State Park Agencies Turn to Trail Conference for Volunteer Recruitment, Training
Our long-time partners at New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)—two agencies that own a significant portion of the land where our volunteers maintain and build trails—want more of what the Trail Conference has to offer.

In the Catskills
The DEC and Trail Conference will be deepening their relationship. The DEC has asked the Trail Conference to take the lead role in managing all volunteer activities in the forest preserve. In addition to managing our program, which recruits and trains volunteers who maintain 200 miles of trails and 29 lean-tos in the Catskills, we will use our expertise to help the state preserve and promote the Catskills.

New volunteers, partnerships, and trail related projects in the region are likely to emerge as we play a greater role in the Catskill Forest Preserve. Stay tuned and bookmark your web browser for nynjtc.org/catskills for announcements and links.

State Parks, Palisades (West of Hudson) and Taconic (East of Hudson) Regions
The Bear Mountain Trials Project is the inspiration for a model of volunteer recruitment, training, and trail building that we are bringing to other state parks in our area. Designated projects are the focus for AmeriCorps crews that are on site four days a week over a period of months building new trails, completing reroutes and maintenance projects, training volunteers, and developing new volunteer trail crews.

The reliable presence of a trail crew at a site over an extended period has proved attractive to many traditional volunteers, who appreciate the flexibility and availability it offers them.

Walkable Westchester
By Jane and Walt Daniels
New second edition covers more parks, more trails
The best guide to the outdoors of Westchester just got even better. Walkable Westchester, the indispensable handbook to hiking, walking and exploring in Westchester County, is now available in a new second edition. Including more than 600 miles of trails in over 200 parks, preserves, and sanctuaries, it is the latest addition to the offerings of guidebooks and maps published by the Trail Conference.

This edition, at 448 pages, is bulging with new and updated information, including details on 26 new parks, 42 more miles of trails, and intriguing sidebars on history, lore and nature. There are plenty of new photographs, detailed maps as well as county locator maps, and driving directions with GPS coordinates. Every park description has been updated and enhanced, all making for informative, yet delightful reading.

Walkable Westchester is the creation of Jane and Walt Daniels, Westchester residents who are long-time hikers, trail designers and builders, and open-space advocates. The original idea for the book came about when, unable to find a hiking guide exclusive to Westchester, they decided to create one themselves. They thought the task would involve about 70 to 80 parks and about 200 to 250 miles of trail. Eight years later, in 2009, they came out with the first edition and let readers in on a secret: there is a lot of open public space in Westchester and, no matter where you live, some of it is close by.

That first issue included more than 180 parks and preserves and described just under 600 miles of trails. This new edition updates these spaces and adds even more detail and history as well as more than a score of new parks and available open space.

The book covers a wide variety of walking, from level, paved pathways to narrow woodland trails. The environments range from salt-water wetlands to rock outcrops. So for any walker in Westchester, whether a suburban mom looking for a paved path or a veteran hiker out for a day-long trek, this book is the perfect companion. It’s even fun reading on a treadmill.

Order your copy now on our website, Westchester.nynjtc.org, by phone (201-512-9348 ext. 11), or in our office.

Last July, we brought the model to Sterling Forest, where three AmeriCorps members were the backbone of a three-month trail stint at the park that trained 78 volunteers at 10 workshops and put to trail-building 76 unique volunteers who worked a total of 2,166 hours. Together, they completed nearly a mile of sustainable new trail in the Doris Duke Wildlife Sanctuary and a major repair to the Wildcat Mountain/Townsend Trail in the northern part of the park. Dubbed the Palisades Trail Crew, after the regional park unit in which they work, these volunteers and a new set of AmeriCorps members will continue to deepen their relationship. The DEC has asked the Trail Conference to take the lead for design, planning, and development.

TRAIL WALKER
New York Comes Knocking
Spring 2014
www.nynjtc.org
people for trails
Zachary Kunow
Suffern, NY
About: Zach is a 14-year-old freshman at Suffern High School and Senior Patrol Leader of Boy Scout Troop 21 in Suffern, NY. Loves the outdoors.

Eared Eagle Scout status by leading the project to build a 60+ foot bridge on the Long Swamp Trail in Sterling Forest State Park this past fall and winter.

How Did They Do It? Turn to page 6 to read more about this project.

His Boy Scout Troop: Troop 21 of Suffern, NY. Scoutmaster: Wayne Kunow, Zach’s father. On February 22, Zack became the 137th Eagle Scout from Troop 21. The troop is a new member group of the Trail Conference and will maintain the 3.2-mile Long Swamp Trail, which they have come to know well.

Says Sterling Forest Park Manager Jeff Hutchinson: “This project was colossal.”

Says Trails Chair John Mack of Zack and Troop 21: “They cheerfully worked hard together as a ‘new leadership’.”

Says Zack: “I knew this project would be challenging when I took it on, but I also knew it would be rewarding and give a great sense of accomplishment.”

His Future: After high school, Zack plans to study in the field of law enforcement, forestry, conservation, wildlife management, or environmental engineering.

The Family: The Kunows have a family membership in the Trail Conference.

Trail Walker blogs all year long.
Visit blog-tw.nynjtc.org and read about Trail Conference people, projects and relevant trail stories.
At Darlington, Rooms Are Alive with the Sound of Hammers

On February 1, construction work began on our soon-to-be headquarters at the Darlington Schoolhouse. Volunteers of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, including AmeriCorps members and others, will be working to finalize design plans, obtain all needed approvals, and complete fundraising for the project.

The Trail Conference is transforming the historic 1891 Darlington Schoolhouse into its Headquarters and Visitors Center. Restoration will be in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. At the same time, an important objective is to create an energy-efficient building with a minimal carbon footprint. This will be achieved by good insulation and sealing of the building envelope, efficient equipment, LED lighting, and geothermal heating and cooling.

To contribute to the campaign and help us raise the final funds needed, contact Don Weise at 201-512-9348 x13 or dweise@nynjtc.org. The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a New Jersey-based, non-profit volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. It is dedicated to preserving recreational hiking opportunities and transforming the spiritual, economic, and cultural benefits of membership in the Trail Conference. Self-nomination for Delegate-at-Large deadline is July 1, 2014.

New, Free Visual Hike Finder at hikes.nynjtc.org

The trail- and tech-savvy volunteer enthusiasts of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference have developed a brand-new Visual Hike Finder map that links to our online catalog of hikes and parks. This new Hike Finder Map displays points that lead to 355 hikes (and counting) from 221 trail heads in 122 parks in the New York-New Jersey region. Each map point is linked to a trailhead. Click to find links to full descriptions of hikes that start at that trailhead as well as to directions and weather.

Narrow your search on the Hike Finder Map by typing in a ZIP code, adjusting the level of difficulty and length, and clicking on features such as “Swimming,” “Waterfall,” and “Public Transportation.”

All hikes are written and curated by Trail Conference volunteers, who are on trails constantly, building and maintaining 2,000 miles of trails in our region, and collecting and updating trail data for use in hike descriptions and the production of the best trail maps in the region.

To check out this new Visual Hike Locator map, visit hikes.nynjtc.org. To find information about hiking and volunteering on trails in our region, and to purchase your own sets of the best trail maps for our region, visit nynjtc.org.

All hikes and parks are available on our website and also can be accessed via a text index at nynjtc.org/view/hike.
One big source that has proved its effectiveness by improving our trails and strengthening AmeriCorps members and giving them opportunities to learn and serve in our area is embarked on a strategy to recruit AmeriCorps, which built and improved parks and outdoor facilities in our region and across the nation. Lakes Welch, Silvermine, Turkey Hill, and Pine Meadow in Harriman State Park are local examples of CCC products.

Like its 1930s predecessor, AmeriCorps programs provide participants with job training, leadership skills, opportunities for service that improves communities and the environment, a living stipend to allow individuals to commit themselves to full-time service to their country, and an education award to further their higher education in a variety of ways.

AmeriCorps is a petri dish that grows new generations of outdoor leaders, and a number of those lands have been turned over to the state of New York, and we are pursuing additional projects in the area. The Bear Mountain project has created a fabulous trail experience on the original segment of the Appalachian Trail over Bear Mountain but, more importantly, hundreds of volunteers have been able to experience the joy of trail building and many are applying their skills elsewhere in the trail system. Our 2008 strategic planning process was truncated by the Great Recession. Even so, a number of important strategic goals were identified that led us to increase, since 2009, our annual contributed volunteer hours by 50%, from 50,000 to 70,000, and our trail miles by 15%, breaking 2,000 miles. It also led us to create and field an invasive plant strike force.

I mention the good results of our last two strategic plans because we will be starting another strategic planning process later this year. The details of the 2010 strategic planning process should be clear by the time the Summer Trail Walker is published. A first step will be outreach to collect opinions and perspectives from our constituents.

A strategic plan provides a powerful, optimistic map to the future.

I realize that for most people, planning is not a watchword for excitement. But keep this in mind. The planning we do together this year will guide the Trail Conference right up to its 100th anniversary in 2020. That, I think we can agree, is something to get excited about.

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Building the Future with Help from AmeriCorps

From the Executive Director

Planning the Last 5 of Our First 100 Years

Rose Harvey, the Commissioner of New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), discussed her long range goals for New York’s park system at our winter meeting held at Manhattan College in February. The state’s park system is huge, and, as she clearly and honestly told us, so are its challenges. But, armed with a strategic plan for addressing these challenges, Commissioner Harvey exuded optimism about the future of New York’s beloved park system.

Our Trail Conference audience could only applaud goals that we share with OPRHP:
• Keep state parks and trails open, safe, and accessible.
• Increase, deepen, and improve the visitor experience in parks and on trails.
• Build a 21st-century green and sustainable park and trail system.

I joined the applause, but also quietly appreciated the power and optimism that can come from a strategic plan.

Over the past decade the Trail Conference has developed strategic goals about every five years. The process is much like a map update—we take a look at current and expected realities and make changes as necessary. Our strategic planning brings together our various cohorts for a shared look at current and expected realities as they relate to trails and volunteerism. It results in a set of goals that will invigorate our work. The Trail Conference has a very good record of setting actionable goals and achieving them.

Our 2003 strategic plan called for the organization to invest in three priorities: digital map-making, using the Bear Mountain Trail Project to train volunteer trail crew members, and acquiring land to protect our long-distance trails. The fundraising campaign of 2004/05 was inspired by these goals and provided the support to establish these very successful programs.
• Most of our maps have been digital for years and our last analog map, South Taconic Trails, will be converted this year. In addition, 20,000 smart phone maps have been downloaded since launching in spring of 2012.
• Our land acquisition program has protected much of our long-distance trails, especially the Shawangunk Ridge Trail. We’ve independently protected 2,000 acres of land in the last decade and have jointly protected another 2,000. Many of these lands have been turned over to the state of New York, and we are pursuing additional projects in the area.
• The Bear Mountain project has created a fabulous trail experience on the original segment of the Appalachian Trail over Bear Mountain but, more importantly, hundreds of volunteers have been able to experience the joy of trail building and many are applying their skills elsewhere in the trail system.

Our 2008 strategic planning process was truncated by the Great Recession. Even so, a number of important strategic goals were identified that led us to increase, since 2009, our annual contributed volunteer hours by 50%, from 50,000 to 70,000, and our trail miles by 15%, breaking 2,000 miles. It also led us to create and field an invasive plant strike force.

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Building the Future with Help from AmeriCorps

Where is the next generation of trail leaders going to come from?

One big source that has proved its effectiveness on trail projects and in communities for decades is AmeriCorps. The Trail Conference is embarked on a strategy to recruit AmeriCorps members and give them opportunities to learn and serve in our area by improving our trails and strengthening our corps of traditional trail volunteers.

AmeriCorps is a direct descendant of the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, which built and improved parks and trails across the country and across the nation. Lakes Welch, Silvermine, Turkey Hill, and Pine Meadow in Harriman State Park are local examples of CCC products.

Like its 1930s predecessor, AmeriCorps programs provide participants with job training, leadership skills, opportunities for service that improves communities and the environment, a living stipend to allow individuals to commit themselves to full-time service to their country, and an education award to further their higher education in a variety of ways.

AmeriCorps is a petri dish that grows new generations of outdoor leaders, and quite a number of those leaders—volunteers, staff, and partners—have been nurtured by it: Skip Card (former board member), Karen Lutz (ATC Mid-Atlantic Region Director), Ama Koenenfield (Trail Builder/Educator), Peter Dohari (New Jersey Program Coordinator), Leigh Dugger (former East Hudson Program Coordinator), Jennifer Easterbrook (Administrative Assistant), Erik Mickelson (Field Manager), and Kevin Simpson (Bear Mountain Construction Manager) are just a few that we know of.

The Trail Conference has welcomed AmeriCorps members managed by other organizations on trail projects in the past. Starting this year, we are developing our own AmeriCorps program and look forward to welcoming, training, and cultivating 12 members in May. They will be assigned to trail projects in our region, where they will also help us grow and train our base of local volunteers.

Plans were still in the works as of the deadline for this issue, but we expect to assign members to the Bear Mountain Trails Project, the new Palisades and Taconic Trail Crews (see “New York Comes Knocking,” page 1), our Invasives Strike Force in New York and, if funding permits, in New Jersey.

Are you an AmeriCorps conservation alumnus? Let us know. Send an email to: jennifer@nynjtc.org.
We Welcome Four New Trail Supporting Clubs as Members

Jolly Rovers
www.jollyrovers.org

Jolly Rovers are a volunteer trail crew focused on technical stone construc-
tion and maintaining trails for the Trail Conference.月 is another excellent
way to get built up as there are many benefits of trail work.

Mommont County Park
www.mommontcounty.com

The Mommont County Park System is committed to improving the quality of
life of the citizens of Mommont County by providing park and recreation areas, facil-
ties, programs, and services of the highest possible quality.

April
Saturday, April 5
SK. Cranberry Lake, Westchester Co., NY. Leader: Wayne
Weaver, 914-966-7132. Meet: 10am at通俗 trailhead. Lunch at makan place.
Saturday, April 19
SK. Garrison to Mount Kisco, Westchester Co., NY. Leader: Ben
Draper, 914-695-5228. Meet: 10am. Perfect weather.
ADH-HD. Miller’s Pond, Morris County, NJ. Leader: Bill
ADH-HD. Blue Mountain Lake, NY. Leader: call 973-644-3592 or
visit www.adventuresforwomen.org for info and to register. Meet: 10am. Middle
distance hike at a moderate pace, 5pm.

Sunday, April 6
SB. Big Bend to Sunset Park, NY. Leader: Bob Lazzaro,
914-368-6154, 212-879-7007. Meet: 10am at通俗 trailhead.

Saturday, April 26
SB. White Plains South, New York Co., NY. Leader: Bob
Lazzaro, 914-368-6154, 212-879-7007. Meet: 10am at通俗 trailhead.

May
Saturday, May 3
SM. Annual Graduation Hike on the High Peaks, Adirondack
Park, NY. Leader: Michael Fedor, 518-257-7053. Meet: 9am at
Adirondack Mountain Club Headquarters.

April–May, 2014 Issue
TRAIL WALKER
Spring 2014
I never intended to have a job bringing kids outdoors. I’ll be the first to admit that I took my initial position in the woods not with the intent of connecting with people, but to practice the skills I’d need as a zoology major; a job leading backpacking trips and teaching at a wilderness school would certainly pay me ahead as a field biologist. What I didn’t expect was that I’d enjoy outdoor education so much that I’d eventually end up all the lab work so that I could be in the field full-time. And one joy that never got old, whether it was in the mountains of southern California or locally on Bear Mountain, was that of introducing new people to the outdoors. For many people, the best chance to do that is through children.

The idea of Nature Deficit Disorder, while a term that’s been bandied about for the last 10 years, hasn’t always had a cohesive definition. As my daughters turned seven, when he joined the Boy Scouts, I moved towards a larger sense of health, discovering that the future of our green areas relies on the decisions these children grow to make — if they never learn to love the outdoors, what motivation will they have to protect it? If we raise a generation of youth disconnected from nature, then nature will eventually pay the price. But more importantly in the short term, taking children outside can be fun if it’s planned well!

So, how do you plan to take a hike with kids?

• Before worrying about anyone else, focus on yourself. Are you ready to take a slow hike, enjoy frequent rests, and get really enthused about any scary bugs or gross scat that may turn up? If so, you’re ready. If you’re in the mood to bag a peak or blow off some steam in a power-hike, now is probably not the time to include a child.

• It’s all about location — select the right hike for the audience. The Best Hikes with Children books, carried on the Trail Conference website, can help you choose from more than 120 hikes throughout New York and New Jersey which are suitable for smaller legs. Loop hikes preferred! You can also find some suggestions on our website: nynjtc.org/content/great-family-friendly-hikes.

• While you might be able to overlook a tiny blister or minor hunger grumbles, such things can be deal-breakers for a child. Be sure everyone’s equipped comfortably, and pack extra snacks and insulation if there’s any chance of it getting chilly.

• Rest is a good thing — pack a lunch and encourage kids to bring a few toys that engage with the environment (not handheld video games!). Choose a route with views that you know you won’t mind spending time looking at. While the kids are playing or exploring, you can read a book and capitalize on the down-time as well.

• If you’re feeling up to it, try a few basic activities and games to get kids paying more attention to their surroundings. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy website has a fantastic page on simple things you can do with little to no materials required: appalachiantrail.org/hiking/hiking-basics/families/groups/hiking-games-and-activities.

If you include a child on your next hike, not only might the experience plant the seed for a future volunteer — you may enjoy taking it slow and looking at nature through a child’s eyes more than you expected. I’m sure it’s what’s kept my parents so young!

Peter Dolan is New Jersey Program Coordinator for the Trail Conference. His current efforts to get people outdoors include recruiting and training students at our neighbor Ramapo College, where he is organizing a new volunteer trail crew.

Amazing Summer Science Camp Opportunity for Kids 12 -18 at Black Rock Forest

You may have hiked Black Rock Forest before, from the top of Split Rock where one can see New York City, to the bottom of Glycerine Hollow… or perhaps you haven’t had the chance. Either way, don’t you know children would love to spend a week at Black Rock Forest, learning from the landscape while immersed in science, art, and nature?

Black Rock Forest Consortium, which includes the Trail Conference, welcomes middle and high school students (grades 6-12) this summer for authentic, week-long learning experiences in nature, working directly with scientists and artists. The focus is on understanding nature through scientific observation and investigation. Classes allow students to explore subjects of interest without the pressure of a grade. They are developed and taught by experts and provide an opportunity to explore college and career possibilities in the natural sciences while having fun in Black Rock Forest. This year, nine classes are offered on topics such as ornithology, turtle biology, biodiversity, nature journaling, and forest ecology (including tree climbing!). Classes are hands-on, interactive learning experiences that are fun as well as informative. One class is a collaboration with neighboring Storm King Art Center for outdoor experiences that hone students’ observational skills while surrounded by monumental sculptures.

Most classes are half-day and will be offered both morning and afternoon (morning: 8:30-12:30; afternoon: 1:30-5:30). Drop-off and pick-up service will be provided at the Cornwall Post Office. For a more immersive experience, students can reside in the “green and smart” Forest Lodge all week, with three meals provided each day, activities every evening, off-site supervised, and nurse and EMT on site. Summer Science Camp is certified by the Orange County Department of Health. For more information or to register online visit www.blackrockforest.org.

Black Rock Forest

June 22 – 28
Conservation Biology on Seahorse Key

July 14 – 18
High School Week at Black Rock Forest

July 21 – 25
Middle School Week at Black Rock Forest

To Register, visit blackrockforest.org or call (845) 534-4517

PEOPLE FOR TRAILS

Will Soter
Kingston, NY

Volunteers to manage maintenance and landowners on about 100 miles of Catskills trails in Ulster and Sullivan County as Trails Co-chair with his good friend Alex Marra (see page 9).

He took his first hike at the age of seven, when he joined the Boy Scouts.

Moved to the Catskills in 2001, Will is a graduate college. “I have been hiking here, and the surrounding area ever since.”

Outdoor credentials: Became a member of the Catskill 3500 Club in 2009. Is a New York State Licensed Guide and, with Alex, is co-founder and CEO of Upstate Adventure Guides. He is also a licensed guide with Destination Backcountry Adventures and is a member of the Catskill Mountain Club.

Off-trail: Will was an assistant manager for Home Depot 2005 - 2008 and then Barnes & Noble 2008 - 2010. In 2010, he took time off from working to be home with his growing family.

What Will says: “As my daughters are a little older now, and my schedule has begun to open up, I’m looking for ways to become more involved in the local hiking community.”

Interested in finding out how you can help on trails in your region? Get in touch with Volunteer Coordinator John Leigh, jleigh@nynjtc.org.

Hiking with Children

By Peter Dolan

Take it slow. Pick the right trail. Bring good snacks. Dress right. Think Fun.

You may have hiked Black Rock Forest before, from the top of Split Rock where one can see New York City, to the bottom of Glycerine Hollow… or perhaps you haven’t had the chance. Either way, don’t you know children would love to spend a week at Black Rock Forest, learning from the landscape while immersed in science, art, and nature?

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We thank these retail partners for their extra support
Zachary Kunow, a 14-year-old freshman at Suffern High School, Senior Patrol Leader of Boy Scout Troop 21 in Suffern, NY, and my son, is an outdoorsman and environmentally-minded young man. When it came time to choose an Eagle service project at the end of 2012, he knew he wanted to do something for an environmental organization. That “something” turned out to be a 60-foot bridge on the Long Swamp Trail Loop in Sterling Forest State Park. “I was looking for an Eagle Project that would be challenging,” Zachary said. “Designing and building a bridge sounded fantastic!”

Green the site of the bridge, engineering help was needed. Zack worked with Brian Brooker from Brooker Engineering on the design. “Mr. Brooker and I chose a truss bridge design made of triangles because it’s economical, efficient, and very strong,” Zack says. The bridge is 60 feet in length and 40 inches wide with 5-foot-high truss/railings. It is composed of a 40-foot span meeting a 20-foot span over a gabion filled with rocks.

After getting approval from Jeff Hutchison, Park Manager and John Mack, West Hudson South Trails Chair, the design was submitted to the state engineers for review. We met with the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to review the site and discuss the DEC permit process. If the permit could be secured, the plan was to start building the bridge during the summer and complete it by the end of the year in 2013. Unfortunately, Zack broke his collarbone just before the start of the planning and construction of the bridge. Zack ended up raising more than $6,000 of monetary and material donations. During this time, he was able to obtain a permit from the DEC. Also, after making a few modifications to the design recommended by the state engineers, he received their approval as well.

We constructed the trusses in our driveway, transported them to the park, and raised the bridge. Sounds very simple! Zack had four workdays with the troop (both scouts and parents) to build the six 20-foot trusses, which were completed in October. The 40-foot span was created by splicing two 20-foot sections.

Next, the troop started working on site to clear the new trail and build two girders. Several tons of rocks were moved to the site from piles of rock slag from a 19th century mine about 100 yards down the trail. Work on site was shut down during hunting season. However, we took the opportunity to move the trusses and other bridge material to property adjoining the park in early December. This was achieved with the assistance of Mark Olson (Assistant Scoutmaster of Troop 23) from MP Olson Excavation. Mark provided use of his flatbed trailer and a Bobcat to move the trusses and material.

On December 21st, Zack coordinated a large group to assist moving the 20-foot trusses and bridge material through the woods to the bridge site. Thirty-seven people including members of the troop, the Trail Conference, friends, and family erected the trusses on location with temporary support. The splices were added for two 20-foot sections to create the 40-foot span that was needed. Additional workdays with the troop followed, during which top rail supports were constructed, a footing for the west side of the bridge was dug, and the floor was laid. The final workday was on January 19, 2014 when another ton of rocks was moved to create walking ramps on both the east and west sides of the bridge.

In all, the troop put in 836 person hours and 12 workdays into the planning and construction of the bridge. Zack said, “I knew this project would be challenging when I took it on, but I also knew it would be rewarding and a great sense of accomplishment.”

As a result of this project and our vested interest in this trail, our troop has been approved as a Member Club of the Trail Conference and will be assigned as maintainers of the trail.

Mossy Glen Trail Gets New Bridge

When snowshoers from Mid-Hudson ADK hit the Mossy Glen Trail over the Peters Kill for the first time, many were1 disappointed by the small footbridge that served the trail. In 2013, the Trail Conference approved funding for replacement of this footbridge, and work began on a new structure late last year. The project was a collaborative effort between Tahawus Trails and the Town of Webb to improve access to this trail. A new trail bridge recently went up just west of the former structure, and is now open to all snowshoers and hikers. The new bridge was built by the Trail Conference Trail Crew, with support from the nearby town of Webb and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Volunteers who worked on the project gathered for a dedication ceremony on April 5th, with Town Supervisor Rob Wood and town council members in attendance. The event kicked off the season with a post-dedication hike on the Mossy Glen Trail. Attendees were treated to live music by the legendary Mike DelGuidice of Big Crush - the two-time Grammy award winner. The event was a sign of things to come as the season kicks off across the entire state, and the group is looking forward to another successful season on the trails.

In addition to the new bridge on Mossy Glen, many organizations are planning new projects and improvements throughout the region. To stay up-to-date, follow the Trail Conference’s social media accounts, or visit the organization’s website at trailconference.org.
2014 promises to be another exciting year for the Long Path. On National Trails Day (June 7) the new 9.5-mile off-road section from Wittenberg Mountain to Phoenixia, in the Catskills, will open. For this to happen, about 1.5 miles of trail still has to be cleared, and several more rock steps and turnpikes have to be constructed.

The majority of this work will be done during a scout trip that is scheduled from May 31 to June 7. Anyone who wants to be part of this project, please check the online calendar for details (nynjtc.org/calendar), or contact the Trail Conference office. See also the Service Vacation notice at right.

Not only will there be need for a crew that week, we also will need volunteers to assist with the logistics before, during, and after the work week: a camp has to be set up, and tools and food have to be brought up the mountain.

The weekends prior to this work week we also will be working on the new trail, and additional volunteers will be needed to help finish the trail by the June 7 deadline. You can come for just a day, or for an entire weekend. Again, please check the online calendar for details.

Other sections of the Long Path will also see activity in the year to come. The Long Path North Hiking Club has scheduled a bridge building event in Cole Hollow on National Trails Day, while south of the Catskills, in Napanoch, we are moving a short trail section from the road onto the D&H Canal towpath. This too will require a new bridge.

In 2012 we reported 1,714 hours of work, which cleared most of the first 3 miles on Romer Mountain. In 2013 a whopping 4,514 hours went into the project, which saw us reach Mount Pleasant from both sides. Now only the section on Mount Pleasant remains to be cleared. We hope you will join us.

Co-Chair Jakob Franke and Andy Garrison

**Long Path & Shawangunk Ridge Trail News**

**JOIN PEOPLE FOR TRAILS ON ONE OF THESE EXCITING PROJECTS THIS SEASON**

As of the deadline for this issue, snow was still deep throughout our region. Many crews were waiting for the snow to melt to plan their projects and schedules. Check the crew trip calendar at nynjtc.org/view/trail-crew-calendars.

**Walk or Run to Protect the Palisades**

Sign up now for the “Escape to the Palisades” 6k Trail Run/Walk.

Lace up and speak as you enjoy a scenic loop hike or run on the Long Path, right across from the proposed LG Tower.

Trails include the Long Path, Shore Trail, Carpenters Trail and Dyckman Hill Trail.

May 4 at 9am, Fort Lee, NJ

For more information and to register, please visit www.escapeoptalisades.com

All net proceeds will support Protect the Palisades efforts.

**Enjoy a Service Vacation in Our Closest Wilderness Area: The Catskill Mountains Or, help by doing a supply hike**

As part of our work to build 9.5 miles of new backcountry trail for the Long Path between the Village of Phoenixia and the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area, the Trail Conference will be offering a weekend backcountry service vacation between May 31 and June 7, National Trails Day. Our goal is to open this exciting new trail on National Trails Day.

On this extended backcountry service trip the crew will be working on the section of new trail that traverses Cross Mountain between Wittenberg Mountain and Mount Pleasant. The crew will be camping each night on the mountain at a base camp, and work will include clearing trees and vegetation, and trail construction such as raking, side-hilling, waterbars, and stone steps.

The Trail Conference will be leading several hikes to the worksite and the base camp to resupply the crew. Volunteers are needed to carry supplies and tools up and down. If you are interested in either opportunity, please email the Trail Conference at catskills@nynjtc.org.

**A New Trail to Go to Black Rock Forest**

Workshop participants last year helped scout route for a new trail.

The Hudson Highlands Nature Museum in Cornwall is planning to create a new trail connecting their 6-mile network with that of Black Rock Forest’s. One of the results will be the creation of a lovely viewpoint looking over Cornwall and north to the Shawangunks and Catskills. The Trail Conference is assisting with this project. Last October, we held a Trail Layout & Design workshop at the site, and on May 31, we will lead a Tread & Drainage: Side-hilling workshop that will begin to build the trail. All are welcome to register for this workshop, whether it is to add to your trail skills or to become a part of this project. Sign up at nynjtc.org/view/workshops.

**South Taconic Trail Extension**

The South Taconic Trail is being extended six miles south to the Taconic Park Rudd Pond area in Millerton, N.Y. This is the natural starting point for the trail, which recent land acquisitions have now made possible. The route requires building about five miles of trail through open woods, hemlock groves, waterfalls, and rock ledges with open views.

**Sterling Forest Backcountry Trails Project**

This year we’re kicking off the trail-building season at Sterling Forest by creating the next section of the Doris Duke Trail, which will extend uphill to join up with the Allis Trail on Sterling Mountain. The Allis is a ridge-top trail running from the Appalachian Trail in the northern part of the park, south along Sterling Ridge and across the New Jersey border to link up with the trails in Ringwood State Park.

Join us for a Sidehilling Party in early May, details to be found here: http://nynjtc.org/content/sterling-forest-trail-project

**Swamp Trail**

Swamp Trail for at least the next couple of years. On any 22, Zack became the 137th Eagle Scout from master of Troop 21 and a Trail Conference member.

Addition to being Zacki father, Wayne Kanowe is master of Troop 21 and a Trail Conference member.

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Long Path & News

Ridge Trail

Shawangunk 2014 promises to be another exciting year from Wittenberg Mountain to Phoenicia, in the Catskills, will open. For this to happen, about 1.5 miles of trail still has to be cleared, and several more rock steps and turnpikes have to be constructed.

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Join us for a Sidehilling Party in early May, details to be found here: http://nynjtc.org/content/sterling-forest-trail-project
Erik Mickelson is New Field Manager

The Trail Conference welcomes Erik Mickelson as the newest member of our staff. Erik fills the new position of Field Manager and is already a familiar face to many volunteers who worked with him last season at Sterling Forest State Park, where he was a member of the AmeriCorps crew. Erik grew up in Virginia Beach, VA, went to college in Tucson, AZ, and came to Sterling Forest from Carlsbad, CA.

Since then Erik has worked at well over 40 different trail sites in Southern California and New York. He worked with the notable trail firm Belfree Contractors; was a regular trail volunteer with the San Diego Mountain Bike Association (he was their Trail Volunteer of the Year in 2009); and volunteered at Calaveras Hills Preserve Trail Captain with the City of Carlsbad, CA. He also sat on the Oceanides Bike/Walk Sub-committee in charge of trail development.

What's different about trail work in New York? "Here there are more rocks and more mud," he says with a smile. "More humidity and more bugs. Also more trees, which I love."

Kevin Simpson, an AmeriCorps volunteer with the 17½6 and overlooking the Bash Kill Wildlife Management Area, had requested the endorsement. The Trail Conference is an adjacent landowner to the Flaum parcel, and we oppose a casino at this site owing to the negative impact it would have on our decades-long efforts to protect the integrity of this spectacular ridgestop for wildlife habitat and human recreation. We sent a letter to the town board stating our concerns and asking that they not endorse the casino. We were in good company with partner organizations such as the Bashkill Area Association and many individuals. Despite losing this round, we will monitor development proposals.

Safeguarding the Gunks Greenway

On February 4, 2014, the Mamakating Town Board voted unanimously to endorse a casino at the top of the ridge. Developer David Flaum, owner of a 345-acre parcel (location of the former Shawanga Lodge) off Exit 114 of Route 17/86 and overlooking the Bash Kill Wildlife Management Area, had requested the endorsement. The Trail Conference is an adjacent landowner to the Flaum parcel, and we oppose a casino at this site owing to the negative impact it would have on our decades-long efforts to protect the integrity of this spectacular ridgestop for wildlife habitat and human recreation. We sent a letter to the town board stating our concerns and asking that they not endorse the casino. We were in good company with partner organizations such as the Bashkill Area Association and many individuals. Despite losing this round, we will monitor development proposals.

Hike with Us This Spring and Get to Know the Shawangunk Ridge Trail

Check nyntjc.org/calendar for guided spring hikes along the Shawangunk Ridge Trail, where we will be showcasing the trail building and conservation and advocacy work the Trail Conference is doing in the region.

Environmental Protection Fund

Established in 1993, the EPF is the state's dedicated source of funding for critical environmental programs. Governor Cuomo proposed to invest just $20 million in land protection at the next fiscal year. Sadly, no money to protect land on the Shawangunk Ridge is in the governor's land protection budget proposal. This, despite the fact that the state has identified the Ridge as a priority area for open space protection, worked with the Trail Conference in the past to add land to ridgeline state forests, and is funding Trail Conference efforts to promote a Gunks Greenway on the Shawangunk Ridge. The 100+ member coalition Friends of NY's Environment worked to increase EPF funding overall, to $300 million. They joined that effort and a February lobby day for it in Albany, and also advocated for an increase in the land acquisition budget in particular.

Protecting the Palisades

Our challenge to LG Electronics’ plans to build a tower on the National Historic Scenic Palisades picked up significant momentum this past winter.

- Two separate letters from the National Park Service to Edwards Feber, Chairman of the Englewood Cliffs Planning Board, discussed the “serious negative impact” of the LG project.
- The Natural Resources Defense Council and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation announced their moves to join the lawsuit against LG Electronics over its plans.
- Six Bergen County mayors signed a letter declaring their opposition to the plans.
- And the Palisades Interstate Park Commission unanimously approved a resolution of opposition.

In all cases, opposition is only to the height of the planned tower, not to LG’s use of the site for its headquarters.

Follow the issue on our coalition website, protectthepalisades.org.

Our States’ Environmental Budgets

In both New Jersey and New York, the Trail Conference weighed in, along with our partners, on state government budget proposals for land protection program funding.

Green Acres In the Garden State, the NJ Green Acres Commission launches campaigns to pass statewide ballot measures in 2006, 2007 and 2009 generating $600 million for state open space, farmland and historic preservation programs, as well as dedicated annual funding for capital improvements to state parks and other public lands. Since 2012, when funds were set to run out, NJKIG has conducted a Sustainable Funding Campaign to secure a sustainable source of funding for the preservation and stewardship of New Jersey’s natural, recreational and historic treasures for generations to come. The effort continues.

Environmental Protection Fund In New York, the focus of The Friends of New York’s Environment, a partnership of more than 100 groups, is on the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). Established in 1993, the EPF is the state’s dedicated source of funding for critical environmental programs that protect clean drinking water, magnificent parks, family farms, and open space. We joined that effort and also advocated for an increase in the land acquisition budget in particular. We also weighed in on funding for State Parks, with representatives participating in an annual Parks Advocacy day in Albany, and worked to raise awareness of Catskill issues, including adequate funding, and staffing for the Dept. of Environmental Conservation, during a Catskill Awareness Day in Albany.

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Discovering Ferns
By Edna Greig
On just about any woodland walk, you're likely to encounter ferns, some of the oldest plants to inhabit the earth. Ferns predate flowering plants and reproduce not by seeds but by spores.

All native ferns in our area have horizontal underground stems called rhizomes. In early spring, the leaf buds on the rhizomes expand and, in most species, uncoil into the appropriately-named fiddleheads. Fiddleheads are a delightful sight in early spring. Some are stout and covered with dense silver or white hairs to help protect them from the cold. Others are delicate and difficult to spot among the leaf litter.

The fiddleheads continue to uncoil into mature leaves which, in ferns, are called fronds. Fern fronds consist of leaf-like blades and stalks that connect the blades to the rhizomes. Fern blades can be simple (undivided) or they may be divided into two, three, or more sections, known as once-pinnate, twice-pinnate, and thrice-pinnate. The degree of division of a fern’s blade is important to its identification. Fern field guides drive into this concept further and provide clarifying illustrations.

The spores of ferns are packaged into tiny sacks called sporangia. In many species of fern, sporangia are arranged in a characteristic pattern on the underside of the blades. But there are some exceptions as noted below.

A sample of our region’s ferns
There are about 80 species of ferns in our region, with the following being some of the more common:

- **Christmas fern** (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) – A fern of drier woodlands with a once-pinnate blade. The ferns can form a dense carpet on the forest floor. The fronds are evergreen, and the previous year’s fronds provide a nice backdrop to the densely silver-haired fiddleheads of early spring. The name Christmas fern may stem from the use of the evergreen fronds for holiday decorations.

- **Osmunda cinnamonomea** – A fern of moist to wet areas with a twice-pinnate blade. This fern is easily recognizable by its sporangia, which are not on the undersides of the blades but rather are carried in dense masses, or “cinnamon sticks” that rise above the fronds. The closely-related interrupted fern (*Osmunda claytoniana*) grows in somewhat drier areas and carries its sporangia in the middle of the blade, hence, the blade is “interrupted.”

- **Royal fern** (*Osmunda regalis*) – A fern of wet areas that can grow up to six feet tall. Its twice-pinnate blades resemble the leaves of the locust tree. It’s sometimes called the walking fern because the blades like light brown flower clusters.

- **Ostrich fern** (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) – A spreading fern of marshy woods that can grow to 42” tall. The name comes from the ostrich-feather-like shape of the fronds that have twice-pinnate blades. The fiddleheads are edible.

- **Hay-scented fern** (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) – An adaptable fern that can form dense stands in a wide range of conditions, from dry to moist and sun to shade. It’s often found along roadsides. Its brittle, light green, twice-pinnate blades smell like hay when crushed.

- **Maidenhair fern** (*Adiantum pedatum*) – A beautiful, unique-looking fern of rich woodlands with delicate, circular blades atop dark, wiry stalks. A fern field guide can help you discover these and other fairly common, as well as not so common, ferns of our region.

**Advice from Leave No Trace in Mud**

- Wear waterproof boots.
- Consider using gaiters.
- Be prepared to hike or run around a trail even when it’s wet or muddy.
- Stop off the designated trail to avoid mud or standing water can quickly lead to the creation of undesigned trails, which can lead to even more erosion. See more at: http://lnt.org/blog/mud/

**The Enlightened Hiker: Trails and MUD!**

By Ama Koenigshof

Yes, we want to walk around muddy patches when we come to them, and in spring, we may encounter them often. But walking around the mud ends up widening the trail, causing added impact to the environment we are out to enjoy and more maintenance issues for trail stewards. So why do muddy patches happen and how to trail builders deal with them? We asked Trail Builder and Educator Ama Koenigshof to explain.

Muddy patches on trails are usually caused by a poor trail alignment that does not allow water to run off it, or by the development of a berm on the downhill side of the trail that causes the mud to spread as a dam. The key to a sustainable, mud-free trail is to get the water flowing across the trail, not down it or standing still. A side-hill trail that follows the contours of the land will be a permanent solution if done correctly. That being said, muddy spots happen. Here are some ways we deal with them:

- **Stepping Stones** – A good solution if a trail corridor is narrow, if there is a good supply of large rock nearby, and if the trail is for pedestrians only. If the trail corridor is very wide (more than six feet), hikers will walk around stepping stones. When choosing stepping stones, the rocks should be at least 1 cubic foot in size with at least one nice flat side. Ideally, they are placed with a gap no larger than six inches between them to ensure comfortable walking.

- **Turnpike** – A trail segment that is built to rise above wet ground. It is a good solution for any width trail corridor, when crush rock and mineral soil are nearby.

**People for Trails**

Alex Marra
Hurley, NY

Volunteers with his good friend Will Soter (see page 5), as new Trails Co-chair for about 100 miles of Catskills trails in Ulster and Sullivan Counties.

What does a Trails Chair do?

Acts as regional trails manager, recruiting and supporting trail maintainers and volunteers, tracking their work, communicating with park managers and Trail Conference partners, and being the liaison between a regional network of volunteers and appropriate Trail Conference staff. Most also get out on trial projects wherever they can.

**Trail Experience:** Alex is a long-time hiker and hike leader, is a member of the Catskill Mountain Club, Catskill 3500 Club (he expects to complete his winter peaks this year), Adirondack Mountain Club, and the Trail Conference. He is a licensed New York State Guide. He is co-founder, with Will, and CEO of Upstate Adventure Guides LLC.

Off Trail: Alex is owner and founder of Hudson Valley Weather (hudsonvalleyweather.com) and is a store manager for Home Depot, managing a workforce of up to 150 people.

What Alex says about his new volunteer position: “I’m excited!”

Interested in doing trail work in the Catskills? Get in touch with Volunteer Coordinator John Leigh, jleigh@nynjtc.org
Understanding how the foot strikes the ground can be important, especially for runners, since many researchers suggest that mid-foot and forefoot strikers are less prone to injuries than heel strikers. (Walkers and hikers are normally heel strikers.)

The Sensoria socks will, the company says, detect if the wearer’s gait has changed during a hike or run, also record distance traveled, cadence (number of foot strikes per minute), number of steps taken, calories burned, and other metrics. A number of existing products, such as the Nike+Sportwatch, can provide some similar information, but no other device on the market geared for the athletic consumer can generate data and images of the pressure generated under your feet.

High tech companies keep trying to push their products onto the trail by getting them either in your backpack or on your wrist. But this spring, the newest high tech product for hikers actually aims to come between you and the trail – as long as you are wearing socks. Really smart socks.

The Sensoria sock is made of a washable, synthetic wicking fabric and will be available this spring from HeadsUp!Inc. LLC, a Redmond, WA-based technology company. CEO Davide Vigiano said in a telephone interview that the company also manufactures a shirt and sports bra that use a sensor to record heart rate.

The sock incorporates three sensors, one each under the heel, near the big toe, and near the small toe, each less than 1 mm thick. To activate the sensors, the hiker or runner attaches a battery-powered anklelet to the sock via snap. The anklelet contains an accelerometer and other technology which allow it to capture data from the sensors in the sock. The user can see the data as it is being collected on his or her smart phone or even Google glasses, with pressure readings as either green, the lowest reading, or yellow or red, a high reading. The sock sensors do not have a GPS, but can be paired with existing GPS units, Vigiano said.

Data can also be downloaded as a video strip from the sock after the hike. The company, Harvard evolutionary biologist Daniel Lieberman Ph.D. who has authored many studies on running form and is the author of The Story of the Human Body (2013 Pantheon) is collaborating on the mobile application, according to Vigiano.

These smart socks are ideal for trail or road runners who not only want to know how far they have traveled but also want to modify their gait, or be notified if they have started suddenly pronating or supinating and want to try and minimize injury. Moreover, the sock could give a before and after look at exactly how an arch support or foot orthotic changes the pressure under the foot.

Howard E. Friedman, DPM, is an avid hiker, a podiatrist in Suffern, NY, and a frequent contributor to Trail Walker. Find many of his articles on our website at sympg.org/news/health news.

For more than a decade Hiking Long Island has been the most popular guidebook to the area’s trails. Author Lee McAlistor has spent the past 30 years hiking, photographing, and researching natural Long Island, discovering its beauty and off the beaten path. The fourth edition of Hiking Long Island describes parks and preserves of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, and hiking trails throughout the area. McAlistor has added a few new ones as well. It shows the walker where to explore natural beauty in small parks and larger tracts of public lands. Relevant stories of area history enhance the trail descriptions. The book helps hikers choose the hike most appropriate for their abilities, and interests, and provides directions to the trailhead.

The unique geology and climate of Long Island make it a fascinating place to hike year round. Despite the suburban population close to New York City, there are many places on the island where the walker can seek solitude amid the beauty of the natural world. Glaciers of the last ice age formed its hills and plains. The moraines that run the length of L.I. six-mile islands in and above hilltop views of the ocean from miles away. The overlap of southern and northern climates on its southern tier introduces an amazing mix of plants, birds and wildlife. There are hardwood forests and pine-barrens, hills and kettleholes, creeks and beaches, bogs and bogs, rivers and bays, dunes and dwarf pines, maritime forests and grasslands, coastal plain and bogs and bogs and bogs and bogs.

When for the publication announcement on our website and in our electronic newsletter, E-Walker, and plan to order your copy, on our website, by phone (211-512-9348), or in our office.

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encourage water runoff.

Corduroy is created when logs are placed side by side perpendicularly to the path and is a good solution when there is a supply of newly downed trees nearby. A certified chain sawyer or many dedicated people with handsaws cut the downed trees into pieces of similar diameter that are as long as the trail is wide. The trail tread way is dug out to be twice as deep as the diameter of the logs. The logs get placed side by side, perpendicularly to the path of travel, and are recovered with the mud that was dug out. The key to corduroy is a successful solution is that the logs are dug deep enough into the ground that they never become exposed. If done correctly, the logs resist rot for hundreds of years and keep penguins from sinking into the slope. Stone Paving –Think stone patio or cobblestone street. This solution is for puzzle lovers. Each rock’s “set” at the same height with as few gaps as possible. Once the entire area is completed, it is covered with mineral soil to lock the structure together. This solution is great for high water flow areas.

Ball Bridging is a good solution if a trail corridor is narrow. Two full round log sills are “set” perpendicular to the path of travel while one or two long half rounds are suspended across the two sills and attached with large nails or screws creating a flat wooden walking surface above the mud. It can become slippery if always wet. Ball bridges are the perfect solution if there is ever running water in the area, because the structure will shift and possibly wash away.

Puttim and Bog Bridges both use decking attached to stringers. With puncheon, the stringers are placed on sills “set” on the ground with board broad of diameter of the logs. The stringers are raised on piers. The construction options are extensive, require carpentry skills, and can require specialized equipment.

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Bog Bridge

Pavging and Bridge

Walking Westchester Team
Westchester, NY

Volunteers: It takes a team.

Authors: Jane and Walt Daniels (hats) Project manager: Jim Simpson Primary Field Checkers: Carol and Erik Jensen, Eileen West. These three volunteers contributed a combined 270 hours to walking, verifying, traveling, and filing reports.

The following volunteers each contributed a minimum of 15 hours to field checking: Ken Blitz, Daniel Chazin, Merilee Crotch, Peter Diamond, Mary Dodds, Zachary Gold, Carolyn Hoffman, John Jurasek, Mark H. Linehan, Catharine Raffaele, Wili Raffaele, Anne Rahikainen, Kate Ray, Lynn Salmon, Fred Stern, Jacques Van Engel, and Robert Willemann.

Others who helped trail check were: Surekha Soni, Anne Sheridan, William Varner, Gene Wiggins.

What they checked: 600+ miles of trails in 200 parks, preserves, and other open spaces.

More volunteers: Copy editing: Dianne Press; Indexing: Sue Belt; Cover photography: Herb Chong

Grand Total volunteer hours? “It’s a guessimate,” says Jane. But something in the neighborhood of 5,500, both on- and off-trail for the whole Walkable Westchester team.

Professional contributors: Nora Porter, graphic design; Allison Werberg, cartography.

Special mention: Ossining Public Library. Over 2,000 volunteers contributed to the project.

Meetings were held and which is hosting the book launch on Saturday, April 5 at 2 pm.

To schedule a presentation by Jane and Walt Daniels, contact Jane at jdhikes@gmail.com. To see where they will be speaking, visit westchesterny.org.
The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has maintained trails at the lovely 75-acre Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve in Bergen County since December 2011. Several projects are on the docket for us there across the water.

Bergen County since December 2011. Recent one completed by the Borough of Franklin Lakes improved a popular trail across the water.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has maintained trails at the lovely 75-acre Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve in Bergen County since December 2011. Several projects are on the docket for us there across the water.

The Preserve Shoreline Loop (white blaze) is a 1.5-mile loop that circles the entire upper basin of the preserve; the Island Bridges Trail (blue blaze) is a 0.5-mile trail which starts at the Preserve Shoreline Loop trail and crosses the northern end of the lake on an earthen dike. A third, red trail, leads from the Preserve Shoreline Loop Trail out of the preserve to the nearby High Mountain Park Preserve, where one can enjoy more than 11 miles of trails on 1700 acres, and get a stunning view of Manhattan to the southeast on a clear day and long views over a valley, a reservoir, and occasionally magnificent sunsets.

Until recently, the Island Bridges Trail at Franklin Lakes was interrupted by breaches in the dike in two places. Recently, however, the borough installed two floating bridges to fill the gaps, and these now permit hikers to walk the entire length of the Island Bridges Trail. The views to the south from these bridges incorporate most of the lake and, to the southwest, a splendid view of High Mountain. Of the two new floating bridges, John Moran, chair of our Northeast Jersey Trails Committee, reports, “I snowshoed over them this winter, and they seemed to be holding up nicely under their loads of ice—they really can’t sink much.” The Trail Conference plans three projects at the preserve this season: a bridge to span Molly Ann Brook; a permanent bridge to replace a temporary bridge near the north end of the preserve; and installation of rustic benches at scenic locations along with a footbridge over a small feeder stream. If things go well, Boy Scouts will complete these projects in spring and summer of this year. The Trail Conference is also working with the borough to obtain grants to build an accessible trail at the preserve.

Trail use at the preserve is likely to get a boost if, as expected, the borough votes to allow lake access for car-top boats.

John Moran says: “The preserve is truly an amazing crown jewel amid attractive surrounding suburbs. The big beautiful lake is an eye-catcher—with fishing, birding, and picnic opportunities, along with plenty of scenery for photography. The forests, islands, dikes, dams and smaller ponds provide a wide variety of terrain and habitat to amble along with family and friends.”

The shine on this gem of a preserve gets even brighter with trail improvements.

Currently, there are two relatively easy trails in the preserve. The Preserve Shoreline Loop (white blaze) is a 1.5-mile loop trail that circles the entire upper basin of the Preserve; the Island Bridges Trail (blue blaze) is a 0.5-mile trail which starts at the Preserve Shoreline Loop trail and crosses the northern end of the lake on an earthen dike. A third, red trail, leads from the Preserve Shoreline Loop Trail out of the preserve to the nearby High Mountain Park Preserve, where one can enjoy more than 11 miles of trails on 1700 acres, and get a stunning view of Manhattan to the southeast on a clear day and long views over a valley, a reservoir, and occasionally magnificent sunsets.

Until recently, the Island Bridges Trail at Franklin Lakes was interrupted by breaches in the dike in two places. Recently, however, the borough installed two floating bridges to fill the gaps, and these now permit hikers to walk the entire length of the Island Bridges Trail. The views to the south from these bridges incorporate most of the lake and, to the southwest, a splendid view of High Mountain. Of the two new floating bridges, John Moran, chair of our Northeast Jersey Trails Committee, reports, “I snowshoed over them this winter, and they seemed to be holding up nicely under their loads of ice—they really can’t sink much.”

The Trail Conference plans three projects at the preserve this season: a bridge to span Molly Ann Brook; a permanent bridge to replace a temporary bridge near the north end of the preserve; and installation of rustic benches at scenic locations along with a footbridge over a small feeder stream. If things go well, Boy Scouts will complete these projects in spring and summer of this year. The Trail Conference is also working with the borough to obtain grants to build an accessible trail at the preserve.

Trail use at the preserve is likely to get a boost if, as expected, the borough votes to allow lake access for car-top boats.

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The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has maintained trails at the lovely 75-acre Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve in Bergen County since December 2011. Several projects are on the docket for us there across the water.

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