-



STEVE AARON

vancy. “We thank each of our wonderful partners whose patience and persistence helped make this critical preservation project possible.”

The deal was five years in the making, with assistance from the Trail Conference, NJ Audubon Society, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, and committed do-

nors. Purchased by NJDOT in 1991, the land was unused and leftover from construction of Route 287. In 2017, TLC sought to have the parcel declared surplus and put up for public auction—a bureaucratic process that took two years. Additionally, TLC requested the clean-up of a half-acre section that had been used as

a dumping ground for bulk trash. The week-long clean-up process, performed by NJDOT contractors and overseen by TLC, resulted in the removal of six dumpsters full of debris, as well as six old cars and 622 tires! Now, the entire tract is clean and green in perpetuity. TLC, funded in part by Green Acres and the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund for this project, was the highest bidder at the auction in September 2019. Open space advocate, N.J. Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi, helped see the transaction to completion.

Precious wildlife habitats and scenic views will remain undisturbed thanks to the permanent preservation of this property. Much of the land is rugged terrain and difficult for visitors to navigate, though its recreation potential is being assessed—including a trail

connecting Ramapo Mountain Preserve to New York State, through the village of Hillburn, into Harriman State Park. “The Trail Conference’s vision for land conservation has always been with the big picture in mind—ultimately, for the creation of green corridors that promote healthy ecosystems and sustainable recreation,” said Trail Conference Executive Director Joshua Howard. “When natural areas thrive, our connection with the land is that much more enjoyable. Working with committed donors and valued partners like The Land Conservancy on strategic acquisitions such as this one not only provides a safe haven for wildlife, it also opens up the possibilities for trail connectivity. And better access to trails improves the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.”

2021 TRAIL CONFERENCE AWARDS

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS

The Trail Conference community faced the challenges of 2020 with determination and resilience. They provided inspiration and hope during a time when we desperately needed it. When parks and trails began to face record-high use with millions of people seeking respite outdoors, our volunteers, service members, and partners rose to the occasion—graciously, patiently working under the closures and restrictions that were put in place to keep everyone safe. We are humbled by such indomitable spirit.

At our annual Volunteer Appreciation event on March 28, we celebrated those who have gone above and beyond. Without their incredible commitment to protecting trails and natural areas, issues such as blowdowns, untended erosion, and the encroachment of invasive species would cut off the public's ability to safely and enjoyably experience all the outdoors has to offer. We can play outside because they work so hard to provide that access for everyone.

During the virtual event, we recognized a number of outstanding individuals that exemplify the Trail Conference mission. It is with honor that we say volunteers are our superheroes. Congratulations to all honorees—and thank you!

THE MAJOR WILLIAM A. WELCH AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PARTNER

Honors partners who have been strong advocates for and provided significant assistance to Trail Conference volunteers.

Rebecca Fitzgerald

Superintendent, High Point State Park & New Jersey Veterans' Memorial; Stokes State Forest (temporary)

Rebecca has been a strong Trail Conference partner since 1999. About six years ago, she encouraged Trail Conference volunteers to get involved with Lusscroft Farm, a subset within High Point State Park. In 2019, she and High Point Maintenance Supervisor Chris White (bio below), supported volunteers in reblazing the trails there. Rebecca helped write a National Recreational Trail Grant that provided funds for the blaze materials, as well as materials to repair several bridges. Rebecca is consistently and enthusiastically going out of her way to support the volunteers by pushing through approvals for projects, facilitating procurement and placement of bollards at trailheads, and providing indoor space for Trail Conference workshops (pre-COVID). Rebecca, Chris, and their team make the work our volunteers do possible.



Christopher White

Maintenance Supervisor, High Point State Park

Chris regularly goes above and beyond to support Trail Conference volunteers. In 2019, Chris and his staff made 1,500 trail blazes so that volunteers could reblaze all 13 trails of Lusscroft Farm. Chris' gratitude to the volunteers is central to all his interactions with them. In partnership with Rebecca Fitzgerald (bio above), he and staff have hauled construction materials, made and installed bollards, removed significant blowdowns, and made repairs to the floating boardwalk on the Cedar Swamp Trail.



Nora Porter

Graphic Designer

Nora has designed Trail Con-

ference books since 1998. She is very skilled, does excellent work, and is dedicated to the organization. While Nora is contracted to do work, she volunteers additional time to "go the extra mile" and help the Trail Conference with questions and requests that she is uniquely qualified to answer. Nora is a pleasure to work with; our books wouldn't be the same without her.



Steve Marino

Maintenance Supervisor, Wawayanda State Park

For over 20 years and across three parks, Steve has been a strong supporter of Trail Conference volunteers, particularly the West Jersey Crew's efforts. Together with each park superintendent, he has made countless projects possible for the crew. In his current position at Wawayanda and as a member of the Forest Fire Service, Steve played a pivotal role in the success of the Terrace Pond Floating Walkway project. He helped prepare the helicopter drop for materials and made sure the crew had the transportation and access necessary for construction. Steve is an enthusiastic fan of our volunteers' work. He has even joined the crew on his days off!



THE DEDICATED SERVICE AWARD

Honors long-time, dedicated volunteers who have demonstrated exemplary service to the trails and natural areas that surround them.

Herb Chong

Publications Committee Member

Over the past 25 years, Herb has offered his skills on projects ranging from trail construction to advocacy to cartography and guide book production. In addition to

helping with our efforts to embrace newly developed GPS technology in the late '90s, Herb oversaw the Trail Conference's first digitally produced map in 2000, which covered Sterling Forest. This map paved the way for the future of the Trail Conference's digital mapmaking. Herb also served as editor, cartographer, photographer, and field checker for major updates to the Long Path Guide Book in 2002 and 2005 and helped to produce a map of John Boyd Thacher State Park. He is also a skilled photographer and has offered photos for use in our publications.



Ron Luna

Former Trail Supervisor: Pyramid Mountain

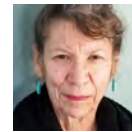
Ron started as trail maintainer at Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area and took over as trail supervisor in 2005. He served in that role until 2018; during that time, he visited the park almost daily to monitor the trails and oversee his maintainers and crews. One of Ron's bigger accomplishments was counteracting the widening of the highly trafficked Blue Trail. Ron worked tirelessly to line the park entrance with granite rocks to keep trail users on the path. He also created the Toddler Trail, a nature trail near the visitor center, and helped scout a reroute for the Butler-Montville Trail. Ron continues to help improve the park by fabricating signs and posts. His love for the trails at Pyramid Mountain is evident not only in his hard work, but also his propensity to welcome all visitors and volunteers to the park.



Martha Rabson

Appalachian Trail Corridor Monitor: Putnam County; Invasives Strike Force Surveyor;

Trail Maintainer: Fahnestock State Park; Trail Crew Member Martha has been dedicated to protecting the Appalachian Trail corridor in Putnam County since 2013. In her corridor monitoring career, she has resolved incursions on her stretch of the trail by reporting signs of illegal hunting and vandalism. In addition to looking after the A.T., Martha has helped to onboard other corridor monitors and is always willing to help with new projects as they come up. Martha also serves as an Invasives Strike Force surveyor, a trail maintainer, and a member of the Trail Tramps, Westchester East, and East Hudson trail crews.



Robert (Bob) Reardon

Former Trail Crew Member and Trail Maintainer: Appalachian Trail; Camp Smith Trail

Bob began volunteering in 1984 as a trail crew member helping to relocate the Appalachian Trail in Putnam County. He also maintained a section of the A.T. from the Bear Mountain Bridge to South Mountain Pass for about a decade. When the Camp Smith Trail opened in 1995, Robert adopted the popular northern section to Anthony's Nose, which he maintained through 2020. Robert was recognized with the Hoeflerlin Award in 1999 for his leadership on trail crews. As he retires from his maintainer position, we recognize his years of dedication to the A.T. and Camp Smith Trail.



Robert (Rob) Segal

Trail Supervisor: Long Path; Trail Maintainer: Rainbow Falls Trail

Rob got his start as a trail maintainer on the Long Path in the late '80s and in 2000 stepped up to oversee

the Long Path between Route 52 and the Catskills as trail supervisor. As part of a major trail relocation effort in 2010, Rob assumed responsibility for rerouting the trail in his region. An attentive leader, Rob works closely with his maintainers to ensure their work meets Minnewaska State Park standards. He is very responsive to the issues raised by his maintainers and the park. Rob proactively plans work trips with his maintainers to tackle bigger maintenance needs; he even shares his expertise of the area by leading group hikes in the park. Overall, Rob's dedication has proved to be a huge asset to the Long Path, Minnewaska, and the Trail Conference.



Alfred (Arnie) Seymour-Jones

Cartography Volunteer

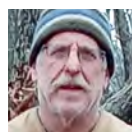
A long-time Trail Conference member and volunteer, Arnie served as a trail maintainer in Harriman State Park for 11 years, then shifted his focus to become one of the Trail Conference's most consistent and reliable map assembly volunteers. Our paper map sets arrive in separate pieces and must be assembled into bundles to make them store-ready. Arnie has been assembling maps on a weekly basis for 13 years and he single-handedly assembles thousands upon thousands of maps every year!



Tom Schmitt

Trail Maintainer, Sawyer, Trail Crew Member: Yorktown Trails

When the Trail Conference acquired new parkland in the town of Yorktown, N.Y., in 2010, Tom almost single-handedly designed and built the 5.6-mile network of mountain biking trails in what



is now known as Granite Knolls Park. By 2014, he had added another 1.4 miles of trail. Moreover, Tom helped set the stage for cooperation between hikers and mountain bikers in the park. Today, Tom continues to maintain 3.7 miles of trails in the park. He also volunteers with the Yorktown Trail Crew and removes blowdowns.

Peter Tilgner

Trail Maintainer: Tenaflly Nature Center

Peter has single-handedly maintained the 7-mile trail system at Tenaflly Nature Center for over a decade, upholding high standards for clearing, blazing, and tread improvement. One of his many accomplishments was coordinating the removal of 279 blowdowns after Superstorm Sandy. Peter also recruits and trains other volunteers to help maintain the trails at Tenaflly and has worked with multiple Eagle Scouts in the design and construction of bridges and boardwalks to preserve wetland habitats along trails.



Susara Van Niekerk

Trail Maintainer: Stokes State Forest, Schunemunk Mountain, Sterling Forest; Club Trails Chair: Interstate Hiking Club

Susara has reliably maintained the Tinsley and Geology trails in Stokes State Forest for over 10 years, an assignment totaling 3 miles. She also holds the position of club trails chair for the Interstate Hiking Club and has enthusiastically led the maintenance of an additional 12 miles of trails in Sterling Forest and Schunemunk Mountain state parks since 2016. Susara's passion and attention to detail make her an outstanding asset to trails she sustains.



THE NEXT GENERATION AWARD

Honors volunteers under 25 years of age who have enthusiastically and passionately made contributions serving the Trail Conference's mission.

Maxwell and Nathalie Chow

Invasives Strike Force Surveyors; Trail Maintainers: Ringwood State Park; Trail Crew Volunteers

Max (16) and Nathalie (14) are busy teenagers who make time to volunteer because they have a deep passion for the environment. In fall 2019, they joined our Conservation Corps for workdays in Sterling Forest. When crew days were canceled in 2020 due to COVID, they steered their passion to the Invasive Strike Force and spent over 20 hours completing their surveyor assignment. In fall 2020, they had a desire to take on long-term volunteer roles and became trail maintainers in Ringwood State Park. We look



forward to Max and Nathalie continuing to grow in their volunteer roles!

THE PAUL LEIKEN AWARD FOR GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Honors volunteers who have recently "gone the extra mile" and made a significant, noteworthy contribution in the last 12 to 18 months.

Carole Baligh

Habitat Helpers Crew; Invasives Strike Force Surveyor; Appalachian Trail Natural Heritage Monitor

Carole has devoted more hours than any other volunteer for our Habitat Helpers Crew for the last couple years. With volunteer activities limited due to the pandemic, our Habitat Helpers were unable to access the garden for months. Once we were able to reinstate limited work days, Carole went above and beyond by participating in every work day. She was often the first to arrive and last to leave, working tirelessly to manage the garden. In addition to Carole's involvement with Habitat Helpers, she is also an Invasives Strike Force surveyor and Appalachian Trail natural heritage monitor.



Don Cohen

Trail Maintainer: Neversink Gorge, Minnewaska, Catskills; Trail Crew Member: Hudson Nor'Westers; Sawyer

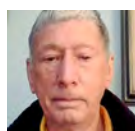
Don has gone above and beyond in many ways since he started volunteering. When he adopted a trail at the Neversink Gorge Unique Area in 2017, he took on a particularly overgrown section and restored it. He regularly attends work trips at the Gorge, and his natural leadership has helped make these trips run smoothly. As a sawyer, he's cleared many blowdowns in the park, and after one storm, he responded to 35 blowdowns. In 2019, Don took up the charge of advocacy; his efforts supported our Albany Advocacy Days. He's also done important research to bolster our conservation work. And in 2020, Don adopted a third trail section in the Catskills and helped remove blowdowns along the Long Path. Don is also an active member of the Hudson Nor'Westers Trail Crew.



Alec Malyon

Sawyer; Assistant Regional Trails Council Chair: New Jersey

Over the past 3 years, Alec has devoted over 500 hours as lead sawyer and maintenance crew worker for 200 miles of trails in Bergen and Passaic counties. He has also been instrumental in removing blowdowns in Sterling Forest. In 2020, he went above and beyond in his sawyer work: Despite the numerous



storms that battered our area, including Tropical Storm Isaias, Alec was always ready to grab his chainsaw and a swamper or two to hit the trail. Alec devoted 269 hours to clear 240 blowdowns from July to December. Alec was also a key volunteer in the major loop blazing projects of 2020, which yielded five new trail loops in the Ramapo Mountains.

David Miller

Trail Maintainer: Long Path; Sawyer

Since David started as a trail maintainer on the Long Path in 2018, he has gone the extra mile, contributing a minimum of 150 hours to his 2-mile trail section each reporting period. In 2020, when another maintainer was unable to volunteer, David temporarily filled in. In addition to maintaining these two sections, David also attended multiple trips to remove blowdowns in the Catskills, assisted with relocations of the Shawangunk Ridge Trail and Long Path, and attended maintenance trips in Schunemunk and Harriman state parks.



Rob Rex

Trail Maintainer: Norvin Green State Forest

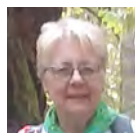
Rob has shown an amazing aptitude for going above and beyond what is expected since he started his duties in 2007. Always up for a challenge, he brings a wave of energy to every trail project he coordinates. He provides a vital link between the Lake Iosco Community and Norvin Green State Forest. In 2020, on numerous occasions, Rob gathered his neighbors to execute various projects such as blazing the entire Posts Brook Trail in a lightning-fast manner and completing a reroute to bypass a trail section that was destroyed by ATV traffic. Last fall, Rob was essential in implementing improvements to the Lower, Carris Hill and Posts Brook Trail intersection, which resulted in clearer, easier paths for hikers to follow.



Karen Rose

Trail Maintainer: Harriman State Park; Club Trails Chair: ADK-North Jersey Ramapo Chapter

Karen is a long-time trail maintainer for multiple sections of the Long Path and Ramapo-Dunderberg trails in Harriman State Park. As club trails chair of the ADK-North Jersey Ramapo Chapter, Karen has been responsible for recruiting maintainers to help with these trail sections. Karen proactively leads trail maintenance hikes to encourage others to get involved. In 2020, Karen went above and beyond when her maintainers were unable to continue maintaining. For the



duration of their absence, Karen filled in and single-handedly covered two of the club's 2-mile sections. Overall, the trail supervisors that Karen works with have been very impressed with her enthusiasm, leadership, and reliability.

Noel Schulz

Trail Maintainer: Harriman State Park; Swamper

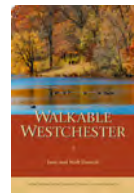
Noel has been a swamper for the Harriman area chainsaw crew for years. He coordinates work trips for the crew, including scouting blowdowns prior to each work trip. Since Tropical Storm Isaias, Noel has been out twice a week for hours at a time removing downed trees. Noel is also a long-time trail maintainer of the Tuxedo Mount Ivy Trail in Harriman State Park.



Jim Simpson

Publications Volunteer: Editor

Jim lent his time, creativity, and talent to serve as editor for the second and third editions of *Walkable Westchester*. For the third edition, authors Jane and Walt Daniels were faced with the challenge of having limited space to add new parks and trails. Jim's suggestions were instrumental in meeting the book's length requirement. Jim researched park history and wrote up pieces for the sidebars. His background as a New York Times photojournalist resulted in photo captions that catch your attention. Jim's ability to give tactful advice on wording and layout was a tremendous help in producing the new edition of the book.



Eileen West

Publications Volunteer: Field Checker

Eileen contributed in many ways to the production of the second and third editions of *Walkable Westchester*. For both editions, she checked trails and parks to ensure the new books would be accurate and up-to-date. For the second edition, she checked more than half of the locations (even after breaking her wrist!); for the third edition, she devoted 172 hours to making site visits. Eileen also volunteered to convert PDFs to Word documents and proofread the final copy. Eileen's willingness to visit parks on short notice and her ability to collect reliable information made her an asset to the Trail Conference's latest publication.



Mott, Jean Brennan, Justin Robinson, Lee Mott, Linda Taggart, Lori Pluta, Mike Daly, Monica Day, Nicole Zonsius, Rabindra Singh, Sean Sullivan, Shelley Harvey, Tamar Schragger, TJ Robinson, Tom Karakowski, Tom Robinson

In 2020, the West Jersey Trail Crew, under the leadership of David and Monica Day, took on the challenge of constructing a new floating walkway over a muddy, bog-like crossing at the outlet of Terrace Pond. The popular Terrace Pond Circular Trail crosses the outlet—a stretch of waist-deep mud that poses a hazard for the hikers who attempt to cross. The sheer rock edges and loose organic material made it impossible to set bridge foundations, so the crew had to find an alternative solution. They devoted over 1,000 hours last summer to install a unique, 120-foot-long floating walkway across the bog. The process involved significant logistical efforts, including coordinating a helicopter airlift. The crew worked tirelessly every weekend throughout the summer, wading in bottomless mud, even through the heat. Together, the crew contributed the most significant improvement to the Terrace Pond trail network in generations. They transformed a difficult crossing into something any hiker can readily cross while staying dry. Additionally, without being asked, the crew took it upon themselves to go beyond what was expected of them and improve other challenging sections of the trail by installing a ladder and 37 stone steps.



Loop Blazing Volunteers

Alan Abramowitz, Alec Malyon, Chris Compel, Chris Connolly, Hank Hafelfinger, John Moran, Keith Scherer, Malcolm Spector, Nick McKenna, Patricia Fuge, Richard Fuge, Wendy Fowler

In 2020, these individuals went above and beyond their normal roles to implement the large-scale reblazing of existing trails in Ramapo Mountain State Forest, Wawayanda State Park, Abram S. Hewitt State Forest, Norvin Green State Forest, Long Pond Ironworks, and Ringwood State Park to create user-friendly loop trails as part of a concerted effort to improve trail networks and reduce the amount of lost hikers. Years of careful planning on behalf of our volunteers, staff, and park partners enabled our volunteers to transform these trail networks without a need for trail construction. This was no small feat on the ground—



West Jersey Trail Crew

Billy Cerezo, Bill Taggart, Chris Durning, David Day, Dan Walter, David Copperman, Don Walter, Greg Bernet, James

our loop blazing volunteers set out with their paint brushes and hammers and devoted over 500 hours through the pandemic and heat of the summer to reblazing over 26 miles of trail to create these exciting new loops.

THE HIT THE GROUND RUNNING AWARD

Honors volunteers who have “hit the ground running” and made a strong impact within their first two years of service.

David Andrews

Ashokan Rail Trail Steward

David joined the Ashokan Rail Trail Steward program in October 2019. He immediately began going above and beyond the regular duties, working with staff to create a tracking and reporting process for the Stewards. When there's a trail issue, David proactively alerts others; for situations he can handle, like clearing small downed trees or helping a turtle safely cross the trail, he's on top of it immediately. David is fantastic at engaging and educating users to hike responsibly. His positive demeanor can put a smile on anyone's face.



Stephen Howard

Welch Trail Education Center Volunteer

Stephen was first introduced to the Welch Trail Education Center in September 2019 and quickly became passionate about it. On his first visit, he fixed a broken water heater and identified a list of projects to be done. Since then, he has restored 19 windows at his home shop and built new windows for ones that couldn't be restored. He also built four new exterior doors and replaced custom-fit siding. His love for history and restoration shine through his work and he is always willing to lend a helping hand.



Steve Krause

Welch Trail Education Center Volunteer

When the pandemic hit, Steve, an engineer, suddenly found himself with more time. When volunteering opened back up, he discovered a love for the Welch Trail Education Center (WTEC) and began going almost every week to help fix and restore it. With his own tools he repaired countless appliances, sinks, and pipes; he reinstalled all the restored windows Stephen Howard had completed; installed new fixtures and toilets; made custom window screens; replaced custom-fit siding; and restored or replaced custom-fit boards along the chimney. At the end of the season, he engineered a new way to board up and preserve WTEC over the winter. No job was too big or too small for Steve!



Michael Lawless

Invasives Strike Force Surveyor;

Trail Maintainer: Black Rock Forest

Michael has been an incredible addition to the Invasives Strike Force program.

As a new volunteer in 2020, he eagerly attended over eight educational/training events to grow as a learner and environmental steward. He carefully applied these skills to the field, taking on 12 separate survey assignments. In 2020, he became the most prolific surveyor (in terms of assignments taken on and hours dedicated in a given year) in our program's history! He also became a trail maintainer for Black Rock Forest. In early 2021, he became the first volunteer to help with scouting, surveying, and removing spotted lanternfly adults and egg masses from a newly infested site in New York State.



Robert Remillard

Sawyer; Swamper

From day one, Robert “hit the ground running” not only as a hard worker but also as a source of valuable information and ideas. In 2020, he helped cut and swamp over 100 trees in High Point State Park, Lusscroft Farms, and Stokes State Forest in N.J. He also helped to clear and blaze the new Ridge Connector Trail, which loops together many of the upper trails at Lusscroft Farms. Robert has over 30 years of professional natural resource management experience, having worked for two agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including 22 years with the U.S. Forest Service. He now uses his skills in his volunteer roles and to support the Trail Conference.



THE RISING LEADER AWARD

Honors volunteers who have taken on additional responsibilities with great enthusiasm over the last two years and demonstrate leadership qualities. It is given to those who selflessly keep dedicating more time and effort and show no signs of slowing down.

Brian Bacher

Trail Supervisor: Storm King State Park; Trail Supervisor: Long Path; Sawyer

Brian started as a trail maintainer in Storm King State Park in 2003; after 10 years of service, he stepped up to become trail supervisor of the park. Brian also became a certified sawyer and regularly responds to blowdowns. Brian is a thoughtful and communicative leader. He is thorough in his onboarding of new maintainers. Outside of the Trail Conference, Brian is a high school English teacher, and he's been a member of the Cornwall Fire Department for over 20 years. In 2018, Brian thru-hiked the entire Long Path and his love for the trail drove him to get involved as a



volunteer; in 2020, he accepted a second supervisor position overseeing the Long Path between Harriman and Schunemunk state parks. We're excited to see all that he accomplishes in his new role!

Marilyn Blaho

Trail Supervisor: North Central Westchester; Trail Crew Member: Trail Tramps Crew, East Hudson Crew and Bash Bish Crew

Marilyn got her start as a member of the Westchester Trail Tramps Crew in 2012. Marilyn's love of nature is infectious and she offers valuable knowledge and limitless energy, humor, and joy to the crews she volunteers with. In 2018, Marilyn took on the role of trail supervisor for North Central Westchester. She is a reliable leader, checking her trails often and maintaining strong relationships with landowners. When a problem arises, Marilyn puts in time to find the best resolution, then plans it out and seeks the people and resources needed to fix it. She operates with efficiency and is always careful to keep all stakeholders informed. Additionally, Marilyn's patience and knowledge make her a go-to person for working with new volunteers. Her passion is valuable in attracting people to trail maintenance and the protection of parks and preserves.



Donna Chapman

Local Trail Chair: A.T. Dutchess/Putnam; Trail Maintainer: Appalachian Trail

Donna's love for the Appalachian Trail led her to become a maintainer in 2013. In 2019, when the Chair of the A.T. Dutchess/Putnam region was stepping down, Donna readily took on the responsibility. As a full-time nurse, Donna has been at the forefront of fighting COVID for the past year. Always putting the health of her patients first, Donna's professional life demanded so much of her time and energy. Yet while fighting a global pandemic, she somehow still worked tirelessly to navigate all the A.T.'s needs while keeping her team engaged and accountable. She gives everything she has to all facets of her life—and she does so with a positive and friendly demeanor.



Michael Pashley

Regional Trail Chair: East Hudson; Co-Crew Leader: Trail Tramps; Assistant Trail Supervisor: A.T. Dutchess/Putnam; Sawyer; A.T. Corridor Monitor: A.T. Dutchess South Lands

When Michael joined the Trail Conference, it was quickly obvious that a true gem had been discovered. He dove headfirst into being a crew member, swamper, and maintainer. His dedication and passion shined when leadership positions began to open up and he enthusiastically stepped up to fill the needs.



Since 2019, Michael has become a successful RTC chair, co-crew leader, assistant trail supervisor, and sawyer—on top of his role as an A.T. corridor monitor. He is a proactive and effective communicator, brings new ideas to each role, and fosters a strong sense of community in his region.

Snapper Petta

Local Trail Chair: Catskills Shelters

In a year's time, Snapper has completely transformed the Catskills Shelter Caretaker program. When the position opened in mid-2019, Snapper expressed interest; serendipitously, he would be retiring at the end of the year. From the moment he officially stepped into the position in January 2020, Snapper has identified ways the program can be improved and then acts on those ideas. In less than six months, he onboarded 12 new caretakers. His enthusiasm is infectious and he has a gift of putting people at ease so his caretakers know they can reach out with any question or request for help. As one caretaker said, “Snapper has made me feel very important to the work that the Trail Conference does [and] left a big impression on me regarding the importance of giving back, no matter how large or small the task might seem.”



Rich Rockwell

Crew Leader: Invasives Strike Force NJ; Invasives Strike Force Surveyor

Rich has shown seemingly boundless energy, enthusiasm, and capacity for volunteering. He began volunteering in 2017 on a Lenape Trail project; in 2019, he became an Invasives Strike Force surveyor, quickly mastering 14 invasives species and traveling all over N.Y. and N.J. to complete assignments. Rich could be counted on to take on strategically important and/or ecologically complex assignments. He continued to grow his roles and learning as he joined invasives removal workdays, helped manage the Lower Hudson PRISM species web pages, and became a trusted ecological resource to other volunteers and staff. When we turned to digital learning due to COVID-19, Rich volunteered to lead one of our first webinars. Then in June 2020, he became our first-ever volunteer leader for the invasives programs as the Invasives Strike Force-NJ crew leader. He successfully led half a dozen workdays in less than 5 months. Simply put, Rich sees a need, challenges himself to learn about it, and proactively seeks solutions.



THE JAKOB FRANKE AWARD FOR CONSERVATION

Honors volunteers who have advocated for and dedicated significant time and effort to land

preservation and trail protection in the face of encroaching development. It is given to those who embody our value that conservation is a shared duty and that we must preserve the integrity of our natural world.

Clarence Putman

Club Trail Chair and Founding Member: Long Path North Hiking Club; Trail Maintainer: Long Path

Clarence has a passion for the Long Path and has dedicated over 25 years and countless hours to build, improve, protect, and maintain over 50 miles of the trail. Clarence's history as a Department of Conservation (DEC) forester has been relayed into his volunteer work. He was one of the Long Path North Hiking Club's founding members and manages the Stewardship Agreement between the club and DEC for the Long Path in Schoharie and Albany counties. Clarence has been instrumental in advancing the Long Path through many state forests in Schoharie County, including directing the construction of the lean-tos and foot bridges. He advocated to get the Long Path on the high priority list for land protection and has supported land acquisition efforts and landowner relationships for decades. He was also a longtime trail supervisor in the county.



Clarence never says no to helping other maintainers or on trail projects and always shows up on time, rain or shine. Without his knowledge and many talents, the Long Path north of the Catskills would still be a hiker's dream!

Robert (Bob) Ross

Conservation Committee Member; Membership and Development Committee Member

Bob is extremely passionate about preserving open spaces and has turned that passion into action by contributing both significant time and funding toward conservation projects throughout our region. Bob is a Trail Conference Life Member who first became involved with our organization in the 1960s. He has served as a trail maintainer in New Jersey and was an important benefactor in the restoration of our current headquarters. More recently, he has been a strong advocate for our Trail Angel Society and a very active member of the Conservation Committee.



On the Conservation Committee, Bob has contributed in many different ways, a few of which are: donated his legal services and expertise toward multiple land acquisition efforts to connect parklands and protect trail corridors; renewed his attorney license in New York for the specific purpose of being able to handle due diligence and closing processes; helped fund efforts to establish a floating walkway along Terrace Pond to help protect the unique environment; and

served as an important link between the Trail Conference and our partner, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey.

Most anyone who has had the opportunity to meet Bob would likely tell you that his passion, optimism, and can-do attitude are infectious! In Bob's own words, "It's easy to take for granted that access to open space will always be available, but without the Trail Conference, I know the trail system would crumble into disrepair."

THE JOAN EHRENFELD AWARD FOR STEWARDSHIP

Honors volunteers who have dedicated significant time and effort to the conscientious stewardship of protected natural areas or environmentally responsible trail construction and education. It is given to those who embody our value that the right path is always a responsible one.

Eddie Saiff

Former Board Chair, Member; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group Member

Eddie served on our Board of Directors from 2009 through 2020 and as Board Chair from 2016-2020. During this time, he provided important leadership that always put

science-based reasoning and balanced judgment at the forefront. As a

Professor of Biology and Dean of the School of Theoretical and Applied Science at Ramapo College of New Jersey, Eddie understands the importance of pursuing scientifically sound and responsible initiatives to land stewardship approaches. In his various leadership roles with the Trail Conference, Eddie has helped to push the organization ahead in an environmentally responsible way. His leadership over the past decade has also included: serving as chair or member of the Nominating, Management, Governance, and Finance committees; helping to lead various strategic planning initiatives; being a founding member of both our Trail Angel Society and Giving Circles; serving as chair of the Darlington Schoolhouse Steering Committee; and serving as a crucial liaison between our organization and nearby Ramapo College.

It requires a special set of skills to be a leader that can inspire those around them to take action, and Eddie definitely possesses these skills!



THE RAYMOND H. TORREY AWARD FOR LIFETIME IMPACT

The Trail Conference's most prestigious award honors volunteers who embody our mission and uphold our values. This award is given to those who have made significant and lasting contributions that have impacted the trails, natural lands, people and/or operations of the Trail Conference.

Walt Daniels

Former Board Member (2011-2020); Trail Supervisor: A.T. Putnam; Crew Leader: Yorktown Crew; Crew Member: Trail Tramps; Sawyer; Publications Committee Member; Policy Council Member; Governance Committee Member

Since 1979, Walt has shown dedication to advancing the work of the Trail Conference. Particularly impressive is his leadership in nearly every aspect of our mission, including trail maintenance and design, publications, Board and committee leadership, technology, and invasive species management. He has reliably promoted the values of inclusion and environ-



mental conservation. While he typically works behind the scenes with little publicity, his tireless work has been instrumental in the Trail Conference's ability to carry out our mission.

His legacy began with litter. Walt and his wife, Jane, first volunteered with the Trail Conference for our Litter Day in 1979; by 1981, he was leading the program. He became trail supervisor for the A.T. in Putnam County in 1983, a position he still holds, and relocated the trail off roads onto a protected corridor. A recognized leader in trail maintenance, construction, and design, he has led many crew projects on the A.T. and trails in Yorktown, N.Y.; was the primary author of our Trail Design Standards document; has

used his expertise to teach countless volunteers through workshops and work trips; and designed and built trails such as the Camp Smith Trail. Walt and Jane have mentored over 20 Boy Scout Eagle Projects.

It's nearly impossible to condense all of the positive impacts Walt has had on the Trail Conference. Other highlights include:

- Serving on the Board of Directors and being a leading committee member.
- Being a founding member of our Trail Angel Society and Giving Circles Program.
- Building strong relationships with land managers including the ATC, where he served on their Board of Managers.
- Being a certified chain sawyer since 1997.
- Conceiving of the idea of *Walkable Westchester*, one of our most popular books.
- Leading the Trail Conference's technology efforts, which started with an IBM grant in 1982 to obtain our first personal computer. He was instrumental in building the Trail Conference's first website in 1996.

Trail Running Community Gives Back Through Volunteering, Fun Events



DON WEISE
DIRECTOR OF DONOR ADVERTISING

Trail running has exploded in popularity, providing a new way for people to fall in love with trails. Those of us who are not runners may be pleasantly surprised to learn just how much hikers and trail runners have in common. Both groups share a deep love of nature, passion for adventure, and that physical connection to the Earth that only comes from exploring on foot. And it's no accident that most runners you encounter will either slow to a walk or announce their presence to avoid startling you. In our region at least, trail runners seem to have a culture of caring, which also translates into giving back to trails.

To engage this user group and involve them in our mission, we offer Trail Conference Trail Runs, a group that meets for monthly runs, often highlighting trails or areas that the Trail Conference has recently improved. The Trail Conference is also supported by several member clubs and affiliates such as Sassquad Trail Running, Red Newt Racing, Salt Shakers, and the Shawangunk Ridge Trail (SRT) Run. Together, we are building a community through runs, benefit races, volunteer trips,



and by actively promoting the Trail Conference.

Kim Levinsky, founder and race director of Sassquad Trail Running, has set an exceptionally high philanthropic bar within the trail running community. All of her events and races benefit the Trail Conference or other charities. Many Sassquad members are also active Trail Conference volunteers. Sassquad's popular Squatchy Onesie Fest at Ramapo Valley County Reservation this February (pictured above) was one of several events that will benefit the Trail Conference this year. It featured runners and hikers ranging in age from 6 to 89. Other Trail Conference benefit events include a monthly RunVenture hike series. Thanks also to Sassquad for sponsoring our new Delaware Water Gap-

Kittatinny Trails map set!

Despite being a serious ultramarathoner who holds three local fastest known time records, Levinsky offers events that are highly inclusive, with short distance options and a clear emphasis on fun. This approach has resulted in a diverse and loyal audience that includes everyone from brand-new runners and hikers to seasoned ultramarathoners. It is a point of pride for Levinsky that her races have a higher percentage of female participants in a relatively male-dominated sport.

Trail Conference Board members Charlie Gadol and Ken Posner are also making a difference by recruiting trail runner-volunteers and by raising funds through trail races in Sterling Forest, the Shawangunks, the Catskills, and Westchester through Run Wild, Inc. Ian Golden and Red Newt Racing also support the Trail Conference through races and the Trails Collective. Thanks to all the trail running organizations who give back to trails!

For more information about trail running events led by the Trail Conference and our partners, visit our Facebook group, Trail Conference Trail Runs. We typically offer two pace groups to accommodate ability levels and comply with safety protocols.

TRAIL CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS

The Trail Conference's mission is made possible through generous support from hundreds of individuals, companies, and foundations—outdoor-lovers like you who care for the environment.

In an effort to reduce our paper impacts, our full supporter list will begin appearing in the annual edition of the Winter Trail Walker. Donations of \$50-plus made in honor or in memory of friends and family will continue to appear in each quarterly Trail Walker.

Thank you for your generosity and passion for trails and natural areas—thanks for your support of the Trail Conference!

TRIBUTES
November 1, 2020 - January 31, 2021

- In honor of Jonathan D Beard*
Sarah-Jane Corke
- In honor of Yana Beranek*
Mel Minnis
- In honor of Robert Bonkowski*
Ryan Mruczek
- In honor of Su-O Chiang*
Dr. Fang-Chin Chiang
- In honor of Brian Collins*
Patricia Mazzone
- In honor of Walt and Jane Daniels*
Frederick Gerty
Gary Haugland
- In honor of Jakob Franke*
Robert Segal
- In honor of Keith Heron*
Nicole Heron
- In honor of Kenneth H Malkin*
Kenneth Mayer

- In honor of Linda Malkin*
Katja Mayer
- In honor of David Miller*
Erin Witcher
- In honor of Miklos Muller*
Daniel Muller
- In honor of New Jersey Forty Plus Hiking Club*
Diana Diasparra
- In honor of Glenn W Oleksak*
Marian MacDonald
- In honor of Sarah Parmeland*
David Michelotti
- In honor of George Petty*
Jane Busillo
- In honor of Kenneth A Posner*
Constance Eby
- In honor of Brian Reilly*
Karolin Anderl
- In honor of Rebecca Schaffer*
Brian Fanning
- In honor of Donald L Weise*
Audrey Roco
- In memory of Charlie Cook*
Karen Dubiner
- In memory of John J Giuffrida*
Peter Heckler
- In memory of John and Marianne Gunzler*
Audrey Curwin
Melissa Curwin
- In memory of Rita Heckler*
Peter Heckler
- In memory of Chris Herrmann*
Peter Herrmann
- In memory of Ann G Loeb*
Robert Ambaras
- In memory of Tom O'Reilly*
Jayson Kolb
- In memory of Michael Joseph Pucci*
Margaret Labate
- In memory of David Woolf*
Naola Gersten-Woolf
- In memory of George Yuzawa*
Pat Yuzawa-Rubin and
The Circle of Service Foundation

Two Trails, 113 Acres Permanently Protected Along Shawangunk Ridge



ANDY GARRISON
CHAIR OF THE LONG PATH & CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

The Trail Conference recently acquired 113 acres of forested land in New York's Shawangunk region in Orange County. This property connects Gobbler's Knob State Forest with the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area and allows us to move another section of the coaligned Long Path and Shawangunk Ridge Trail (SRT) off the road, away from homes, and into the woods. Additionally, this parcel extends an already protected trail corridor to a length of 20 miles, permanently protecting both trails. The next step is to completely move the trail onto the protected land.

The SRT was built in 1992 and 1993. At that time, the trail crossed land of 30 different private properties between High Point State Park in New Jersey and Bear Hill Nature Preserve in Cragmoor, N.Y., where it ended at the Long Path. Today, there are only a handful of landowner agreements, all south of Otisville, N.Y.—everything else has been preserved. Taking advantage of these conservation successes, in 2005 the Long Path was relocated and joined with the



The Trail Conference has been involved in the protection of roughly 4,900 acres along the Shawangunk Ridge, where the Long Path and SRT coalign.

SRT in the Wurtsboro Ridge State Forest. In 2012 after preserving another key parcel in Greenville, N.Y., the Long Path was again moved, joining the SRT in Shin Hollow. That move resulted with the Long Path being coaligned with the SRT for 34 miles.

With this successful trail land acquisition, the Trail Conference has been involved in the protection of around 4,900 acres total along the Shawangunk Ridge. As a result of more than 20 years of conservation efforts, five new

state forests have been created. Additionally, one state park and one wildlife management area have been enhanced. We would not have been this successful without our partners the Open Space Institute and the Orange County Land Trust.

Special thanks to Robert C. Ross for donating his legal services, expertise, and closing costs to making this land acquisition possible. Thank you to Run Wild, Inc. for raising funds for this conservation project. Thanks also to the

Long Path North Hiking Club, which cares for the entirety of the Long Path through Schoharie, Albany, and Schenectady counties.

YOU can be a part of this conservation legacy by donating to the Trail Conference. Help protect the land you love today! To support the Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund directly, write "LASF" in the special instructions box at nynjtc.org/donate or email Don Weise, Director of Donor Advising, for more information: dweise@nynjtc.org.

Congrats, Long Path End-to-Enders

The Trail Conference offers a certificate and an end-to-end patch "rocker" to anyone who hikes the entire length of the Long Path. The trip can be completed in one continuous trip or in a number of hikes over many years. The following people became end-to-enders in 2020.

#179 Patricia Malodobry finished on 6/26/2020

#180 Jeff "Tinman" Sargent finished on 7/4/2020

#181 Thomas Walsh finished on 7/4/2020

#182 Kenton Matthaei finished on 8/12/2020

#183 Marek Rygielsky finished on 9/20/2020

#184 Brian Ibbs finished on 11/11/2020

#185 Heather M. Post Ibbs finished on 11/11/2020

#186 Anna Quell finished on 11/27/2020

#187 Jeffrey Quell finished on 11/27/2020

#188 Rob Taylor finished on 12/05/2020

#189 Jill Moretto finished on 12/05/2020

#190 Kylie Yang finished on 01/03/2021

Keeping the Long Path Stitched Together

Since 1960, the Trail Conference has spearheaded the effort to maintain, protect, and complete the Long Path. Over the past 60 years, many volunteers, staff, landowners, and partners have been involved in the maintenance, creation, and protection of this beloved, aqua-blazed trail. Thanks to these efforts, the Long Path has seen continued improvements.

In the past 30 years, the Trail Conference has worked tirelessly to preserve land to permanently protect the Long Path. Numerous partner organizations have helped with these efforts. There are now long stretches of Long Path trail corridor that are protected, but there is still a lot of work to do to preserve the entire trail and eliminate the road walks.

In 1989, the Trail Conference and its Long Path Committee urged Rockland County to designate the Long Path on the county map as a park. The county obliged, and long strides have been made since that time in similarly ensuring its protection as not only a trail, but also a green corridor. Today, the official Long Path stretches from New York City

to John Boyd Thacher State Park in Albany County—although there are two areas with long road walks. There is a 13.25-mile road walk in Orange County and a 12.3-mile road walk in Ulster County. The Trail Conference is happy to announce we currently have plans to address them both.

In Orange County, the City of Middletown recently opened hiking trails in its reservoir watershed. Both the County of Orange and the City of Middletown are working to extend the Orange County Heritage Trail, a multi-use rail trail, and connect it with the watershed trails. The Long Path currently follows the Heritage Trail to New Hampton. That is where the 13.25-mile road walk begins; it ends at the Shawangunk Ridge. We now envision continuing the Long Path on the Heritage Trail extension when it is completed. From that point we hope to route the trail through the reservoir trail system and then through Orange County's Indigo watershed land, which will leave the trail about 1 mile from the Graham Mountain State Forest along the Shawan-

gunk Ridge. Our next step is to get approvals from six different departments within three different government agencies.

In Ulster County, the Long Path reroute through the Vernooykill State Forest and Sundown Wild Forest was recently approved. Trail construction will begin in 2021, led by Trail Conference friends Tahawus Trails. Trail Conference volunteers first started scouting this route in 2000; it has been 20 years in the making! This project will move 10 miles of the Long Path off the road.

North of the Catskills, the Long Path crosses a lot of private land, thanks to gracious landowners who allow for trail easements. All these efforts together make it an enormous task keeping the Long Path stitched together as one 358-mile-long trail.

The Long Path exists because of the incredible passion of volunteers who want to be a part of the legacy of New York's Greatest Trail. We need all the help we can get. Maintainers and trail managers are always needed—adopt a section of the Long Path to call your own! Contact volunteer@nynjtc.org for more info. Andy Garrison



Vernooy Kill Falls

On-the-Ground Improvements

Long Path improvement projects in 2020 included:

1. Removal of more than 300 blowdowns by the Long Path Trail Crew, with assistance from the Long Distance Trails Crew
2. Work on the technical Upper Nyack Trail relocation at Hook Mountain by the Long Distance Trails Crew. This project provides a durable and scenic new route for the Long Path. They

constructed 2,000 feet of new, sustainable trail.

In 2021, work will begin on the reroute of a road walk that is currently longer than 12 miles. The trail will be rerouted to Vernooy Kill State Forest and Sundown Wild Forest leading into Catskill Park. This project, led by Tahawus Trails, will eliminate the Long Path's second-longest road walk between the Shawangunks and Catskills and will be built as a multi-use trail for hiking and biking.

What You Need to Know About Mud Season



HEATHER DARLEY
COMMUNITY OUTREACH
COORDINATOR

You're familiar with spring, summer, fall, and winter. But do you know about mud season?

Mud season is the shoulder season at winter's end (late March in our region) through mid-spring (May) when trails are vulnerable to erosion and displacement due to an influx of water from snow melt and fluctuating temperatures. This is a sensitive time for trails, soil, and vegetation, especially at higher elevations in the Catskills. As responsible hikers and bikers, we should make sure to follow best practices to protect the land we love.

When should I visit the trails?

Remember to "walk or ride the freeze" and "skip the thaw." That means you should aim to explore trails on colder days when the trail tread is frozen and skip the warmer days when the ground is thawing.

Why is this so important? The freeze-thaw cycle. On warmer spring days, snow melts and creates puddles. At night when the temperature drops, that saturated ground freezes. The water in the soil expands when it freezes, expanding the compacted tread soil. The sun warms up this expanded soil and creates mud. Muddy trails are vulnerable to deep ruts, which can damage the durable trail surface. Be particularly mindful of your potential impact when temperatures are between roughly 30-40 degrees this time of year.

Understanding the freeze-thaw cycle and planning your trip accordingly is the easiest way to do your part in protect-



HEATHER DARLEY

ing trails during mud season. If you do want to venture outdoors when it's warmer—and muddier—the best choice is a trail with a hard-surface tread, like a carriage road or rail trail. Luckily, there are plenty of those throughout our region!

How should I prepare?

We can best be prepared with two things: gear and know-how. Plan ahead, pick a trail based on the conditions, and prepare with gear to make it easier to adventure during mud season. You'll be more comfortable while also being mindful of our impact during this sensitive time of year.

▶ Waterproof Boots

If you come across mud on the trail, stay on the trail and test out those waterproof boots! A good pair of waterproof boots will keep your feet dry and ready for whatever conditions you encounter. Wear microspikes or crampons when

trails are icy. Don't forget to clean your boots or tires after your adventure to prevent the spread of invasive species.

▶ Gaiters

Gaiters are a fantastic Leave No Trace tool that keep the elements out of footwear in any season. Available in ankle, calf, or knee heights, gaiters keep debris and water out of your boots.

▶ Trekking Poles

As an optional piece of gear, trekking poles allow hikers to keep their balance through particularly sticky stretches of muddy trail.

▶ Picking Your Line of Travel: Stick to the trail + utilize trail features

Sometimes our instinct is to avoid the mud and travel either off the trail or on the edge of the trail. The muddy trail tread will recover better than the fragile vegetation stepped on off-trail, so be sure to travel through the middle of the trail. That vegetation serves as vital ground cover: preventing erosion and providing food and habitat sources for wildlife.

Walking on the edge of the trail can also encourage trail widening, which over years can cause trails to be 15-plus feet wide! Utilize trail features such as stepping stones and boards/puncheon. A little rock-hopping, anyone?

Trail Science

Trail building is both science and art. Trail Conference Trail Builder Erik Mickelson documents both on his website, Trailism. Visit trailism.com for more information on frost-thaw cycles and

to learn about frost heave (as well as lots of other interesting info on trails).

To learn about needle ice, an interesting phenomenon that can be witnessed during mud season, visit my.ilstu.edu/~jrcarter/ice/needle/.

News in Brief

Supporting Tomorrow's Conservation Leaders

Since 1913, group camps throughout Harriman State Park have provided people with their first outdoor experiences. Today, the Trail Conference is reimagining the possibilities for Camp Wakoda, a former Girl Scout camp built along Lower Twin Lake. By restoring this historic camp as the Welch Trail Education Center, we are building the training grounds for future stewards of the environment.

Now you have the opportunity to make a tremendous impact on tomorrow's conservation leaders.

In 2019, we received a matching grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation, and Heritage to not only restore, but also expand the camp for educational purposes. Our forward-looking proposal is ambitious, but in character with the camp's history and

purpose—to enrich the lives of our service members as they train and work to improve natural areas. The grant covers some, but not all, of the funding—and that's why your donation is so important! Only with your gifts can we make this plan a reality. Learn more and donate to the cause at bit.ly/tc-wtecf.

Looking for Our Member Clubs?

Trail Conference Member Clubs are our friends and partners who maintain trails, host events such as guided hikes, and offer more ways to get outdoors. They help support our mission and amplify the power of our likeminded efforts to help connect people with nature.

While we were unable to run the latest member club list in this issue of Trail Walker—we needed the space to honor so many incredible volunteers!—you'll always find info about these valued partners at nynjtc.org/member-club.

Cheers to the Work of Hudson North Cider Co.

Kyle and Sara Sherrer, the sibling duo creators of Graft Cider, launched Hudson North Cider Co., a mission-driven cidery, in March 2020. In just a year's time, the Sherrer pair and their crew have met their brand's initial two goals:

1. Bring a high-quality, full-bodied, hazy dry cider to the Hudson Valley (with 2/3 less sugar than their competitors, nonetheless).
2. Preserve and maintain trails and waterways in the region.

Hudson North Cider raised and

donated \$4,116 to the Trail Conference in 2020. By partnering with their distributors, they collectively donated 10 cents per gallon of cider sold. Through their Taps for Trails initiative, \$1 was donated for every pint sold. Additionally, Hudson North donated 20% of all their merchandise sales. Once they can safely do so, Hudson North plans to host new Taps for Trails events, trail clean-ups, and more—so stay tuned.

As they continue to grow within the local market, Hudson North plans to grow its mission as more cider and trail lovers sip and support the outdoors and their initiative.

Check them out on Instagram or Facebook: [@HudsonNorthCider](https://www.instagram.com/HudsonNorthCider).



New Publications Now Available

As pre-announced in the previous Trail Walker, two new publications arrived over the winter and we are excited to get them into the hands of trail users!

The third edition of **Walkable Westchester** is a completely revised and improved guide to more than 225 parks and 635 miles of trails in Westchester County. With the latest trail and park updates, and an upgrade to color maps and photos, this guide is the

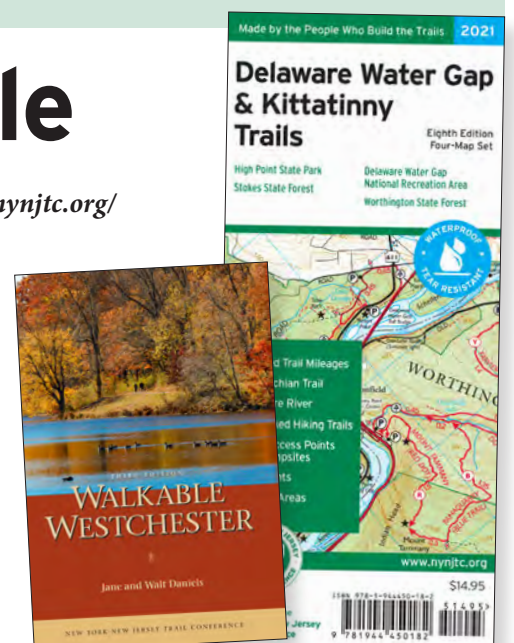
ultimate go-to resource for exploring all the great open space within the county. You can grab your copy today at bit.ly/tc-ww3, and also check out our money-saving combo of the new book with our 2020 Westchester Trails map set.

The eighth edition of our **Delaware Water Gap & Kittatinny Trails** map, formerly titled just Kittatinny Trails, is our most significant update to the map set since 2009. Covering more than 325 miles

of trails along the Kittatinny Ridge and adjacent Delaware River in three states, it includes new and improved elevation contour lines, revised streams, new trails, several trail updates, and many other additions and improvements. You can get your waterproof, tear-resistant print copy on our webstore at nynjtc.org/shop, and it is also available through the Avenza Maps app map as a single map that combines the four section maps;

learn more at nynjtc.org/pdfmaps.

We wish to thank volunteer book authors Jane and Walt Daniels for their amazing efforts to prepare the completely revised guidebook. The new map was produced with support from Sassquad Trail Runners—thank you!



Two Lakes, One Lovely Loop

FEATURED HIKE

Details

- ▶ **Trail:** Blue Mountain Lake and Hemlock Pond Loop
- ▶ **Park:** Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Sussex County, N.J.
- ▶ **Difficulty:** Easy
- ▶ **Length:** 5 miles
- ▶ **Dogs:** Allowed on leash
- ▶ **Features:** Views, swimming, wildflowers

This easy, 5-mile loop hike in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area circles Blue Mountain Lake as well as the remote and scenic Hemlock Pond, and climbs to a rocky viewpoint over the Poconos. The route of the hike is shown on Map 121 of the Trail Conference's new Delaware Water Gap & Kittatinny Trails map set.

From the northeast end of the parking area on Blue Mountain Lakes Road, near the kiosk, head into the woods. In 40 feet, bear right onto a blue/red-blazed connecting trail that heads downhill. At the next intersection, proceed ahead on the paved road.

After crossing a culvert over a stream, the blue-blazed Outer Loop begins on the right, but continue ahead, now following the red blazes of the eastern leg of the Inner Loop. At an open grassy area, turn left and climb to Blue Mountain Lake, then continue to follow the red-blazed trail along the lakeshore. As you approach an arm of the lake, the trail bears right and heads away from the lake, soon reaching a T-intersection with a grassy woods road. Turn



JEREMY ARGAR

Read the full Blue Mountain Lake and Hemlock Pond Loop hike description with directions and further details at bit.ly/tc-bmlhp.

left onto the road, continuing to follow the red blazes.

In about 0.4 mile, turn right onto another blue/red-blazed connecting trail, which leads in 750 feet to the blue-blazed Outer Loop. Turn left onto the Outer Loop, which follows a woods road. In another mile, the road curves left and passes through a hemlock forest.

At the next T-intersection, turn left onto a blue/green connecting trail, but in 60 feet, turn right onto a path that leads down to the shore of Hemlock Pond. After taking in the view of this remote pond, return to the main trail and turn left to follow the green-blazed Hemlock Pond Trail in the counter-clockwise direction around the pond. A short distance ahead, the orange/green-blazed Hemlock-Crater Connector begins on the right, but continue ahead on the green-blazed trail. In half a mile, at a T-intersection, the yellow-blazed Woods Road Trail begins on the right, but turn left to continue along the green-blazed Hemlock

Don't Forget Your Map!

Our popular Kittatinny Trails map set was first introduced more than 30 years ago. In its new, 8th edition, the map set gets the new title of Delaware Water Gap & Kittatinny Trails and gets its most significant update since 2009. This must-have set, covering this hike and more than 325 miles of trails, is now available for purchase in print and digital versions at nynjtc.org.

Pond Trail.

Soon, you'll reach the dam of the pond. Bear left and cross the dam. Rock ledges at the southwest corner of the pond provide a nice place to stop and savor its beauty.

Proceed ahead on a gravel road. In 300 feet, at a T-intersection, turn right onto the blue-blazed Outer Loop. In

about a mile, you'll arrive at a fork in the road. Bear right and, in 300 feet, turn right onto a footpath that leads up to slabs of glacially polished bedrock. Continue ahead through the woods to a viewpoint with stunted pitch pines, known as Indian Rocks, with views over the Delaware River valley and the Pocono plateau in Pennsylvania.

After taking in the views, return to the fork in the road, bear right onto a red/blue-blazed connector trail, then immediately turn left and descend. At the base of the descent, turn right and follow the red-blazed Inner Loop along a crumbling paved road. Soon, you'll notice Blue Mountain Lake through the trees on your left. At the end of the lake, follow the red blazes, which turn left, leaving the road, and descend on a footpath to the dam. Turn right at the dam and continue along the red-blazed trail to the next intersection, then turn right and follow the blue/red blazes back to the parking area.

📍 Daniel Chazin

Join the Trail Conference, Get Great Deals

Check out some of the latest Trail Conference Retail Partners and their great members-only discounts. Visit nynjtc.org/retail-partners for full details on all partner discounts.



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Shop the AmazonSmile App, Support Trails

Did you know that you can support the work of the Trail Conference simply by shopping online? When you shop AmazonSmile at smile.amazon.com, the retailer donates a portion of eligible purchases to the nonprofit of your choice. (We hope you'll choose the Trail Conference!) Thanks to you, we received \$437.03 from the AmazonSmile Foundation for purchases made Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, 2020.

Making it even easier to support great trails and healthy ecosystems, AmazonSmile custom-

ers can now support the Trail Conference in the Amazon shopping app on iOS and Android mobile phones. Simply follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start generating donations for the natural areas you love.

1. Open the Amazon Shopping app on your device.
2. Go into the main menu of the Amazon Shopping app and tap into Settings.
3. Tap AmazonSmile and follow the onscreen instructions to complete the process.

If you do not have the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app, update your app. We are grateful for your support!

Stay Connected!

Upcoming Events

Find details at nynjtc.org/events

- ▶ Trail Conference Trail Run: Teatown & Croton Dam, Westchester County **April 17**
- ▶ Rethink Your Energy Consumption: A Discussion on Clean Energy **April 20**
- ▶ Trivia for Trails: Earth Day Celebration **April 22**
- ▶ Wine Tasting for Trails: A Virtual Benefit Event **April 29**
- ▶ Trail Conference Trail Run: Crater Lake, Hemlock Pond & Blue Mountain Lake (Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area) **May 1**
- ▶ Finding Less-Traveled Trails Webinar **May 19**
- ▶ Run (or Hike) the Gunks! Quiet Side: Gobbler's Knob & Bashakill **May 22**
- ▶ Trail Conference Town Hall Webinar **June 2**
- ▶ Trivia For Trails: Celebrating National Trails Day **June 3**



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