Imagine a group of passionate people who believe in the power of connecting with nature standing in front of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They see potential in the natural areas outside of New York City—untamed woodlands and mountains that can offer clean air, exercise, and respite for the growing population in the rapidly developing metropolis. Many of these natural areas themselves are being eyed for development. Time is of the essence to protect the land.

Through private donations and public participation, they succeed in preserving many important parcels. With ownership of these lands transferred to the states of New York and New Jersey, they begin partnering with these agencies to scout, design, and construct trail systems that will provide safe, enjoyable access for the public. They enlist more people to build, maintain, and protect these new trails and the precious ecosystems they allow visitors to experience.

All this work they do as a volunteer-powered nonprofit: the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

That scene is as much a retelling of the Trail Conference’s origins in the early 1900s as it is a look at the work that the organization is accomplishing today. As we close our Centennial year this October, the symbolic end of an era presents Trail Conference leadership with the opportunity to ask many of the same questions our founders pondered: How do we harness the growing interest in nature? How do we empower more people to explore the outdoors safely? How do we instill a sense of pride and responsibility in protecting its integrity? Of course, there are new questions we must face as well: How do we address barriers between people of color and equitable access to the outdoors? How can our work better address climate change and other threats to the health of the environment? As we turn 101, it feels like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a real difference in how the public engages with nature.

In this Trail Walker, you’ll read about some of the steps we are taking to answer these questions—from a large-scale trails plan that emphasizes community connectivity (page 5) to leading the response to the emerging invasive spotted lanternfly (page 4). We’ve also embarked on a strategic planning process to define our priorities and efforts in the coming years.

As an outdoor lover and Trail Conference supporter, we invite you to be a part of this journey. Sign up for our digital newsletter at nynjtc.org to receive invitations to provide feedback, stay up-to-date on our progress, and more.

The work the Trail Conference does now impacts how future generations will experience the outdoors.
You're Invited to Our Centennial Gala

We invite you to join us at our Centennial Gala on Saturday, Oct. 16, at 6 p.m. at the Bear Mountain Inn. To mark this milestone, we will be honor-

You are invited to join us at our Second Annual Trail-A-Thon on Sunday, Oct. 16, at 6 p.m. at the Bear Mountain Inn. To mark this milestone, we will be honor-

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

Will You Take on the Trail-A-Thon Challenge?

Our Second Annual Trail-A-Thon, running Sept. 13 through Oct. 31, is a chance to support sustainable trails and healthy parks. As we close out our Centennial year and look to our 101st birthday this October, we’re inviting every-

TRAIL CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS

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

Bear Mountain Inn

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Doors and inspire a deeper appreciation for the care that natural areas require.

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If a time machine could take us back to the early years of the Trail Conference, what would we change? Hindsight is 20/20, and we might be tempted to change our mission—had we foreseen that trail building would remain a constant presence over the last century, providing the public access to some of the most amazing natural areas outside of any major city. We still accomplish our mission the same way we started: by engaging the support of enthusiastic and dedicated people who share a similar desire to enjoy nature.

The Trail Conference was founded as a conference of likeminded organizations—the convener of those who were eager to do the work needed to empower individuals to protect the land we all love. That spirit continues to drive our work today. In fact, without the good will of our land manager partners, whose agreements invite us to do things like build and maintain trails and remove invasive species, the Trail Conference would not exist. With more and more people looking to connect with each other, and new partnerships—the need for better collaboration—is greater than ever.

Our latest opportunity to play a key role in a major, multi-partner initiative has come in New Jersey, where the Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan connects communities to businesses and nature via trails (read more on page 5). In the Spring 2021 issue of Trail Walker, our work with the Open Space Institute and Orange County Land Trust on the Highlands West Community Plan, which envisions a vital green corridor conserving open space and providing accessible recreation through Orange County, N.Y., was featured. (Visit the article at Mljy3-twpo2J.) And, of course, there are the incredible coordination efforts that make our long-distance trails possible.

Everybody knows about the Appalachian Trail—the 174 miles of A.T. maintained by the Trail Conference in New Jersey and New York are well loved. As we prepare to celebrate the A.T.’s centennial, we celebrate our legacy as the organization whose volunteers built its first section, through Harriman-Moore Mountain state parks, in 1923.

The Highlands Trail, in comparison, is something of a secret. Hikers on the Appalachian Trail can be forgiven for not knowing about the 180 miles of trails managed by the Trail Conference, it extends 180 miles from the Delaware River at the New Jersey/Pennsylvania border to the Hudson River in New York. Plans are underway to fully extend the Highlands Trail east to the Connecticut border.

And then there’s the Long Path. Since 1960, the Trail Conference has spearheaded the effort to maintain, protect, and complete this trail, dubbed New York’s Greatest Trail. The aqua-blazed Long Path extends 358 miles from 17th Street subway station in Manhattan to John Boyd Thacher State Park near Albany, connecting the most cosmopolitan area in the country with the region’s wild places. The goal is to extend the trail across the Mohawk River and Saratoga County to link with the Adirondack Forest Preserve trail system.

As we enter our second century, we are well positioned to ensure that, on our 200th birthday, a time machine is not needed to address opportunities that might have been missed. We will continue to work with our partners, both public and private, to create a better experience outdoors. As we work with our partners, we are improving the impact that we have by not just focusing on the physical trail, but on the total trail experience. Whether in 2021 or 2121, whenever someone needsthe solace of the wilderness or the respite of a trail, it will be there for them, thanks to the efforts of those united by the Trail Conference.

Joshua Howard
Executive Director
executivedirector@nynjtc.org

High Rainfalls Highlight Value of Sustainable Trails

In Harriman State Park, the recently rebuilt Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail, left, withstood Hurricane Henri much better than the Katak Trail, right.

Henri and Ida illustrate the need for sustainable design and maintenance. Most people (other than long-distance hikers) wouldn’t be on a primitive trail in the aftermath of such a storm—not with downed trees, trickling creeks, and dormant springs suddenlygushing back to flood levels and significant water on trail sections that had been dry to contend with. But for builders and maintainers, these conditions can be some of the most illuminating. They help identify what areas are draining well and which ones require attention, sometimes with unexpected results.

A properly functioning trail segment should not have large amounts of water flowing down trail more than 10 or 15 feet before draining off downhill, even under deluge conditions. As dramatic and video-worthy as the trail becoming a temporary stream might appear, it should make trail professionals cringe. That fast-moving water is carrying off all the soil loosened up by our feet, hooves, and/or animal feet, and then some. Over the years, that means more sediment in our waterways and degraded trails left behind for future generations, which then require more costly fixes to prevent them from becoming unsightly permanent scars on the natural landscape.

The upside, though, is that these storm events help make it plain where the drainage is being most overwhelmed by water flows, which can then help us decide where to focus our efforts.

This summer’s storms kept our trail crews busy assessing trail conditions and planning remediation projects for the remainder of this year and into 2022. If you’d like to learn more about what it takes to build a trail that can withstand significant water and, or, trails, we invite you to attend a workshop led by one of our skilled trail builders. Trails possible.

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In Harriman State Park, the recently rebuilt Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail, left, withstood Hurricane Henri much better than the Katak Trail, right.
When there is an urgent threat of invasive species in our region, the Trail Conference’s Ecological Stewardship team springs into action. Our latest target: spotted lanternfly (SLF). Spotted lanternfly (Lycorma delicatula) is a colorful insect in the planthopper family that congregates in large numbers to feed on the sap of trees. This incredibly destructive pest can feast on over 70 different species of plants, including some of our most iconic native trees and economically important crops such as hops, grapes, and apple trees. Our team has been very busy developing and implementing an SLF early detection and rapid response program in partnership with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the lead agency in stopping SLF in New York. We’ve been targeting SLF infestations in the Lower Hudson Valley region, including Orangeburg, Sloatsburg, Port Jervis, and Newburgh, N.Y., and calling on our network to respond.

As the leader of the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), a partnership of more than 50 organizations, the Trail Conference understands that protecting our region’s natural areas from threats like invasive species requires building a robust network of volunteers, seasonal and part-time workers, organizational partnerships, and institutional partnerships that value communication, collaboration, and participation. Building this infrastructure allows us to respond rapidly to new threats—that have the potential to destroy the integrity of the ecosystems so vital to our physical and mental wellbeing. This type of cooperative approach to invasive species management has been on full display over the past few months as our battle against spotted lanternfly, an emerging threat to our region’s economy and native habitats.

And what a collaborative effort it has been! Here’s a snapshot of our efforts so far this year.

Spring: Early Detection

This spring, the Ecological Stewardship team recruited volunteers to survey for SLF egg masses, part of a statewide monitoring effort involving the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the NY iMapInvasives database, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Our program engaged 110 volunteers who dedicated close to 600 hours of surveying for spotted lanternfly egg masses across 197 locations in the Lower Hudson Valley and northern New Jersey. A small group of dedicated volunteers and staff members also worked with Ag and Markets to remove over 600 SLF egg masses before they could hatch. Each mass contains up to 50 individual eggs, so this urgent effort in the spring helped suppress infestations in advance of full-fledged response efforts this summer.

In tandem with these efforts, our Conservation Dogs team has been invaluable in finding SLF hidden among vegetation. Once a spotted lanternfly report is filed and confirmed by Ag and Markets, we deploy our Conservation Dogs team to assist agency inspectors in further defining the scope of the infestation. These early detection surveys are critical to successfully managing this species before it takes hold in other areas.

Summer: Response

Our response plan involves multiple control measures: erecting insect traps on species of trees the SLF is attracted to, clearing vines and other vegetation too small to hold traps; and treating SLF’s host tree, from young (Ailanthus altissima) to insecticide so the insects are killed when they feed. Meanwhile, we encourage swatting, squashing, and stomping as many SLF as possible.

In late July, we brought in our Invasives Strike Force crew to help clear vegetation in preparation for treatments and installation of insect traps. The crew was joined by staff, other Trail Conference Conservation Corps members, Invasives Strike Force volunteers, PRISM partners, and community partners. This group also helped to remove and dispose of nearly 1,000 individual spotted lanternflies they came across during their brush-clearing work. In addition, they helped facilitate treatments by locating and flagging target host trees. Our Conservation Dogs team was involved in defining the border of currently known infestations so that our treatment plan could move forward with greater accuracy.

In early August, we organized a group of Trail Conference staff, interns, volunteers, and PRISM partners to install nearly 70 insect traps on various host trees and locations, where traps were planned for installation as needs emerge. These traps were purchased or provided to us by Ag and Markets, who facilitated quick procurement and delivery. Within one week of installation, these traps had already caught over 3,000 SLF, which were promptly removed.

In addition, PRISM partner Trillium Invasive Species Management performed strategically targeted insecticide treatment of 289 host trees to further curtail the population and prevent spread.

Looking Ahead

This flurry of activity highlights small steps toward our long-term SLF monitoring and management goals, which depend upon public engagement through awareness, education, and participation. Another team is ramping up efforts to plan a communication campaign.

With community awareness in mind, the installed traps nearest to public access points feature “Have you seen this insect?” signs with species ID and reporting and contact information to help spread public awareness, mitigate tampering, and promote public participation in survey efforts. With the help of citizen science volunteers and PRISM staff and partner coordinators, these traps will be checked every two weeks through the fall. This September, the SLF survey program will kick into overdrive as volunteers will help detect SLF adults outside of the known infestation sites. The synergistic connections between our various programs and sense of shared responsibility for environmental protection, as exemplified in this spotted lanternfly early detection and rapid response model, will continue to drive our Stewardship Program through 2021 and beyond.

If you are interested in contributing to this effort, there are many ways to help—from donating time to volunteering time. Volunteers are currently needed to continue vegetation clearing, help with monitoring SLF circle traps and removing caught SLF at these sites, or in surveying for SLF close to your home. Contact Invasives Species Citizen Science Coordination Brent Land via reportin@nynjtc.org for more info.

Special thanks to the following participants:

- Catskill Regional Invasive Species Program (CRISP), who cleared vegetation at an infestation site in Huguenot.
- PRISM partners: Trillium Invasive Species Management INC, who donated their time to perform the treatments.
- Suzanne Barclay and Kristen Ossmann, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland County, who provided interns to assist with vegetation management and education and outreach to community members.
- Andrew Morgan, Pound Ridge Land Conservancy, who brought interns and power tools to help with vegetation clearing in Orangeburg.
- Don Gabel, New York Botanical Garden, who advised on treatments, helped transport traps to us, and facilitated communication with township employees.
- Glenn Sungela, who helped with vegetation management.
- Town of Orange-town, Town of Deer Park, and various business owners, who were very responsive in quickly getting us permission to proceed with treatments and vegetation management.
- Thank you to all the private donors who pitched in to fund the purchase of insecticides for the treatments.
A new, multi-use trail system that supports healthy communities and ecotourism in the greater Lake Hopatcong region is becoming reality, thanks to private-public partnerships and a belief in the power of connecting people with nature.

The Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan envisions a recreational trails system covering Jefferson Township and Mount Arlington Borough in Morris County, N.J., that will provide an attraction for visitors to the lake and an amenity for those who call Lake Hopatcong home. The trails will accommodate walkers, joggers, hikers, and bikers and provide both an alternate route for travel around the lake and a resource for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors. The trail system will tie neighborhoods together and provide access to the area’s municipal parkland, county parks, state parks, and the state wildlife management areas. When complete, the system will stretch from the Mount Arlington NJ Transit Rail Station in the south to the Mount Paul section of Kittatinny Valley State Park in the north.

The vision was spearheaded by a local resident who is an avid bicyclist, jogger, and hiker—a private donor passionate about getting outside and enjoying nature. It was during the height of the pandemic that he saw the potential in addressing the area’s lack of trails to bring the local community together through the natural beauty of Lake Hopatcong. When considering how to connect nature with business and health, he began a partnership with consulting firm Greener by Design to find solutions.

Greener by Design completed the comprehensive Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan in January 2021. The plan takes an inventory of the existing trails in the region, lays out the routes for new sections, identifies key properties for acquisition, and estimates the costs involved in construction of a complete system of trails. As trusted partners in trail systems design, care, and management, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference was enlisted to provide expertise and support for the Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan in July.

“The Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan aligns beautifully with the Trail Conference’s mission, values, and vision for the future,” said Trail Conference Executive Director Joshua Howard. “As more people seek nature, providing improved access is essential. The kind of connectivity this plan provides shows real forethought in caring for both the natural areas of the Lake Hopatcong region and the people who live, work, and recreate there. We are proud to be a part of this exciting endeavor.”

The plan proposes 16 new trail segments in Mt. Arlington Borough/Jeffer son Township that total just over 24.5 miles. Most of the land within the trails plan is already publicly owned, managed by various municipalities, Morris County, or the state. That means little land acquisition needs to take place—a big hurdle already cleared in completing the proposed trails system. So far, the newly formed Trail Committee in Jefferson Township has worked on improvements on one segment, with plans to perform further trail work to the Prospect Point Preserve Trail system.

The key segment in the plan is transforming Compton Road, an existing logging road, into a multiuse trail suitable for bikes, strollers, and foot traffic from Route 15 to Paderewski Road. Frank Pinto, who worked on the plan through Greener by Design, says its direct access to Route 15 allows for a trailhead with ample parking off a major state highway, which is important in attracting visitors. Jefferson Township has additional plans for ecotourism-friendly improvements in this area, including a parking lot and pump track for bikers. Pinto hopes to receive bids for construction on this segment’s first 1.5 miles soon.

“It’s wonderful to work with the Trail Conference and Jefferson Township that see a common vision of enhancing the Lake region’s attraction as an ecotourism destination through this ambitious trail network,” Pinto said. “Future plans being considered would link the trail system through Wharton Borough to Dover, a regional transportation hub.”

The Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan is made possible through the cooperative support of the following: the Morris County Park Commission, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program, NJDEP Division of Parks & Forests, NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife, NJDEP Recreational Trails Program, New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Jersey Highlands Council, Jefferson Township, Greener by Design, and the Trail Conference.
Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park in New York’s Putnam County has long been a favorite destination with over 60 miles of blazed trails, many of them quiet and uncrowded. The park, like many others, has seen an enormous increase in trail usage during the pandemic. Fortunately, several projects have been underway to improve trails and park infrastructure and give more opportunities for trail users.

In August, a Trail Conference volunteer crew completed the new Oscawana Ridge Trail in the southern part of the park near Oscawana Lake. The 2-mile trail, which permits only foot traffic, may be reached by parking at the north end of Bell Hollow Road where it enters the park. Follow the red-blazed Candlewood Hill Trail for about 0.3 miles until it turns left off a steep uphill woods road. The yellow-blazed Oscawana Ridge Trail continues on the road and gradually climbs the ridge, emerging onto rocks with a broad view to the east over the lake, soon followed by views to the west over Bell Hollow. The trail continues along the ridge before descending and turning right on a wide woods road, which leads to the southern end of the trail on Lakeview Drive in Putnam Valley. Limited street parking is available, though not in winter.

We thank fellow crew members Bob Flavin, Andrew Fritsch, Bruce Lucas, and Ken Zadeck for their work to design and build the Oscawana Ridge Trail. We are now working with park staff to lay out a future loop trail down to the shore of Lake Oscawana. If you’d like to help build this trail when it’s approved, you can volunteer at the Trail Conference website: nynjtc.org.

Other changes in the park are part of the Open Space Institute (OSI) multi-year Fahnestock Improvement Plan. Most obvious is the new Big Woods Drive going north from Rt. 301 to the Big Woods parking area and trailhead. The new trailhead is at the intersection of the Cabot and Perkins trails, two Trail Conference-maintained trails that permit only foot traffic. As part of the project, the Perkins Trail going west has been greatly improved to be more sustainable and attractive. This trail crosses the active farm fields of the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming before entering the woods and eventually ending at School Mountain Road.

Another new parking area for 15 cars has been constructed on the south side of Rt. 301 where the Appalachian Trail crosses. This replaces some of the previous roadside parking for improved safety.

For mountain bikers and equestrians as well as hikers, OSI and the park are developing the Hubbard Perkins Loop, a 9-mile lollipop trail beginning near the Hubbard Lodge off of Rt. 9 just north of its intersection with Rt. 301. Completion is expected late this year. The trail will follow sections of several existing trails including School Mountain Road, Hubbard Loop, Wiccopee Trail, Clove Creek Trail, Fahnestock Trail, and Perkins Trail. Significant portions of some trails have been rerouted and improved to correct long-standing erosion and water problems. Signs at trail junctions will show the route of the multi-use loop and indicate that other trails are for foot traffic only.

In addition to these recent projects, other trail development continues, particularly in parts of the park east of the Taconic State Parkway. Additional land adjacent to the park is also being acquired by land conservancies and the state, giving more opportunities for trails in the future.
Tackling Overgrowth
Clipping Brigade Builds
Tremper in the Catskill For-
Memorial Shelter on Mt.
caretaker for the Baldwin

time Trail Conference shelter
Meet Eric Friedman, a long-
Catskills' Baldwin Shelter Privy
When Nature Calls: Rebuilding the

Meet Eric Friedman, a long-
time Trail Conference shelter
caretaker for the Baldwin
Memorial Shelter on Mt.
Tremper in the Catskill For-
est Preserve. The shelter’s accompa-
mying privy had fallen into
disrepair over the past few
years. So Eric, in coordina-
tion with the New York State
Department of Environmen-
tal Conservation, stepped
into action. He used his
years of carpentry experi-
ence to bring the privy back
to working condition. With
support from Trail Confer-
ence staff, Eric rallied the
help of volunteers and DEC
staff and interns to carry in
approximately 280 pounds of
materials, tools, and supplies
for a four-day work trip. Al-
though Eric camped out in
the lean-to for the full trip,
new volunteers hiked up to
the site every day to help get
the job done.
Thank you to volun-
teers Eric Friedman, Frank
Kazimir, Charley McIn-
tosh, Ivan McIntosh, Joyce
Gallaher, Iyyme Mika, Ana
Zelenin, Rebecca Stoltzfus,
and Patrick Linsey, as well
as support from the DEC
Forester and staff.

The nice thing is, while
munching (gobbling) the
brownies, it becomes
a social half hour or so
where they all get to talk
with each other.
Our goal has been to
create a ‘trail family’ and
that’s what we have done.”

Jersey Off Road Bicycle
Association (JORBA) and
the Trail Conference
collaborated on an
important bridge project in
the Wildcat Ridge Wildlife
Management Area in Morris
County, N.J., with great
results. Planning for this
project began pre-COVID,
and its completion this
summer is another step on
the road to normalcy in the
eyes of our trail builders.
JORBA’s Norm Albrecht
worked with then LTC chair
Estelle Anderson to plan the
project. JORBA provided
the skilled leadership and
workers, with volunteer
Dan Scerra credited as
the master carpenter. The
Trail Conference helped
with material expenses and
land manager discussions.
Our thanks go to JORBA
for being strong partners
in improving trails. We
look forward to more

Collaboration!

For more information on
JORBA, check out their

Volunteer leaders Bob Jonas
and Estelle Anderson care
just as passionately about
their fellow volunteers as
they do trails. In Morristown
National Historical Park in
Morris County, N.J., the duo
has created a roving trail
crew dubbed the Clipping
Brigade. The crew tackles the
park’s trails most in need of
treatment. In Morristown,
the crew worked together
on his/her trail section
tackles the overgrowth.

This amazing group:

Meet Jiang Xu, a long-
time Trail Conference
member Charlie Gadol
completed his
Long Path section hike!
Charlie’s journey began
on July 3. Not only did
he crush it on the trail,
he also doubled his
fundraising goal and
raised over $3,000 for
the Trail Conference’s
mission!
Want to learn more
about the Long Path
and join the incredible

Want to learn more
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Check out our Friends of
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This season, eight crews are working to improve the trail experience throughout our region. They’ve been documenting their progress in monthly blog posts (bit.ly/ tc-tcccblog21) and on Instagram (trailconfcorps), we’re sharing highlights below.

Trail Crews

Throughout June, the Harriman Trail Crew completed the set of stairs at the entrance of the Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail. This set of stairs was especially difficult because we were starting on the edge of a service road that we couldn’t block access to. The top of the staircase ended at a section of bedrock, so we had to squeeze eight steps with 9 inches of rise each into about 100 inches of run. To accomplish the square, our last step was pieced together with two rocks that we had to shape to fit the bedrock. After completing the staircase, we focused our efforts on re-naturalizing the area. - Ed Zubrowski, Harriman Crew Leader

The month of July has been a busy one for the Taconic Crew. We have had multiple successful volunteer work days and workshops for drainage and stone structures at the Wilkinson Trail work site. The volunteers that have shown up have been highly motivated and interested in what we do as trail crew members. We got them involved in rock moving and staircase building, having very successful days in moving very large rocks for us to use as gargoyles in our staircase! With their help, we have plen- tiful amounts of rock to use as gargoyles and junk rock for closure that has helped us to finish our staircase. In total, we installed three new steps and repaired four stairs along the Wilkinson Trail. We also end- ed up closing part of a social path that was confusing many hikers along the Wilkinson Trail, closing 212 feet of social path. - Snowdon Jones, Taconic Crew Leader

You can read more about the Harriman and Taconic trail crews, as well as the work of the Palisades and Morris County crews, at www.nynjtc.org/content/2021-trail-crew-blog

Outreach and Education Stewards

At Breakneck Ridge, the new Nimham Trail opened at the beginning of July, which provides us another route to suggest to less experienced hikers or those who have done Breakneck many times and want to try something new! It is named after Daniel Nimham, a sachem of the Wappinger Indians, whose ancestral lands include the Hudson Highlands. Surprisingly, none of the brand new signage mentions this! It is a beautiful and user-friendly 0.7 mile connection from the Breakneck scramble to the Wilkinson Trail. The number of users is increasing as we are able to spread the word every day. Over the course of the month, we counted 410 hikers using the new trail. - Rosa Bledsoe, Hudson Valley Crew Leader

July was another busy month, filled with more training and special events on days when we were stewarding or performing maintenance on the trails. At the beginning of July, all six stewards became certified Leave No Trace Trainers. In mid-July, we participated in a special Leave No Trace Hot Spot event at Minnewaska State Park Preserve. This was exciting as it allowed us to meet with park staff, land managers, and other stewards who have a hand in improving the conditions of this park. Social trails, trampling of sensitive vegetation, and improper disposal of waste are common problems at Minnewaska—especially on the trail going out to Gertrude’s Nose. We collaborated on the most effective ways to tackle these challenges, and it was reassuring to see the research from the Leave No Trace team that showed how effective on-the-ground stewardship is. - Myra Romano, Catskill Trail Stewards

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Invasives Strike Force

The ISF crew kicked off July removing Scotch broom at Harriman State Park and the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation and had some help from volunteers. The crew also worked on Chinese silvergrass, swatheworts, and small carpetgrass at High Tor State Park and Shrub Oak Memorial Park.

Next, the crew continued managing sticky sage at Dover, N.Y. The crew proudly finished managing all the sticky sage found along the Appalachian Trail in this visit! It is essential to manage sticky sage along the trail to prevent the spread of this relatively new invasive to other regions in the Northeast. Overall, the crew is proud to say that they treated a total of 6,612 sticky vases along the A.T! The crew will be returning to Dover one last time for the month to continue working on sticky sage management on private properties. - Kassidy Robinson, ISF Crew Leader

You can read more about the Invasives Strike Force’s efforts this season at www.nynjtc.org/content/2021-corps-invasives-strike-force-blog

Aquatic Invasives Strike Force

For the Aquatic Invasives Strike Force (AISF) crew, the month of July has been filled to the brim with water chestnut removal! Over the course of July, the AISF crew has removed just over 105,000 plants from 11 sites! In total, these plants weighed over 14,000 pounds.

The AISF Program has also been heavily involved with multiple stakeholders from Lake Sebago in Harriman State Park to devise a strategic plan for managing aquatic invasive species through early detection and prevention. Earlier this month, AISF Crew Leader Maya Thompson and AISF Program Coordinator Tori Yoder led an aquatic survey training session for the three crews from Lake Sebago ADRONEACK Mountain Club, Appalachian Mountain Club, and the American Canoe Association (ACA). The Lake Sebago ACA camp also spearheaded the Interagency In- spection Steward Program for a single Saturday at the public launch, where nearly 100 boats were inspected, providing significant support for the creation of a full-season program.

- Maya Thompson, AISF Crew Leader

You can read more about the AISF crew’s efforts this season at www.nynjtc.org/content/2021-corps-aquatic-invasives-strike-force-blog

**From Morris County to the Catskills, TCCC Crews Are Making a Difference**

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Running Forward and Giving Back

Over the past quarter century of leading hikers and trail runners through the woods, I’ve come to realize that both user groups share much more in common than I had ever realized. This became apparent when I noticed large numbers of my Saturday trail runners showing up on Sunday hikes, on their active recovery days. And while it’s true that not all hikers run, I have yet to meet a trail runner who doesn’t hike. As “trail pedestrians,” hikers and trail runners share a common love for the healing power of nature, solitude, and exercise out among the trees. Pace doesn’t matter, but trails do. And once we’ve enlightened to the close connection between the Trail Conference’s work and the future of trails, most of us want to give back—as members, volunteers, or both.

This realization led to the formation of Trail Conference Trail Runs, a group that meets regularly in all weather and seasons, to visit the trails we maintain. With two leaders, our monthly “flex runs” are designed to accommodate different pace and distance requirements. Runs take place throughout our service area, highlighting the before, during, and after phases of trail construction and repair. It’s exciting to see the light go on when a young trail runner sees how much time and effort goes into trail building and wants to help. Or when a seasoned ultra-runner makes a transformative gift that allows a major trail project to move forward. I’m inspired by people like Trail Conference runner and member Jessica Simao, who maintains remote trails in Norvin Green State Forest plus the heavily used Mount Tammany Trail in Worthington State Forest. Equally inspiring are race directors like Kim Levinsky, Charlie Gador, Ken Poster, and the Mahwah Regional Chamber of Commerce, who have generously donated race proceeds back to the Trail Conference.

Do you run trails? Join us! With more than 600 members, our Trail Conference Trail Runs group on Facebook is a great way to connect with fellow trail runners of all ability levels, and stay up-to-date on upcoming runs and races. You can also find us by searching our website.

MEVO Partnership Improves NJ Trails

This year’s trail crew from Mahwah Environmental Volunteer Organization (MEVO) continued their fantastic partnership with the Trail Conference, giving their time and effort this summer to improve trails in northern New Jersey between June and August. Five volunteer crew members under the guidance of their MEVO crew leader spent two days each week (over 1,000 total hours!) tackling high-priority projects that could not otherwise get done in 2021. In Norvin Green State Forest, the crew rerouted over 700 feet of trail to improve the hiking experience and sustainability of the recently orange-blazed Lake Sonoma Loop. Upon hiking the new stretch of trail, Trail Conference volunteer and author Daniel Chazin commented that it was “expertly sidehilled” and “significantly improved the trail.” The MEVO crew also spent several days continuing to improve the popular Reservoir Loop in Ramapo Valley County Reservation. Moving many tons of crushed rock and fill dirt, they elevated a 60-foot section of trail tread above a perennially wet area by creating a variety of technical trail structures—including retaining wall drainage lenses, and cross drains—keeping hikers’ feet dry for years to come.

Many thanks to the 2021 crew for all their hard work!

First Harriman Half Marathon a Huge Success

On July 31, the Trail Conference teamed up with Kim Levinsky, the philanthropic founder of Sassquad Trail Running, as well as Harriman State Park and the Town of Tuxedo, to host a sold out, first annual Harriman Big Bear Squatch half marathon and 7-mile trail run. Thanks to generous donations from Kim, members of the trail running community, and the waiving of fees by our partners, the event netted $2,000 for the Trail Conference in its first year.

Departing from the village of Tuxedo, runners ascended the western escarpment of Harriman and toured park highlights including Clausius Smith Den, Almost Perpen-
Club Spotlight: ADK North Jersey-Ramapo

The Adirondack Mountain Club North Jersey-Ramapo Chapter is one of 27 chapters of the ADK. The mission statement of ADK, which will be celebrating its centennial in 2022, states in part: “ADK works to protect ... wild lands and waters by promoting responsible outdoor recreation and building a ... constituency of land stewardship advocates.”

The North Jersey-Ramapo Chapter (NJR), founded in 1971, numbers about 1,000 members, who primarily reside in Rockland and Orange counties in New York and Bergen, Passaic, Morris, and Essex counties in New Jersey.

About 150 hikes are offered year-round by NJR in various parks throughout New York and New Jersey. Hikes, which are led by experienced leaders with knowledge of the trails and trail safety, vary in skill level from easy for beginners to strenuous for advanced hikers. The hikes are rated for their pace, distance, and terrain difficulty.

Although hiking is its main activity, NJR also offers some kayaking and biking outings. In addition, there are several social events planned throughout each year, such as guest speakers at membership meetings, Mohonk Mountain House Day, an annual holiday dinner party, and tours to points of interest. Also, NJR is very proud to have sponsored the very first blood drive by ADK.

Over the years, the North Jersey-Ramapo Chapter of ADK has forged a close working relationship with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. Several members of NJR have served on the Board of the Trail Conference and several have received prestigious awards from the Trail Conference in recognition of outstanding volunteer work. Also, NJR is grateful to the Trail Conference for the use of its state park under the direction of NJR volunteers maintain three trail sections in Harriman State Park.

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See More

- For more information about the North Jersey-Ramapo Chapter of ADK, visit their website: adknjr.org.
- For photographs and videos of its hikes, see the Facebook page of the North Jersey-Ramapo Chapter of ADK: facebook.com/NJ-Ramapo-ADK-113791893485524.

Can’t find your club? This list represents all Trail Conference member clubs whose dues are up-to-date. If you have questions about your club’s status, please ask your officers to contact the Advancement Team at 201-512-9348.
Centennials are always worthy of celebration. This fall, the Trail Conference finally gets to celebrate its 100th birthday—even if the party is a little late. (No one could have anticipated a pandemic, after all.) In commemoration of the milestone, a century of the Trail Conference’s volunteer-powered conservation and stewardship legacy is documented in the new book, Reflections.

Reflections includes the first four chapters of Vistas and Vision, which covered events that led to the Trail Conference’s founding in 1920 up through 1995. It adds four more chapters that recount the Trail Conference’s last 25 years of growth and accomplishments. The book is meant to be a comprehensive read on all things Trail Conference—from the organization’s formation in New York City through the dawn of its second century headquartered at the historic Darlington Schoolhouse in Mahwah, N.J. Printed in full color, Reflections features photographs that make you wish you could meet the historical figures and visit the landscapes that grace the pages. Reflections is a must-have book for those who want to learn the story behind the wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities in the greater New York, metropolitan area. It documents the Trail Conference’s impactful work both literally and figuratively blazing trails throughout the region.

Just as importantly, it tells stories of the people who made that possible.

A project of this size is like a three-legged stool: It needs accurate history, good photographs, and a design that entices reading. Special thanks go to volunteer author Ron Dupont, whose research and writing make the book an engaging remembrance through a century of service. Thanks also go to volunteer project manager Jane Daniels, who worked with designer Nora Porter to ensure the book would be a beautiful tribute to all that the Trail Conference has done in the last 100 years.

Reflections will be available for purchase online at nynjtc.org/shop this fall.

Join the Trail Conference, Get Great Deals

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

A.T. Vista Celebrates Vision and Community

The Trail Conference invited everyone with a love of trails to help celebrate 100 years of Appalachian Trail history during the inaugural A.T. Vista—a hybrid virtual/live event that took place August 7 and 8.

This year is the 100th anniversary of Benton MacKaye’s 1921 article, “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning,” which sparked the movement to build the trail. Trail Conference volunteers built the very first section of the Appalachian Trail, through Harriman-Bear Mountain state parks in New York. Guided hikes all along the A.T. and on nearby trails were open to all to join in the fun. Participants were also encouraged to “hike their own hike” along the trail of their choice. Virtual components included webinars and the opportunity to share photos and stories on the A.T. Vista social media feeds. Check out pictures from the weekend at bit.ly/4e-atvista21.

The Trail Conference will be hosting next year’s in-person A.T. Vista event at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz, slated for August 5-8, 2022. The A.T. Vista events are the reimagining of the A.T. Biennial, last held in Maine in 2017. A.T. Vista aims to be recognized as the forum for engagement of all who cherish the future of the Appalachian Trail’s protection, stewardship, and connection of the human spirit with nature while increasing participation from younger and diverse members.

Volunteers are needed to help put on the 2022 event. We’re looking for people who are enthusiastic about sharing their love of the outdoors with others. Whether you can give a few hours or are ready to roll up your sleeves and serve on the steering committee, we need you! Find out more, including what volunteer opportunities are available, at atvista2022.org/volunteer.

Stay up to date with everything A.T. Vista-related by signing up for the monthly newsletter at bit.ly/4e-atvistanews.
New Upper Nyack Trail Makes Hook Mountain Hike Even More Enjoyable

In the shadow of Hook Mountain, the Upper Nyack Trail has been an important connection from Nyack Beach State Park to the Long Path for many years. It is a utilitarian trail that facilitates a great 6-mile loop from Hook Mountain on the Long Path worked into Lake State Park and returning to Nyack Beach on the River Trail.

The Upper Nyack Trail, opened to the public in June, was several years in the making. Its creation was made possible by the purchase of 30 acres of undeveloped land from the Marydell Faith and Life Center. Adjacent to Nyack Beach and Hook Mountain state parks, this parcel would have been coveted for residential development; its purchase by the Trust for Public Land in 2017 was a significant win for conservation in Rockland County. This acquisition was made possible through the combined efforts and funding of the Trail Conference, New York State, Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, Village of Upper Nyack, Durst Organization, Open Space Initiative, and the Trust for Public Land. Soon after the sale, work on the new trail began: route for the trail was scouted, mapped, and proposed for approval by the leadership of the Long Distance Trails Crew to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, who assumed management of the land once it was incorporated into Hook Mountain State Park. The approval took into consideration the access and safety of the route while ensuring no ecological or archeological resources would be affected.

The construction of the trail, along and through a steep slope of boulders eroded from Hook Mountain, was taken on by the skilled and dedicated volunteers of the Long Distance Trails Crew. This Trail Conference crew works on long-distance trails such as the Appalachian Trail, Long Path, and Highlands Trail. While the new Upper Nyack Trail is not technically a long-distance trail, because it is an important connection to the Long Path, the crew agreed to take on the challenge.

Construction began in 2019. Though less than a mile in length, the technical work required to build a safe, sustainable route through such challenging conditions took almost 2 years to complete. The crew, which generally works Friday, Saturday, and Sunday every other week from early spring to early winter, put in 7,341 volunteer hours (and hundreds of gallons of sweat, as well as a little blood) into the project.

The easily accessible location for this project was a welcome change for the crew, which frequently works on projects that require several miles of hiking just to get to the worksite. However, the difficult and occasionally dangerous conditions posed by the slope of boulders over which the trail traverses created a significant challenge. Many of the experienced crew members said that it was the most difficult site they have ever encountered; it was often challenging just to get level footing. Throw in rolling boulders, swimming bees, and an overly friendly wild turkey, and the challenge was on. The many bumps, bruises, and bites suffered by the crew resulted in renaming the site “Ouch Mountain.”

To create this trail, large boulders (up to 1,000 pounds each) had to be moved, manually, using rock bars and a high line. These boulders were moved along low spots and drainage channels to form stepping stones. In other places, rocks were placed along the route to level it, then smaller rocks were wedged into gaps around them. This crush—literally gravel-sized rocks manually crushed by crew members from larger rocks—was used to fill in the smaller gaps. The footpath was then finished by covering the rocks and crush with dirt that was dug up nearby and carried in buckets to the trail.

The trail has received rave reviews from many users, including experienced hikers. It was officially opened during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 18, which was attended by many of the politicians, volunteers, and partners who made the land acquisition and trail possible. Featuring spectacular summer weather, the event and subsequent hike was a true celebration of the lovely location and the successful completion of an amazing project.

“This marvelous trail provides much better access to Hook Mountain and completes the vision of the partners who worked with the Sisters of Mercy over several years to purchase this key property for public use,” said Carter Strickland, New York State Director of The Trust for Public Land. “Close-by nature helps provide a free outlet for physical exercise and the mental relief we all need, especially during COVID, and now more people will be inspired by the wonderful views of the Hudson River and highlands at the summit of Hook Mountain. Congratulations to the Trail Conference for the design and execution of a trail across very challenging and technical terrain.”

Check out this new trail for yourself! Find the full hike description at nyntjc.org.

New Life for the Old Trail

When the acquisition of the land from Marydell was completed, the intention was to build a new trail and abandon the old one. However, since the opening of the new Nyack Beach to Hook Mountain Trail, many have found that the two trails now facilitate a nice, 3-mile loop hike from Nyack Beach, up to the Long Path, and back to Nyack Beach. Additionally, the old trail provides access from Palisade Drive in Upper Nyack, a popular access point that led some to lobby to keep the old trail. While partly on private land—meaning the trails use is not within our control in perpetuity—for the near future, the old trail will continue to be maintained by the Trail Conference. Plans are in place to improve it, relable it, and extend it through the recently acquired and conserved River Hook: The Hester Haring Cason Preserve.

Special Thanks

Gratitude goes to the following for making the new Upper Nyack Trail possible.

• Chris Reyling, Erik Garnjost, Marty Costello, Dr. David Booth, Jeff Raskin, Russ Dooman, and the other volunteers of the Long Distance Trails Crew

• Bob Stien, David Neil, Elizabeth Co, Melody Patrick, and the rest of the Friends of Rockland Lake and Hook Mountain

On the Upper Nyack Trail project, the Long Distance Trails Crew installed 351 stone steps, built 2,537 square feet of crib wall, and constructed 3,775 feet of sidehilled trail.

Long Distance Trails Crew volunteers donated 7,341 hours to the Upper Nyack Trail project.