



FACTS

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APPALACHIAN NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL POCHUCK CREEK & FLOODPLAIN CROSSING Vernon Township, NJ

Overview The boardwalk and bridge across Pochuck Creek and floodplain, in Vernon Township, NJ, represent an extraordinary example of cooperation among disparate entities from private and public sectors. Sanctioned by every New Jersey governor since the project commenced in 1978, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the National Park Service (NPS) began acquiring lands for an Appalachian Scenic Trail crossing in the Pochuck Creek area, ultimately amassing some 240 acres. Construction was directed by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, in conjunction with the Appalachian Trail Conference.

The mile-long boardwalk, with its 110-foot long wooden suspension bridge forms a section of the Appalachian Scenic Trail, between the Pochuck and Wawayanda Mountains. It was built to provide a hikers of all ages and abilities with a safe off-road alternative to the 2.1-mile stretch of narrow, winding local Route 517, formerly the only connection between two sections of the AT.

The 3,000-foot wide floodplain, over which the crossing extends, is classified by the National Park Service as an "Exceptional Resource Value Wetland," crisscrossed by tributaries and a quagmire into which a hiker can sink waist-deep, even in dry summer months. Pochuck Creek meanders through it -- a non-delineated river with a 60-foot wide stream channel that can be up to eight feet deep. During extreme rains, it can rise six feet or more and be fast-flowing, carrying trees and other debris downstream.

In flood conditions, the entire area resembles the prehistoric lake it once was. More often, it is a beautiful marshy bog of tall grasses, bushes, wild flowers and the state's largest concentration of cattails, surrounded by a hardwood and evergreen forest. It is a habitat for a variety of native and endangered species and offers an extraordinary hiking experience unlike any other on the Appalachian Scenic Trail Scenic, which stretches from Maine to Georgia.

Tourism impact The Pochuck boardwalk and bridge offer a unique hiking experience through one of the most unusual and dramatic scenic environments of the entire Appalachian Scenic Trail. It is an area of solitude and escape from civilization, virtually next door to suburban Vernon Township. It also makes it possible to hike across New Jersey entirely off highways.

Studies show that tourists increasingly seek outdoor adventure and nature preserves. Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) estimates that three- to four-million people a year use the AT. Intended thru-hikers (those setting out to hike from Georgia to Maine) leaving Springer Mountain, GA, grew from 1,000 around 1993 to nearly 3,000 by 2000.

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Tourism impact/cont'd	<p>More hikers are financially well-off and mature, seeking escapes from the pressures of the business world. They spend money on items that provide comfort and ease on the trail, and they spend at stop-off points. An ATC survey in 1999 showed that through-hikers spent an average of \$623.41 per person while on the trail, mainly in restaurants, motels, packaged food & beverage. A growing number of hikers are day-hikers, often including such activity in a resort vacation. Any area that can offer a mix of luxury resort amenities and nature has a distinct advantage.</p> <p>The Township of Vernon provides just such a desirable mix -- luxury resort accommodations, a spa, golf courses, natural attractions, downtown shops and restaurants. Appalachian Trail through-hikers have discovered Vernon as an ideal stopover. The township offers overnight hostel and other accommodations and such hiker necessities as a laundromat, post-office mail pickup, restaurants, bed & breakfast inns. Its welcoming atmosphere is attracting growing numbers of hikers, who spend multiple nights for rest and renewal.</p> <p>With New Jersey rapidly trading its image of a turnpike and gas-tower state to one that offers some of the most varied attractions in the country, this boardwalk trail makes a substantial contribution to that new image.</p>
Trail land manager	Wawayanda State Park
Trail maintainer	New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
Volunteers	<p>Approximately 500 volunteers contributed nearly 9,000 hours, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and members Appalachian Trail Conference National Park Service-Appalachian National Scenic Trail Park Office New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks & Forests Vernon Township Municipal Authorities Purcell Associates, Consulting Engineers Builders Association of North New Jersey Jersey Central Power & Light General Public Utilities St. Benedicts Prep School; Vernon Public High School Members of St. Thomas Episcopal Church Dedicated individuals
Planning, Building Time	<p>24 years, from 1978, when land acquisition commenced, to 2002, when the boardwalk and bridge were dedicated.</p> <p>Two phases: 17 years spent in planning and land acquisition (1978-1995); 7 years of actual construction (1995-2002)</p>

Construction Challenges	<p><u>Rights of way and land acquisition:</u> New Jersey DEP and the National Park Service had to acquire approximately 240 acres from various owners, over a nearly 20-year period, from 1978-1995, when construction actually commenced.</p> <p><u>Remote Location & Terrain:</u> Meandering 60-foot wide stream channel of the Pochuck Creek, steep, undercut, unstable banks frequently overrun by flooding; poor soil conditions for sinking supports, remote site with poor access for building equipment.</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> None! About \$36,000 was raised in cash.</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u> Working with time schedules of volunteer crews, obtaining and scheduling specialized equipment and materials.</p> <p><u>Continuity:</u> Contacting and maintaining a roster of talented volunteers who stepped up to the plate for the long term, running the project.</p>
Construction Highlights	<p>Suspension bridge was built in 1995, but not connected to a trail until boardwalk construction began in 1999.</p>
Bridge	<p>GPU volunteer experts adapted transmission line installation to piers and suspension cables of bridge, using heavy machinery to sink 40-foot poles into the muck, stabilizing them with a complex “snowshoe” platform of crushed stone, rebars, patented pier anchors, spikes and lag screws surrounded by concrete collars.</p>
Boardwalk	<p>Bridge walkway consists of four 20-foot sections, a 15-foot center section and two end sections, totaling 110 feet. Materials consisted of wood planking cut into 648 pieces; 40-foot yellow pine transmission poles; crushed stone; poured concrete; rebars in varying sizes; Tensar Geogrid; spikes; lag screws and wire cables. Each section was 64 pieces that had to be cut, fitted, drilled and connected – at the hands of untrained volunteers.</p> <p>Boardwalk materials consisted of 8,502 treadboards; 874 piers, totaling 4,251 feet of boardwalk, and all laid by volunteers.</p>
Final Construction Costs	<p>The project ultimately cost about \$800,000, with approximately \$36,000 raised in cash from grants and private donations; the rest given in materials, engineering and construction expertise and volunteer manpower.</p>
Area Geology	<p>The Ramapo Mountain Range of Precambrian metamorphic rock, buffeted by glaciations of its peaks and sediments, now is a terrain of rugged ridges and gentle valleys. The area is rich in iron deposits, discovered before the Revolutionary War, contributed to a prosperous and thriving community through the early 20th century. Much of the area has been purchased by New Jersey’s Green Acres program and mandated to remain forever wild.</p>

Area Vegetation	Native cattails, plumed grasses, wild flowers, hemlock, laurel, firs, five species of oak (red, white, black scarlet and chestnut), hickories, yellow and black birch, sweet gum, sugar maple, rare yellow birch and white pine, flowering dogwood, viburnum, blueberry, huckleberry, mountain laurel, azalea.
Area Wildlife	Deer, beaver, otter, porcupine, mink, black bear, copperhead, black, rattle snakes, more than 200 species of birds, including ruffed grouse, broad-wing hawks, great horned owls, pileated woodpeckers, brown creepers, hooded warblers, ovenbirds, scarlet tanagers and towhees
Location, driving directions, parking	<p>From southern NJ: State Route 23 North to State Route 94 north, to Maple grange Road, west to Canal Road north. Eastern end of Boardwalk begins here.</p> <p>Or, 94 north to Price's Switch Road, to Bucky Lane (left turn) to Boardwalk.</p> <p><u>Parking:</u> Canal Road and Bucky Lane, off Price's Switch Road. Note: there is no parking at the western entrance to the Boardwalk. Pedestrian traffic crosses County Route 517 from the western end of the trail onto the Boardwalk.</p>
Area Attractions	<p>The Pochuck Boardwalk & Bridge crossing is situated in New Jersey's northeast corner, the Skylands Region. Additional nature trails are located in Stokes and Wawayanda State Parks and Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge.</p> <p>Other attractions include Mountain Creek Resort & Spa, 11 golf courses (Ballyowen, Crystal Springs, Wild Turkey among them), Barret House Museum of 19th century area life, pick-your-own Jersey Fresh produce farms, Franklin Mineral Museum, Van Bunschooten Museum of 18th century, Sterling Hill Mining Museum, Ringwood and Skylands Manor houses and the New Jersey Botanical Gardens at Skylands Manor.</p>
Area accommodations	A range includes bed and breakfasts, hotels, motels and a resort, among which are The Spa at Crystal Spring, Alpine Haus Bed & Breakfast, Apple Valley Inn, Glenwood House Bed & Breakfast, Glenwood Mill bed & Breakfast, St. Thomas Hostel.
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference	The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference was formed in 1920 as a federation of hiking clubs. One of the oldest such federations in the country, the non-profit organization operates with a backbone of volunteers, maintaining 1,500 miles of trails in New Jersey and New York, from the Delaware Water Gap north and east through the Catskills to the Massachusetts border. The federation represents 82 organizations and 7,500 individuals in the bi-state region, but has an actual constituency of nearly 100,000 hikers and naturalists. It cares for trails of public agencies and private land trusts, publishes authoritative hiking books and maps, and has an active trail corridor acquisition and advocacy program.
Contacts	<p>The New York - New Jersey Trail Conference, 156 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah NJ 07430. Phone 201- 512-9348. Website: www.nynjtc.org</p> <p>Appalachian Trail Conference, PO Box 807, 799 Washington Street, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425. Phone 304-535-6331. Website: www.appalachiantrail.org</p>
