New beginnings and nearly a century of service were celebrated at the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference’s grand opening event on Saturday, September 12. Along with members, local officials, and the community, the Trail Conference marked its first trail season at the historic Darlington Schoolhouse headquarters while kicking off the organization’s 95th year of creating, protecting, and promoting trails.

Executive Director Edward Goodell plants a swamp white oak—a native species that supports Ramapo Valley Reservation and Ramapo College of New Jersey.

On June 23, LG Electronics USA announced a redesign of its proposed new high-rise development in its proposed Englewood Cliffs, N.J., reducing the height of the tallest building from 143 feet to the tree line, at 70 feet.

Assem bly version of the bill has also been introduced by John McKeon, D-M adison. Please be ready to respond you regarding the passage of these bills.

The Trail Conference applauds LG for the final design which is sensitive to the historic and environmentally sensitive Palisades and in keeping with the company’s reputation as a good neighbor and corporate citizen.

Executive Director Edward Goodell plants a swamp white oak—a native species that supports the riparian habitat adjacent to Darlington Schoolhouse during the grand opening.
REI Donates Over $76K to the Bear Mountain Trails Project

Thanks to the overwhelming support of our members, volunteers, partners, and friends, the Trail Conference’s restoration of the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain State Park has received a huge boost: Because you voted for our trail project on the A.T., REI will donate over $76,000 to help complete our work.

This generous donation is part of the national retailer’s Every Trail Connects campaign, which aims to inspire stewardship of the outdoors. REI earmarked $500,000 to invest in 10 trails around the country, with votes tallied at rei.com/trails deciding where the funds would go. Every vote for the Appalachian Trail gave the Trail Conference $5 for the Bear Mountain Trails Project. Voting kicked off at 3:01 a.m. EST on August 14 and lasted a mere 37 hours before all $500K had been allocated. The campaign’s success demonstrates that REI’s pledge added an additional $10,000 to each trail.

In total, the A.T. received 13,229 votes and $76,145. We thank each and every one of you for backing us.

The money donated will go toward building a safer, more enjoyable Appalachian Trail through Bear Mountain State Park—the most heavily used section of the A.T. This million annual visitors to Bear Mountain create an unusual amount of wear on the park’s trail system, necessitating an upgrade to the hiking paths originally built in the 1920s. Since 2006, the Bear Mountain Trail Project has seen 1,745 volunteers and 5,518 hours of work. The professional trail builders and our Conservation Corps members to make these trails more sustainable.

Volunteers on this project have spent over 60,000 hours building 17,131 linear feet of trail, including 1,805 stairs and 11,631 square feet of crib wall to ensure the trail will endure for generations to come.

The crew working on the Bear Mountain Trails Project hit the 60 percent completion point on the Upper East Face portion of the Appalachian Trail relocation this summer. They are on schedule to finish the Trails for People Exhibit at the foot of Bear Mountain this fall. This interpretive exhibit, built directly along the Appalachian Trail, explains the history of the park, trail-building techniques, and why constructing sustainable trails is so important. It serves as an unofficial gate-way to more than 50,000 acres of backcountry habitat.

With just 1,145 feet of trail remaining until we reach the James Memorial Trail at the top, the Bear Mountain Trail Project is expected to be completed in 2017. To get the job done in that timeframe, we’re looking for enthusiastic volunteers who are interested in helping us rebuild this historic trail and donations to fund our $250,000 budget. Find out how you can get involved at nynjtc.org/bearmountains, or contact Trail Builder Adam Knotheid at 616-337-2481 or aknoth@nynjtc.org.

The grand opening was made possible by the generosity of lead sponsor United Water New Jersey, and through sponsor-ship and donations from Inserra Supermarkets, Inc./ShopRite, Northwestern Mutual, L.L. Bean, and Secor Farms of Mahwah. Special thanks to our Volunteer Committee and all of the volunteers who made this special day a great success.

Explore the Catskills During Lark in the Park

The 2015 Catskills Lark in the Park will be held Saturday, October 3, through Monday, October 12. Celebrating the Catskill Mountains region of New York State and the Catskill Park, the Lark includes organized hikes, bicycle trips, paddles, service, and cultural and educational events. For a full schedule of this year’s events, visit www.catskillslark.org.

Join us in Celebrating our Volunteers

We help honor our outstanding volunteers and trail partners on Saturday, November 7, from 1 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. at the new Trail Conference headquarters (600 Ramapo Valley Rd., Mahwah, N.J.).

The afternoon will include workshops on trail design, responding to trail emergencies, introduction to the Invasives Strike Force, how to run an outreach table, reading the woods, intro to cartography, and using GPS/map and compass. Appetizers will be served before the awards ceremony at 5:30. For more information and to register, visit http://bit.ly/tc-vol-15.

Please let us know how to support the Trail Conference at no cost to you! When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price on eligible orders to the Trail Conference. Bookmark http://smile.amazon.com/ch/22-6042838 and support us every time you shop. Thank you to our supporters for raising $287.86 in the second quarter in 2015!

Department of Clarifications: In the Summer 2015 Trail Walker article “Volunteers Boost Trail Conference Russia project,” the name of the Long Dome Trail (LDT) was used to refer to the Long Dome Trail Complex, and the Long Path Project in the Catskill. The Long Path Crew, under the guidance of Jakob Franks and Andy Garrett, is responsible for the education. They designed the trail, worked with all the necessary agencies for the required permits, and scheduled a multitude of work trips. Their core crew is comprised of the Labor Over the 9.5-mile relocation, the LDTIC and the Jilly Moffett did very specific technical work as assigned by Jakob and Andy. Jakob, his wife Galy, and Andy were supported by the LDTIC, and received volunteer recognition awards from the Trail Conference last fall for their work.
While the Trail Conference was undergoing a physical transformation, we were also in the process of building a stronger, more effective organization whose work was accomplished by a large body of semi-autonomous volunteers assisted by a small but highly skilled staff reporting to the Board. Several conclusions were reached, including:

1. The most effective working groups are the smallest that can bring all relevant facts to bear.
2. Stakeholders should have the opportunity to provide input on decisions that affect them.
3. The Board is ultimately responsible for making decisions.
4. The staff is responsible for working with volunteers to implement the Board’s decisions.

Fortunately, another non-profit with the same DNA as the Trail Conference went through a similar reorganization more than a decade ago. The Appalachian Trail Conference (formerly the Appalachian Trail Conference) was structured almost exactly like the Trail Conference when it was formed in 1935. In fact, the Trail Conference's Chairman at the time, Major William Welch, was elected to serve as the ATC’s first Chairman, too. Since that time, the ATC’s reorganized structure working and steadily improving over the past 12 years was encouraging.
The towns of Suffern, Hillburn, Sloatsburg, and Tuxedo, surrounded by the great parks and forest state parks, are recognizing an economic opportunity at their doorstep. Mass transit is bringing in visitors from New York City and beyond, and the towns need only to help connect visitors with the restaurants, shops, and amenities these burgs have to offer. Now, it’s becoming easier than ever to linger in these trail towns before heading into the woods.

Events like the first annual Explore Harriman Adventure in the Trail Towns Corridor, presented by Harriman, Tuxedo Farmers’ Markets every Saturday, and outdoor activities along the west side of the park, are making that clear. Sponsored by the Suffern Chamber of Commerce, Harriman, Tuxedo Farmers’ Market took place on September 19 and encouraged visitors and residents alike to tour these communities and partake in all of the year-round food, music, art, and happenings they offer. Buses conveniently shuttled visitors from town to town for a full day of celebration.

TRIBUTES

In honor of Robert Ross for Father’s Day
David B. Hines
In memory of Francis F. Rice
Richard P. DeVincent
In memory of Charles E. Klabunde of the New York City and Beyond, and the towns need only to help connect visitors with the restaurants, shops, and amenities these burgs have to offer.

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**NEW TRAIL OPENINGS**

**Rebirth and Reroutes Along the Shawangunk Ridge Trail**

The Shawangunk Ridge Trail took a hit this spring, when a massive wildfire sparked in Summitville, N.Y., ended up burning 2,660 acres across the ridge. No injuries or structural damage were reported, and the fire—which was ignited on May 3 by a homeowner who ignored a burn ban—was under control within a week. Still, the SRT from Roosa Gap to Shawangunk State Forest was scorched. For a long-distance trail that already had a full slate of improvement projects lined up this season, summer was shaping up to be busier than usual. Here’s a glimpse at the work accomplished along the Shawangunk Ridge Trail so far this year.

**Rehabbing the SRT After the Fire**

First on the agenda: Assessing the fire damage. Once the area was safe, the Trail Conference’s Long Path co-chairs Jakob Franke and Andy Garrison took notes on impacted trail markers andblazing needs. By the end of May, they had replaced the trail—and the forest had already begun healing itself, as small fires could be seen popping up across the charred land.

Fast-forward to August, when that regrowth along the hiking path had actually grown somewhat out of hand. “Blueberry is taking off, ferns are every-where, sassafras is everywhere, and scrub oak is everywhere—and it’s all growing like crazy,” Franke reported. To combat the vegetation overtaking the trail, the Long Path Crew set out on several clip n’ clear dates throughout August and September to open up the walkway.

**New Trails in Huckleberry Ridge State Forest**

The Trail Conference’s newest Conserva-tion Corps trail crew, the Long Path/Shawangunk Ridge Trail Spoke Crew, pictured below, tackled the most ambitious project on the SRT this year. Under the guidance of Franke and Garrison, four AmeriCorps members and several volunteers built over 2.5 miles of trail in Huckleberry Ridge State Forest, including a connection from the new parking lot on Raymond Drive and a new SRT segment from the Lenape Ridge Trail segment fork.

The primary goals of these trail connec-tions were to: 1. Give locals, visitors, and hikers arriving at the Port Jervis train sta-tion access to the southernmost part of the Long Path and SRT, and 2. Move the SRT off private property and provide a loop near Hawthorne Lake. After extensive corridor clearing, side-hilling, and stone work, hikers can now enjoy a woodland walk that overlooks the local rural area surrounding Port Jervis. The trail itself is moderate to strenuous, and at its highest point offers panoramic views of the Catskills.

For a detailed account of the crew’s two months living and working in the field—including the trails of working building a trail in severe weather and the mongrel boost of an old-fashioned camp sing-along—check out their weekly reports at nynjtc.org/long-path-shawangunk-ridge-trail-crew.

**Ongoing Projects**

In Roosa Gap State Forest, a 0.5-mile relo-cation of the Long Path/SRT from the fire tower is 50 percent complete. And in Shawangunk State Forest, work has begun on two new trails that will connect a new DEC parking area on Cox Road with the Long Path/SRT on the ridge. Franke hopes to have those trails completed by early next year.

Work along the Shawangunk Ridge Trail will continue through the fall. If you’re interested in helping to make improvements along the trail, contact Jakob Franke: jf31@cbu.edu or 201.638.0582.

**Doris Duke Loop Opens the First of Many New Trails to Make Sterling Forest More Accessible**

By Sona Mason, West Hudson Program Coordinator

The four-mile Doris Duke Loop trail at Sterling Forest State Park, in Orange County, N.Y., is officially open! It is the first of many new trails and improvements planned for Sterling Forest, which intends to provide up to 70 miles of trails under a plan that aims to create “an integrated, year-round trail system for a diversity of trail users.”

The new Doris Duke loop, which includes a section of the Allie Trail, was completed as part of the Sterling For-rest Back Country Trails program, a partnership between the Trail Conference and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.

Work on the creation of this loop began shortly after New York State acquired the property in 1998. The first draft of a trails plan came early in 2000, and a final draft was implemented in 2009. Trail building on the Doris Duke Trail began in 2013. This September, four AmeriCorps mem-bers leading the Trail Conference’s Palisades Trail Crew, pictured above, fin-ished the trail with the help of many volunteers. The new hiking path is a mod-el of modern sustainable trail-building techniques, showcasing bench-cut con-struction, stepping stone crossings, rock stairs, and other structures to harden the tread. For much of its length—where sustai-nable little work beyond brush removal was necessary at all: There are simply blazes on trees to keep hikers on track.

The opening of the Doris Duke Trail Loop was celebrated with a ribbon cutting on September 20 as part of the Hudson River Valley Ramble. It was followed by an interpretive hike—and trail run, for the speedies—of the entire loop, which encompasses fl ats and hills, ridgetop views, enormous eras, and plentiful wildlife viewing opportunities through the Doris Duke Wildlife Sanctuary. Hik-ers enjoyed the first of fall’s leaves, walked by a vernal pool, stopped at a beaver lodge overlook, spied birdlife from the cover of trees over the wetland, and stopped over young amphibians dispersing into their habitat.

If you wish to get involved in building and improving trails in Sterling Forest, contact West Hudson Program Coordinator Sona Mason: smason@nynjtc.org or 201.512.5348 x16

**Five-Mile South Taconic Trail Extension Officially Open**

By Andrew Seirup, East Hudson Trail Chair

Two years in the making, the five-mile South Taconic Trail extension in the north-est corner of Dutchess County was officially opened to the public on Sunday afternoon, September 28. This new trail connects the south end of the South Taconic Trail to the existing Rudd Pond trail system in Millerton, N.Y. In June, 6.3 miles dow n to Iron Mine Pond and Shagroy Road. The entire section is now fully open and blazed, though there are still a number of spots where volunteers will continue working to improve the tread.

A grand opening hike of the new section took place on Saturday, Sept. 27, at the Hudson River Valley Ramble. The new trail is a fairly strenuous hike of about sev-en miles and a 1,500-foot elevation gain, ending with the very steep descent to the Quarry Hill Road trailhead. It’s a rewarding hike with many open views, hemlock groves, and small stream crossings.

The Huckleberry Ridge Extension was the result of years of behind-the-scenes work to make the trail possible. From start to finish, this has been a very rewarding project to be involved in, and I’m very proud of the group involved. I hope you all get a chance to enjoy hiking all or part of the new trail soon.

**Stroll Through History Over the High Bridge**

By Robert Ward, Trail Conference Volunteer

Over 10 years ago, a grassroots initiative called the High Bridge Coalition was formed to try to persuade the New York City Department of Parks to reopen the walkway over the High Bridge, a magnifi-cent section of the Old Croton Aqueduct—New York City’s first water supply system—that connects Manhattan and The Bronx. A report examining the state of the High Bridge, which was origi-nally opened in 1848, indicated that it was structurally sound, but the “T” bars were rusting out and needed to be replaced. The group succeeded in convincing several local politicians to set aside funds for the project, and on January 13, 2013, work began on restoring the High Bridge.

Workers removed the walkway, saving each brick and even some of the dirt, and replaced the old “T” bars with new, stain-less steel ones before putting everything back in place. On June 6, 2015, the High Bridge walkway was officially reconnected to the public. For a more detailed history of the Old Croton Aqueduct, visit: http://blog-tw.nynjtc.org/old-croton-aqueduct-history/. The link includes suggested walks along the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, which runs from the Croton Reservoir in Westchester County to Manhattan along the route of the original aqueduct.

The map/guide To The Old Croton Aque-duct in New York City, published by Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, describes the route of the aqueduct, the history, and describes the walk that can be purchased from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference or from the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct.

The High Bridge was designed by James Remick, Jr., the architect of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, and built by John B. Jervis, one of America’s foremost engineers at the time. It was constructed to resemble an old Roman aqueduct with five-foot-square stone granite columns marching across the broad valley of the Harlem River. During the construction of the Harlem River Tunnel in 1901, the stone pillars over the river were removed and replaced by a modern steel arch bridge.
A quarterly look at some of what we have been doing to improve public access to nature.

**People for Trails. Trails for People.**

A quarterly look at some of what we have been doing to improve public access to nature.

*Breakneck Ridge Sees Another 25 Percent Jump in Number of Visitors*

Breakneck Ridge has been dubbed the “most popular trail in North America”—and our Trail Stewards can attest to that. Over the past three years, the Trail Conference’s Breakneck Ridge Trail Stewards have recorded a 25 percent increase in hikers annually. In 2013, the most hikers they saw on any given day was around 500. Last year, the most popular days saw about 700 hikers. This year, Breakneck Ridge hosted over 1,000 hikers on the busiest days.

Stations at Breakneck Ridge on weekends through Labor Day, the Trail Stewards interacted with nearly every hiker that approached the trailhead, providing visitors with maps and information on safe hiking. According to State Park officials and the local EMS, there was not an increase in emergency responses needed.

“The ability to give a business card with information was extremely reassuring for most hikers,” said Tragno. “They were happy to know that there was someone they could call if they were in trouble or lost, and the fact that they had already talked to us made it more likely that they would reach out for help before getting super lost.”

The Trail Stewards also provided suggested trail routes—especially for visitors unprepared for the strenuous scramble up Breakneck Ridge—and were trained to teach Leave No Trace Principles to make hikers aware of their impact on the mountain.

**Ramapo Earth Crew Tackles Trail Work in Eight Parks**

The Ramapo Earth Crew—a partnership of the Trail Conference and MEVO (Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization)—closed another successful season in August. Working on everything from trail maintenance to litter cleanup to combating illegal ATV use, the crew ran a total of 12 Trail Conference work trips since April. During an estimated 800 hours of work on trails, the crew helped to improve hiking paths in Ramapo Valley County Reservation, Flat Rock Brook Nature Center, Franklin Lakes, Norvin Green State Forest, Ramapo Mountain State Forest, Long Pond Ironwoods State Park, Ringwood State Park, and Sterling Forest State Park. Find out more about this great group of young volunteers and how to get involved next year at nynjtc.org/content/ramapo-earth-crew.

By Monica and David Day, West Jersey Trail Crew Leaders

This fall, the West Jersey Trail Crew will be working to complete a boardwalk in Wayswaynda State Park’s Cedar Swamp, relocate a washed-away trail in Worthington State Park, build a new 36-foot bridge in Stokes State Forest (on last spring’s stormwork abutments), continue construction of a new trail in Stokes, and begin the restoration of the Starway to Heaven on the Appalachian Trail just north of Vernon, N.J. There will be “something for everyone” on all of these trips—so join us!

Bring your lunch, plenty of water, gloves, and sturdy work shoes—and be prepared to get dirty. All tools, materials, and training will be provided. Beginners are welcome on all work trips. We’ll be in the field the following Saturdays this fall: Sept. 19, Oct. 3, Oct. 10, Oct. 24, Oct. 31, Nov. 7, Nov. 14, Nov. 21.

All events begin at 9 a.m. Please phone leaders Monica and David Day at 732-937-9098 (home) or 908-307-5049 for meeting locations and driving directions. Check http://bit.ly/1HtfgSl for full details about each outing.

Happy Trails to A.T. Supervisor Rich Taylor

Rich Taylor, a longtime Trail Conference volunteer and supervisor of the Appalachian Trail from the New York State line to Route 17, resigned from his posi- tion this summer. Taylor stepped down after relocating to southern New Jersey.

Taylor also volunteered as a trail main- tainer, A.T. corridor monitor, and member of the Long Distance Trails Crew. Some of his proudest accomplishments as an Appalachian Trail supervisor included several improvement projects around Fitzgerald Falls, the erosion of the A.T. south of Route 17A, the removal of the Little Dam bridge when it collapsed and the emergency construction of stone steps across the stream, and the construction of a new side trail to the Wildcat Shelter.

“I would like to thank you all for the vol- unteer efforts that you have donated to the A.T. and to the Trail Conference,” he wrote to his maintainers before his departure.

“Your contributions to make the A.T. a great place for outdoor experiences is appreciated. Maybe I will see you on the trails still in the future.”

**Megalithic Crew Finishes Trails for People Interpretive Exhibit at Bear Mountain**

The Megalithic Crew—run by the Nature Center, Franklin Lakes, Norvin Green State Forest, Long Pond Ironwoods State Park, Ringwood State Park, and Sterling Forest State Park. Find out more about this great group of young volunteers and how to get involved next year at nynjtc.org/content/ramapo-earth-crew.

In July, the volunteers and AmeriCorps members of the Megalithic Trail Crew began work on the Trails for People Interpretive Exhibit at the foot of Bear Mountain. This interactive exhibit built directly along the Appalachian Trail provides hikers with the history of Bear Mountain State Park, the A.T., and sustainable trail-building practices. The Megalithics welcomed a number of groups that helped ensure the project was on schedule to be completed this fall, including the Student Conservation Association (pictures), Nature Place Day Camp, and the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew. For a detailed account of the crew’s busy summer, check out their weekly reports logged at nynjtc.org/bearmtncrewupdates.

**Join the West Jersey Trail Crew**

*By Monica and David Day, West Jersey Trail Crew Leaders*

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**Trail University Reaches 1,000 Courses**

For nine years, our award-winning Trail University workshops have been giving volunteers the skills and knowledge needed to build and maintain trails. On Saturday, September 5, our Introduction to Trail Maintenance course in New Jersey’s Long Pond Ironworks State Park was our 1,000th Trail U workshop. New Jersey Program Coordinator Peter Dolan led the course, teaching 11 volunteers everything they need to know about keeping trails open and safe. Interested in boosting your own skills? Browse our online schedule for more upcoming Trail U workshops near you: nytcnj.org/view/workshops.

**CatSKill Conservation Corps Hosts Trail-Marking Clinic**

For many weekends throughout the season, contact Crew Chief Chris Ryalting at 914-953-2163, feuller99@hotmail.com for more information. For more info on joining the Ramapo Earth Crew, visit nytcnj.org/content/ramapo-earth-crew.

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**Ask a Trail Builder**

By Arna Koenighof, Trail Builder and Educator

I didn’t realize people actually design trails. How do you figure out the best place to build them?

While designing a new trail, I have a lot of things running through my mind: technical things, like running slope (the slope on the path of travel) or cross slope (the slope perpendicular to the path of travel), and more intangible things, like “happy little trees.” Yes, I’m referencing the painter Bob Ross. As children, my brother and I would watch the star of the PBS series “The Joy of Painting” create calming nature scenes from a blank white canvas while he soothingly narrated his process. Today, I see trails as having the ability to take us to those tranquil vistas that Ross painted, bringing us to a place of serenity. While designing a new trail, the current landscape is my blank canvas, and I get to paint in my own “happy” trails. Well-designed trails are inspired by the trail builder to a state of giddy euphoria and give the layperson a sense of joy, all due to the “invisible” work of the trail’s designer.

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**DAMAGED BRIDGE BRINGS TOGETHER A DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF HIkers**

Text by Bob Fuller/Marty Costello/David Booth, members of the Long Distance Trails Crew

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around, does it make a sound? Maybe. But if a tree falls on a small wooden footbridge, it will definitely break it.

The bridge crossing High Meadow Brook on the Blue Trail in Ramapo Mountain State Forest is a prime example. Constructed in 2005 by Dan Loughrey as his Eagle Project with Scout Troop 96, the bridge weathered many storms until April of this year, when a falling tree crashed right through it.

The subsequent repair of this bridge is an excellent model of the Trail Conference’s collaborative method of operation. Financial damage was first reported by a member of the public via nytcnj.org. The issue was forwarded to New York Program Coordinator Peter Dolan, who brought it to the attention of local Trail Chair Karen Schoof, Ringwood Volunteer Supervisor Gene Giordano, and Park Superintendent Eric Pain. They determined a course of action, which included the involvement of the Long Distance Trails Crew (LDTC), whose members are experienced in bridge repair. The LDTC agreed to scout the site and develop a materials list while Dolan worked to secure park assistance and funding for the required materials.

Based on work needs, a second volunteer crew—the Ramapo Earth Crew of the Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO)—would be brought in to assist the LDTC volunteer crew. The LDTC met on a 15-year plan, and that meant I would find myself up in the Presidential Range when I was 72 or so. That same September I went up to Maine and started south from Mt. Katahdin. How right that thru-hiker was! Although I couldn’t do 10 or 11 miles a day through the 100 Mile Wilderness and central Maine, when I reached the Mahousuc Range and then New Hampshire, I was lucky to knock off six-and-a-half. I thought he must be kidding, but when I went home after a couple of weeks, I realized what a sardonic joke that was. I wished I could have blazed my way through the Brady’s Path in northeast Connecticut, bought a pair of good hiking sticks, and a lot of ice. The shelters had chain link fence across the front to keep out bears, but if you had a good day 13 or 14.” He said, “When you get to New Hampshire, you’ll be making six to a place of serenity. While designing a new trail, the current landscape is my blank canvas, and I get to paint in my own “happy” trails. Well-designed trails are inspired by the trail builder to a state of giddy euphoria and give the layperson a sense of joy, all due to the “invisible” work of the trail’s designer.

**Ask a Trail Builder**

By Arna Koenighof, Trail Builder and Educator

I didn’t realize people actually design trails. How do you figure out the best place to build them?

While designing a new trail, I have a lot of things running through my mind: technical things, like running slope (the slope on the path of travel) or cross slope (the slope perpendicular to the path of travel), and more intangible things, like “happy little trees.” Yes, I’m referencing the painter Bob Ross. As children, my brother and I would watch the star of the PBS series “The Joy of Painting” create calming nature scenes from a blank white canvas while he soothingly narrated his process. Today, I see trails as having the ability to take us to those tranquil vistas that Ross painted, bringing us to a place of serenity. While designing a new trail, the current landscape is my blank canvas, and I get to paint in my own “happy” trails. Well-designed trails are inspired by the trail builder to a state of giddy euphoria and give the layperson a sense of joy, all due to the “invisible” work of the trail’s designer.

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**TRAIL TALE: HIKING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL BECAUSE IT’S IN MY BLOOD**

By Ray Torrey, Trail Conference Member

When I turned 60 years old and had to retire from my job as a captain with American Airlines, I decided to fulfill one of my life’s ambitions and hike the length of the Appalachian Trail. In the early spring of 2000 I started out from Springer Moutain, Ga., with 20 pounds on my back. After descending Blood Mountain several days later with knees that felt like they were useless, I arrived at the Walasi-Yi Interpretive Center at Neels Gap, sent home about 15 pounds of useless weight, and purchased a pair of good hiking sticks. Georgia is tough, the mountains steep and narrow. I thought that first segment took about 16 days, being a section hiker, I went home and returned the next spring.

The second year I made it through the Great Smoky Mountains, two blizzards, and a lot of ice. The shelters had chain link fence across the front to keep out bears, but it made it feel like being in time in prison.

The third year I flew into Asheville, N.C., and met up with my pre-arranged ride to take me up to the trail at Smis Gap. He had thru-hiked the A.T. and gave me many good pointers. He asked how many miles I did in a day and I said, “Twelve, maybe on a good day 13 or 14.” He said, “When you get to New Hampshire, you’ll be making six to a place of serenity. While designing a new trail, the current landscape is my blank canvas, and I get to paint in my own “happy” trails. Well-designed trails are inspired by the trail builder to a state of giddy euphoria and give the layperson a sense of joy, all due to the “invisible” work of the trail’s designer.

**The Appalachian Trail was recently rerouted on the upper east face of Bear Mountain.**

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This new, sustainable section of the A.T. will be enjoyed for generations. Lately, I’ve been getting asked a lot of questions about the hard science of trail building: things like the ratio of batter and bench—the ratio of vertical and horizontal lean—for any given crib wall. These facts and figures are not compiled on soils and water flow and even what makes a trail enjoyable to the human mind. Trail designers use computer systems and algorithms that create trail designs. But following the “rules” and the numbers may not always lead to the best end result—sometimes, there is no concrete answer for where the trail should be.

New trail design requires unwavering vigilance to both science and intuition. In some instances, you just have to feel the flow of the river and the phases and minuses, and think how the most inexperienced hiker would enjoy this new section of trail. You have to call on your inner Bob Ross.

Well-designed trails can offer a sense of joy, all due to the “invisible” work of the trail’s designer.
Helping Hungry Hikers
Along the Appalachian Trail
By Don Tripp, West Jersey Trails Chair

The Hunterdon Hiking Club has served more than 1,000 thru-hikers.

This past July, high up on the Kittatinny Ridge along the Appalachian Trail in New Jersey, 197 thru-hikers were greeted warmly with grilled burgers, hot dogs, and great local produce, compliments of the Hunterdon Hiking Club. For the past several years, quietly and without a lot of publicity, club members have volunteered their time and donated food to help our long-distance hiking friends.

On selected days, club members would arrive at 8 a.m., set up the grill, chill down the perishables, and greet thru-hikers with a hearty meal. The club set a record for the number of meals served in a single day: During one hot day in July, 32 hungry hikers were treated to burgers and hot dogs, hikers were treated to grilled burgers, hot dogs, and great local produce. In addition to local produce, complements of the Hunterdon Hiking Club. For the past several years, quietly and without a lot of publicity, club members have volunteered their time and donated food to help our long-distance hiking friends.

During one hot day in July, 32 hungry hikers enjoyed Hunterdon Hiker's hospitality. And what a feast it was! Summer is prime time for Jersey produce. In addition to bagged produce, thru-hikers were treated to freshly picked corn, blueberries, tomatoes, and peaches—all from local fields and orchards in the Garden State. The takeaway treats were also New Jersey products: Mars candy bars and Nabisco cookies.

Hunterdon Hiking Club has been a longstanding member of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. More than 10,000 thru-hikers have appreciated their support and generosity over the past 10 years, and the club looks forward to welcoming many more.
50 Years of Recreation in the Delaware Water Gap

Among the parks where the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference maintains trails, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is unique: It’s the only location the Trail Conference serves that is a designated National Recreation Area, managed by the National Park Service. Across the country there are only 18 National Recreation Areas (NRAs), congressionally protected lands that prioritize recreation activities while safeguarding the environment and land from incompatible development. The Delaware Water Gap received its NRA status 50 years ago, on September 1, 1965.

Encompassing 70,000 acres in New Jersey and Pennsylvania along the Delaware River, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DWG NRA) offers excellent opportunities for all outdoor enthusiasts. For hikers, the Appalachian Trail through DWG NRA provides access to the popular Mt. Tammany, Sunfish Pond, and a connector to the spectacular Buttermilk Falls (also easily accessed by car). The Pennsylvania side is home to its bike-friendly Joseph McDade Recreation Trail and a selection of beautiful waterfalls, as well as popular launches and shuttles for kayaks and canoes.

In total, the Delaware Water Gap offers more than 150 miles of maintained trails. Fourteen Trail Conference volunteers, plus the volunteers of the Hunterdon Hiking Club, maintain 31.3 miles of those trails in N.J., including all 13.8 miles of the A.T.

Over the summer, the National Park Service asked the Trail Conference for assistance with trail improvements around the historic Ramior Solar House, located within the DWG NRA in Milford, Pa., about 20 minutes west of High Point State Park. This structure, which is being restored as a center for environmental and sustainable design, is one of the earliest examples of passive solar residential design—it is known as the second solar house built in the United States and is the earliest surviving example in this country. On September 26—National Public Lands Day—Trail Conference volunteers and staff partnered with the National Park Service to lead an Introduction to Trail Maintenance workshop and trail work day at Ramior Solar House, teaching volunteers how to open trails in historically sensitive areas. The maintenance work exposed some of the house’s unique architectural features, which had been hidden from view under years of overgrowth.

“The Delaware Water Gap area serves as the northwestern gateway to hiking in New Jersey,” said West Jersey Trails Chair Don Tripp. “From here, hikers can access hundreds of miles of trails that our volunteers maintain in the Kittatinny Range. We’re proud to be stewards of the Delaware Water Gap’s hiking paths.”

If you’re interested in joining our ranks of volunteers who keep these beautiful trails open and safe, contact volunteer@nynjtc.org for more information.

An overview of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area for hikers can be found at: nynjtc.org/parks/delaware-water-gap-national-recreation-area. For a full visitors’ guide, visit: nps.gov/dewa/index.htm.

When Is a Hike Really a “Hike”? By Erin Roll, Trail Walker Contributor

“If you can get a cell signal, it ain’t hiking.” That was a meme that someone had posted on the wall of a hiking-related Facebook group that I belong to. It certainly was the intended meaning to be humorous. I certainly got a grin out of it—and come on, you don’t go hiking if you’re going to be talking on your cell all the time, right?

But the more I thought about that meme, the more I found myself wondering about its other, hidden meaning. I was sensing this attitude—which I have seen among certain other hikers and outdoors people—that you’re not really hiking unless you’re out in the deepest, remotest backcountry, miles from “civilization.”

Where this attitude comes from is subject to debate. Maybe it’s the influence of Thoreau, Emerson and the other Transcendentalists writing about a return to nature and the simple life in the 19th century. Perhaps it’s because of the (idealized) image of the free, independent individual that keeps showing up in the American mythos. Or maybe it’s a not-so-hidden desire to say, “Hey, look at me; I’m out here roughing it—to top, that’s all.”

There is obviously nothing wrong with a long trek in the deeper woods, as with so many other hikers, my backpack includes at least one overnight on the Appalachian Trail. But I think the assumption that a hike has to be both long and remote, in order to be considered a hike is an erroneous one.

Here in New Jersey and New York, we are fortunate to have—both because of geography and conservation efforts—a wide range of excellent parks and trails, including many within a few miles of (or actually in) New York City.

I remember leading my family on a hike one morning on the Long Path in the Palisades. It was summer, and the woods were at their greenest and leafiest. At one point my mother said something to the effect that it was hard to believe we were right across the river from the city.

So, then, what really makes a hike? That’s a question, I think, that each of us needs to answer for ourselves. We all have different reasons for liking hiking, including scenery and vistas, checking out the local flora and fauna, adventure, mental or spiritual health, or getting that perfect selfie to post on Instagram.

I think we can agree, though, that a hike depends as much on someone’s mindset as on geography—perhaps even more so. A hike is more than just walking from one point to another; it should also be about using your senses—listening to bird songs or wildlife, smelling pine trees and flowers—and actually being aware that you’re putting one foot in front of the other. To put a slightly Zen spin on it, it’s about being in the moment, whether you’re hiking two miles from the city or 200.

If you’re a hiker who’s satisfied by nothing short of a week atop a Colorado 14er, that’s fine. If you prefer a short walk in the woods near your house or in your nearest city or county park, that’s fine, too. What matters is that it is fulfilling to you.

But back to that meme about the cell signal. It still has a point, unless there’s an emergency, or your phone doubles as your GPS unit, keep the phone stashed away and enjoy the hike.

A Trail Conference member since 2009, Erin Roll is a reporter and editor with North Jersey Media Group, as well as a part-time graduate student at Montclair State University. She also maintains a hiking/feudal blog on WindDowns called Trail Head and Wandering Minds.

The National Park Service held a series of public meetings in early September to get visitor feedback on its management plan for the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Find updates on the plan process at parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa.

Chris Carroll Havestraw, N.Y.

Chris Carroll and Travis Torgerson are grounds maintenance workers for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation at Bear Mountain State Park. As part of a new program started this year, the time of both men is donated by the work one day each week to help with Trail Conference projects while they learn valuable trail-building skills.

How did you get involved with New York State Parks?
Chris: I went to school for computer programming, but happened upon an opening with Parks. I took a chance since it was so close to home, and I’m glad I did!

Travis: I was going to school for biology when I was recommended for a summer job here with the Park. After that, I never left!

What has been your favorite part of the trail building experience?
Travis: Getting to work alongside the Megalithic Crew, I always have a lot of fun out here, but I learn a ton, too. It’s really cool that I get to work on the trails that I enjoy hiking. It would be awesome to thru-hike the A.T. knowing that I got to be a part of its construction and conservation.

Now that you’ve built trails, how has your view of trail work changed?
Chris: I never realized how much work and patience and planning goes into the process. It is great problem-solving practice to work the brain as well as the body. It’s also been really cool to see how some of the techniques, like high-lining and stone splitting, are actually done.

It’s awesome to give back, be out in nature, and not only make a trail look awesome, but help connect others to it.

If you’d like to give back to trails, check out all of our volunteer opportunities at nynjtc.org/volunteer.

HISTORIC HUDSON RIVER COTTAGES
Affordable stalls, one and two bedroom homes available in historic cottage community in Westchester County, off the Hudson River. You hear from NYC. Dating back to 1720, this three-season community offers swimming pool, bocce court, organic community garden, social hall with internet and solar/office/dwelling. 82,000 $39K Down—317-685-5404

A hike on the Carpenter’s Trail along the Palisades—with views of the George Washington Bridge and New York City—is still a hike.
Plan Your Fall Hikes with New Editions of the West Hudson and Catskill Trails Map Sets

Catskill Trails Map Set: 11th Edition

Already one of the Trail Conference’s most popular maps, a revised 11th edition of the Catskill Trail map set will provide hikers with the most up-to-date and accurate trail map of the Catskill Park available when it is printed this fall. This six-map set highlights trails in and around Catskill Park in Delaware, Greene, Schenectady, Sullivan, and Ulster counties of New York, covering more than 325,000 acres of protected land.

This map set features more than 400 miles of marked trails in and around Catskill Park, including over 100 miles of the Long Path. The approximately 9.5-mile route of the Long Path through Slide Mountain Wilderness is now shown in its entirety, and the location of the newly opened Catskill Interpretive Center in Mount Tremper is indicated. The DEC parkland classifications have been adjusted near Belleayre Mountain to reflect recent changes, and additional New York City Department of Environmental Protection watershed lands have been added throughout the map coverage area. Many additional minor corrections and changes have also been added to this new edition of the Catskill Trails map set more accurate than ever before.

Additional map features include 50-foot contour lines, detailed trail mileages, all 55 peaks in the Catskills over 3,500 feet, landmarks, springs, and more points of interest. Detailed trail descriptions on the map backs include the latest trail changes.

At only $16.95 (plus $4 for Trail Conference members), this comprehensive map set will be a must-have for exploring the wild outdoors of the Catskills when it becomes available. The map set is expected to be available sometime in October. This map set was produced with support from Campzoo, an outdoor store and retail partner of the Trail Conference.

West Hudson Trails Map Set: 7th Edition

Made by the people who build the trails, the new seventh edition of the West Hudson Trails map set by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference features more than 70 miles of marked trails in Storm King State Park, Black Rock Forest, Schunemunk Mountain State Park, and other nearby parklands. Nearly 25 miles of the Highlands Trail, along with more than 10 miles of the Long Path, are shown on the maps. This revised edition includes trail lines that have been redrawn based on newer, more accurate GPS data and aerial photography. A new trail has been added in Black Rock Forest, and several additional view points have been added throughout the maps.

Other corrections and adjustments to the trails and maps have made this edition of West Hudson Trails the most accurate we have ever published. This revised edition, released in August, includes trail mileage figures directly on the map, providing distances between trail junctions and significant trail features. Additional map features include 20-foot contour lines, UTM gridlines, preen overprint for protected lands, parking areas, and other points of interest.

At only $8.95 ($6.71 for Trail Conference members), this map set is a must-have for exploring these parklands in Orange County west of the Hudson River. This map set was produced with support from Campzoo, an outdoor store and retail partner of the Trail Conference.

The Trail Conference has drawn upon its long history of producing high-quality trail maps to provide this service for park visitors and hopefully encourage more people to explore the miles of hiking paths that traverse New Jersey. While these park maps are available for free, we ask that if you like them, please consider making a donation, becoming a volunteer, or becoming a member of the Trail Conference. You can also show your support by purchasing our full-featured digital maps, which are available in print format on waterproof and tear-resistant Tyveck. Our popular Kittatinny Trails, North Jersey Trails, and Jersey Highlands Trail map sets include many of these New Jersey state parks.

The Trail Conference would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many great people who made these maps possible. Sue Bell served as volunteer coordinator for this project, keeping everything on track by facilitating communications among the cartographer, Jeremy Appar, and everyone else involved. Volunteers Ed Bunday and Paul Cashen helped provide GPS data for the maps, and others—including Alan Abramowitz, Estelle Anderson, Daniel Chasin, David Day, Monica Day, Gene Giordano, Bob Jonas, Howie Liebmann, Paul Makus, Keith Scherer, Karen Schoof, Brian Smietowski, and Don Tripp—offered valuable field-checking and review expertise. Thanks also to all of the park superintendents and everyone else at the New Jersey State Parks, including Steve Ellis and Diane Lonnie, who helped us create the best maps possible for park visitors.

Print copies of these maps are available from most of the park offices and visitor centers. The maps can also be obtained in a digital format, both as a regular PDF in 8.5”x11” format for viewing on a computer and smartphone, and as a GPS-enhanced version for use with the free PDF Maps app by visiting our website at nynjtc.org/pdf-maps.

As always, both map sets are available in print format in vibrant color on waterproof, tear-resistant Tyveck. To obtain the newly revised print map set, shop online at nynjtc.org, call 201-512-9348, or visit the Trail Conference office. The maps are also available in digital format on Apple and Android devices through the PDF Maps app; learn more about our GPS-enhanced maps at nynjtc.org/pdf-maps.

West Hudson Trails Map Set: 7th Edition

This summer, the Trail Conference surpassed 60,000 map downloads through Avenza’s PDF Maps app—and these digital maps only continue to increase in popularity as more and more people on the trails discover their enhanced capabilities. We are excited to now offer new digital maps (see N.J. State Parks article on this page) and provide additional options for obtaining them—including map bundles and online purchases from our website. To help get these valuable tools onto the devices of even more outdoors-loving people:

In August, the app’s developer updated the software and included the ability for users to download collections of maps, called map bundles. It is easier than ever to download our most popular map sets, like the two-map Harriman-Bear Mountain set or six-map Catskill set, while saving money versus buying each map individually. We currently offer nine map bundles, which can be found within the app’s map store by searching for the map title.

Another update: it is now possible to access the app’s map store and download free and for-sale maps using any browser on a desktop PC or mobile device. Avenza’s pdf-maps.com websites now allow you to search for maps, view preview images, and purchase maps without a mobile device. You can check out using a PayPal or debit/credit card.

As always, these digital maps are not meant to be a replacement for printed maps that every trail user should have—they are a supplement to help enhance your outdoor experience. Batteries can die, software can become buggy, and weather can become problematic, so have a printed map with you just in case.

Our Digital Maps

We offer a large selection of both free and for-sale maps through Avenza’s PDF Maps app, which is available on Apple and Android mobile devices as a free download. The app allows you to pinpoint your location on a map, even when there’s no mobile coverage, and includes features like route tracking, waypoint marking, photo geotagging, and the ability to measure distances between map points. Step-by-step instructions for downloading the app and finding our maps are available at nynjtc.org/pdf-maps.

We are thankful to everyone who uses the app, recommends it to others, and takes the time to contact us with suggestions and feedback. The hands received from our app map sales, just like our print map sales, go right into the trail work we do in the region, so we hope users will continue to spread the word. It is great hearing that back from trail maintainers using the app to report trail problems, trail stewards using the app to mark locations of invasive plants, and hikers using the app to report map changes and new trail features.

The popularity of these digital maps has certainly shown us how we can further develop opportunities to help more people explore our region’s trails safely.

New Maps Cover 15 Northern NJ State Parks

The Trail Conference, in partnership with the New Jersey State Park Service, is currently finishing up a project to produce maps for 15 of northern New Jersey’s state parks. These maps can replace outdated handouts previously provided by the parks, and we hope users find them to be accurate, detailed, and user-friendly.

The Trail Conference has also won a grant through the National Recreational Trails Program to produce maps for many more state parks. Funds for this project have been awarded for maps to the following state parks:

- Abram S. Hewitt State Forest
- Allamuchy Mountain State Park
- High Point State Park
- Hopatcong State Park
- Jersey Jump State Forest
- Kittatinny Valley State Park
- Long Pond Ironworks State Park
- Innisfree Green State Forest
- Ramapo Mountain State Forest
- Ringwood State Park
- Stokes State Forest
- Swartswood State Park
- Wayhasta State Park
- Worthington State Forest

Maps were funded in part with a national Recreational Trails Program grant in cooperation with the New Jersey State Park Service.

The 15 state parks and forests include:

- Abram S. Hewitt State Forest
- Allamuchy Mountain State Park
- High Point State Park
- Hopatcong State Park
- Jersey Jump State Forest
- Kittatinny Valley State Park
- Long Pond Ironworks State Park
- Innisfree Green State Forest
- Ramapo Mountain State Forest
- Ringwood State Park
- Stokes State Forest
- Swartswood State Park
- Wayhasta State Park
- Worthington State Forest
Native Plant Habitat Taking Shape at Trail Conference Headquarters

By Linda Rohleder, Trail Conference

Native Plant Habitat Taking Shape below the knee and above the ankle. It is Hudson Partnership for Regional Inventory and Monitoring (HudPMI)’s goal to collect baseline data on regional hiking trails in the region, creating the first-of-its-kind map of invasive plants along hiking paths from a broad landscape scale. When the project began in 2011, the goal was to collect baseline data on regional hiking trails with the intention of monitoring and maintaining the integrity of the native vegetation in the parks.

Our survey strategy assigns a manageable section of just two miles to each volunteer. Over the last five years, almost 500 volunteers have been involved in our surveys. In the process, they have collectively generated over 50,000 observations of invasive species—a substantial data set that will be useful in analyzing invasive species distribution and spread throughout the region.

Very little was known about the extent of invasive species in our parks when this citizen science program began, and the surveys have turned up some interesting results. We’ve identified the top invaders in our parks: Japanese barberry, Japanese stiltgrass, multiflora rose, winemonger, and garlic mustard. In fact, the top two—Japanese barberry and Japanese stiltgrass—have been found in all of the parks surveyed so far.

We’ve also identified parks that have substantial areas with fairly low invasive plant levels, such as Abbeem Hewitt State Forest and the southern portion of Ninebri Green State Forest in New Jersey, and Schuylkill Mountain State Park and Storm King State Park in New York. We’ve also seen a pattern of more invasive species closer to human impacts, such as parking areas and buildings.

Using the data collected by our volunteers, we are able to plan work days where we remove pockets of invaders to protect native habitats and also target new invaders to help keep them from establishing and becoming the next Japanese barberry. We’re also able to start predicting areas which are more likely to be invaded.

Our 2015 season has come to a close, but we’re already planning for next year. To participate in 2016, sign up for our mailing list by emailing Linda Rohleder, Director of Land Stewardship, at lrohleder@nynjtc.org.

Linda Rohleder

Invasives Strike Force Citizen Science Program

Top 1,000 Miles of Trail Surveyed

Has Your Park Been Surveyed? Our volunteers have collected data at over 60 parks, many of which have had every trail completely surveyed. Find out which ones have been completed at nynjtc.org/panel/invasive-strike-force-parks.

Invasives Strike Force Citizen Science Program

Top 1,000 Miles of Trail Surveyed

Incom ing freshmen from Ramapo College of New Jersey helped plant native species around the Darlington Schoolhouse grounds in August.

How to Prevent Shin Splints

As a term used by athletes to describe a condition that affects the leg, shin splints are a common injury that many runners and hikers experience. While there is no one cause for shin splints, there are several factors that can contribute to its development.

The most common causes of shin splints are overuse or improper technique. Overuse can occur from running too long or too fast, or from running on hard surfaces. Improper technique can include running with a high arch or flat foot, or running on uneven terrain.

To prevent shin splints, it’s important to gradually increase your training and avoid repeating the same exercises too often. Wearing proper shoes and using proper form and technique can also help prevent shin splints. If you do experience shin splints, rest and ice the affected area to reduce swelling and pain. If the condition persists, see a doctor for further treatment.

Volunteers are special people. They give their free time, free of charge, to help with the cause of their choosing. When it comes to trail work, loyal and unwavering support is needed. To put it plainly, trail work is tough. But if we are lucky, a crew will gain one or a few loyal volunteers who make it their calling to come out and get things done. For the Taconic Trail Crew and that volunteer is Gene Wiggins.

Gene Wiggins, Yorktown Heights, N.Y.

By Chris Bush, AmeriCorps Leader of the Taconic Trail Crew

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Gene is a life member of the Trail Conference who began volunteering five years ago. Somehow, in between running his own IT consulting business and raising a young family, Gene has organized the crew half a dozen consecutive Saturdays (and some Mondays) to help further our progress on the Appalachian Way Trail in Fahnestock Park. When asked why he volunteers, he simply said, “I love being outside.”

Due to the geology of Fahnestock, the crew has seen our fair share of rockwork on this project, including a number of heavy-duty stepping stone sections and more than a few stone stairs. Regardless, Gene has unwaveringly stood up to as we have dug pits and set stone after stone.

“I really enjoy the stowenork,” Gene said. “It’s a mix of hard work and athletics!”

The Appalachian Way Trail project was completed in September, but that hasn’t slowed Gene down. As an informal volunteer with the Taconic Crew, he also maintains a section of trail at the Hilltop Haven Farm and Environmental Center in Yorktown, N.Y.

The Taconic Crew would like to thank Gene for his hard work and dedication. Without volunteers like him, the trails could not be as beautiful and accessible as they are.

For more information on the Taconic Trail and how you can get involved, visit nynjtc.org/taconiccrew.

How to Prevent Shin Splints

If your shoes are worn down significantly on one side of the sole, replace the shoes. If you have a flat foot or high arch foot, you may benefit from placing an arch support in your shoes or boots—even when you’re not on a trail. In addition, shorten your stride when hiking or running, taking shorter steps or strides especially when running on hard or uneven terrain, and vary your running surface. Consult with your physician to find out if you have any underlying medical conditions that may contribute to shin splints.

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Featured Hike

Explore More Than Ever Before
Through Dover Stone Church Preserve

The Stone Church Preserve was purchased in 2004 with private and public funds through the collaborative efforts of the Dutchess Land Conservancy, the Town of Dover, the Friends of Dover Stone Church, and Dutchess County Government and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Additional lands and improvements to the Preserve were added in 2009, with a grand opening celebration in 2010.

The stream-fed cavern known as Dover Stone Church is one of the most spectacular natural sites in Dutchess County, New York. Thanks to the work of volunteers from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, hikers can now explore more of the protected lands surrounding this hidden natural wonder. Three new trails traversing the Dover Stone Church Preserve were officially opened to the public in June. Built by Trail Conference volunteers—including the Harlem Valley Trail Crew led by Salley Decker, volunteer supervisor of the Preserve, town officials, and the staff of Dutchess Land Conservancy—the new hiking paths add four additional miles of trail to this historic green space in Dover Plains. Prior to their completion, only a fraction of the Preserve was accessible via just one marked trail.

The Trail Conference adopted the Stone Church Preserve in early 2014, sharing responsibility for the maintenance and protection of its trails. The Town of Dover and DLC added a key 53 acres in December 2014, making it possible to build and open the three new trails this spring.

The original Stone Church Cave Trail (0.3 mile round-trip) leads to the center of the Preserve. Large, metamorphic rocks form the Dover Stone Church’s entrance in the shape of a gothic cathedral window, hence the holy moniker. Once inside, you’ll find a magnificent waterfall fed by Stone Church Brook, a tributary of the Tenmile River, which parallels the trail. The unique beauty of this site, which has historical ties to Native American Pequot Chief Sassacus and his warriors, is often likened to something out of a fairy tale.

For a longer tour of the Preserve along hiking paths of varied terrain, retrace your steps back along the Stone Church Cave Trail. In this direction, all three of the new trails are accessed from a trailhead on your right as you near the clearing. The new yellow-blazed and red-blazed trails each provide one-mile loop hike options. The in-and-out blue trail is 1.5 miles roundtrip. You'll encounter plenty of rocks and several forest types on these trails, from abandoned agriculture land now sprouting juniper trees, to oaks, hickories and hickories, to chestnut oaks and pitch pines at the top of the ridge, which offers sweeping views over the Harlem Valley. Many of the habitats at the Preserve are sensitive to disturbance, so please stay on the blazed trails.

Directions:

Take NYS Route 22 to Dover Plains. Immediately south of the traffic light at Mill Street (Mets-North Rail Station), look for a blue and yellow historical marker on the west side of the road for Dover Stone Church. The drive is private, but open for pedestrians, do not take cars up it. Parking is permitted at Dover Elementary when school is not in session, at the Taber Wing House, and at Four Brothers Restaurant. Walk north toward the traffic light to sign designating the entrance to the Preserve’s right-of-way. At the top of the gravel driveway, you’ll enjoy a bird’s eye view of the tree-lined lane. A quarter-mile walk from this viewpoint will lead you to an informational kiosk containing maps and important information about the Preserve and its history.

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