

# Building a Park for Generations to Enjoy



Palisades Interstate Park Commission



New York-New Jersey Trail Conference



Jeremy Apgar

**FAR LEFT** Maj. William A. Welch's engineering and environmental accomplishments at the parks of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission served as a template for state and national parks across the country.

**ABOVE** This footbridge over Popolopen Creek has been rebuilt many times since this photo was taken in the 1930s, including a full replacement in 2012, after Hurricane Irene.

**LEFT** At Bear Mountain, which welcomes 2 million visitors every year, building sustainable trails means constructing features like stone steps to help prevent erosion.



New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

By surveying visitors, parks and maintaining clubs are able to get a better idea of who is hiking the trails and how they are using them. This information can be used to help build more sustainable trails.



New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

Generations of hikers have been giving back to trails by joining the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. In this photo from the 1960s, Trail Conference volunteers are seen working to keep hiking paths free from overgrowth.



New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

Modern trail-building techniques work to preserve the terrain. Properly designed and built trails can withstand the test of time.

## CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE BACKCOUNTRY

The Palisades Interstate Park system is a lasting monument to the conservation movement of the early 20th century. Hiking trails that offer public access to the backcountry of these parks are the work of generations of dedicated volunteers. This public-private trail-building partnership was conceived by Major William A. Welch, the first general manager and chief landscape engineer of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC). In 1920, he encouraged volunteers from New York City hiking clubs to cooperatively form the Palisades Interstate Park Trail Conference, now known as the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. Together, they built 100 miles of trails in seven years, including the historic first 20-mile section of the Appalachian Trail, across Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks. In partnership with PIPC, New York-New Jersey Trail Conference volunteers today maintain more than 2,100 miles of hiking trails, including those in Bear Mountain and Harriman.