Celebrating 95 Years of the Appalachian Trail’s Origins at Bear Mountain

Most trail lovers know the Appalachian Trail runs from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. But quiz even the most enthusiastic thru-hiker, and she may not even realize that the Trail’s true start is right here, less than 50 miles north of Manhattan.

Ninety-five years ago this October, volunteers of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference officially opened the first constructed section of the Appalachian Trail, which they built and blazed through Bear Mountain State Park. Nearly a century later, Trail Conference volunteers still selflessly give their time and energy to ensure that the 174 miles of A.T. spanning New York State, she may not even realize that the Trail’s true start is right here, less than 50 miles north of Manhattan.

In July, our A.T. volunteers will be out in full force from the Delaware Water Gap to the Connecticut border maintaining the Trail and engaging visitors as the thru-hiker ‘bubble’ makes its way through our region. The RPH Cabin Volunteers will be holding their annual work weekend and barbecue July 13-15. (Read more on page 9.) And expect to spot an impromptu tailgate or two at A.T. trailheads throughout the month as our trail family offers some trail magic.

Every day is trails day for the Trail. But on National Trails Day, we add a little extra celebration to our stewardship. Join us Saturday, June 2, as we give back to the trails that offer us so much enjoyment—plus share some snacks and camaraderie! Head to Mahwah, N.J., for our annual open house at Trail Conference Headquarters. The event includes tours of our offices at Darlington Schoolhouse, guided hikes through Ramapo Valley County Reservation, and volunteer opportunities to help make a difference at this popular park, located right next door to our historic home.

Or check out our event on the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain, co-hosted by REI. From trail building to old trail closure, invasive species removal to litter clean-up, we’ll be making a difference from the bottom of the mountain to its summit.

Also on the 2nd, our Conservation Corps trail crews in Sterling Forest and Hudson Highlands state parks will be holding Trail Love days. We’ll be posting more details on these projects and events at nynyjc.org. Interested in a specific project, or want to find out about other volunteer opportunities that support the Appalachian Trail? Email volunteers@nynyjc.org, and we’ll help you get started.

Liz Levers Inducted Into A.T. Hall of Fame
Elizabeth Levers, former president of the Trail Conference (1970-72), was named a member of the Appalachian Hall of Fame Class of 2018. Known as the “Mother of the A.T.” in New York State, she was key in the early land acquisition planning for the A.T. in New York, as well as setting the standard for A.T. management for our region. Liz was a no-nonsense woman who devoted her energies 7 days a week to the A.T. after her retirement from an administrative post at Columbia University. In 1979, she received recognition from President Jimmy Carter for her outstanding efforts as a trail volunteer.

Show Your Love of Trails on National Trails Day

NYNJTC.ORG SPRING 2018

MAINTAINING 2,154 MILES OF TRAILS IN NY AND NJ

TRAIL WALKER

NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE • CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE SINCE 1920

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Take a Look Back at Our 2017 Accomplishments and See What’s Ahead pages 8-11

Celebrating Our Standout Volunteers and Partners pages 6-7

WHAT’S INSIDE:
Breakneck Ridge in Putnam County has once again been named the most popular hiking destination in North America. In a recent survey on Trails.com, it received more than 10,000 votes, placing it above other national parks and U.S. Forest Service areas. Breakneck Ridge is in a unique position to understand the effects of overuse and environmental degradation. The Trail Conference is in a remarkable popularity. But mitigating the effects of such overuse and environmental degradation.

Over the past 5 years, the number of visitors at Breakneck Ridge has increased at an alarming rate—we estimate that more than 100,000 people climb this mountain each year. Factors including social media, word of mouth, easy public transit access, and population density in the greater New York metropolitan region have created a perfect storm for trail overuse and environmental degradation.

There is no one solution to mitigating the effects of such remarkable popularity. But the Trail Conference is in a unique position to understand these trends and provide assistance. Since 1920, we have been committed to educating and elevating voices in the safe, enjoyable, and responsible use of trails.

In spring 2013, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation asked the Trail Conference for help. Our response was a one-month pilot called the Breakneck Ridge Trail Stewards Program. It was so successful that the Trail Conference has continued the program weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Thanksgiving. Every since. Trail Stewards deliver much-needed services that would not otherwise be available to these visitors. (Read more on page 8.)

The Trail Conference also spearheaded the creation of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, which includes the Breakneck Connector—a project that will improve visitor safety while accessing Breakneck Ridge from Metro-North and NYS Route 9D. It is the first major undertaking by the coalition that has been working for years to plan how best to manage concerns along Route 9D between Cold Spring and Beacon. Construction is expected to begin in 2019. (See sidebar for more info.)

The Trail Conference also anticipates playing an integral role in assisting the public when the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics spends Oct. 29-Nov. 5 at Breakneck Ridge, which has been identified as a 2018 Hot Spot. A Hot Spot is a “natural area that is being negatively impacted by recreational use” and is “facets the threat of irreversible environmental damage.”

How can you help? The first step is to understand that everyone is responsible for protecting the environment. The Trail Conference is a great resource for learning how our use of trails and parks impacts these ecosystems—and how to give back to ensure our favorite outdoor destinations remain open, safe, and healthy for years to come. Spring is the perfect time to take a workshop and get out on the trails with us to learn more about how you can help protect the land you love. Get started at nynjtc.org/volunteer.

## Protecting North America’s Most Popular Hiking Destination

Breakneck Ridge in Putnam and Dutchess counties' Hudson Highlands State Park has been voted the most popular hiking destination in North America. In a recent survey on Trails.com, it received more than 10,000 votes, placing it above other national parks and US Forest Service areas. Breakneck Ridge is in a unique position to understand the effects of overuse and environmental degradation. The Trail Conference is in a remarkable popularity. But mitigating the effects of such overuse and environmental degradation.

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### Trail Conference HQ Reopening Saturdays During Peak Season

With warmer weather comes extended hours at Trail Conference Headquarters. Our Trail Store will be open Saturdays during peak hiking season, beginning April 7. Stop by for maps, sunscreen, hats, and more from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., every Saturday through November. Visit trail to chat about trails with you. If sharing hiking knowledge

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Strengthening Our like the Trail Conference, this the community and groups vision. If not for the diligent to become a suburban subdi- relocated—seemed destined Goosepond Mountain State, N.Y., that is now part of 400-acre property in Ches- trajectories, they need champions protecting long-distance trails. With so many un- conception of a long-distance construction and maintenance developing a long-distance lands Trail will be completed with the help of our partners and volunteers—particular- ers may also be needed as ers and off-trail research- ongoing task of reducing un- interrupted green corridor. The goal for this study is to create a comprehensive vision for a high-quality, interconnected public trail system through a green corridor that will improve the quality of life for local communities while protecting precious wildlife habitat. The Greenway, with the Highlands Trail and Orange County Forest Greenway, will showcase the western Hudson Highlands as a premier destination for outdoor recreation and magnificent scenery for residents and visitors alike. This vision for the High- lands Trail will be completed with the help of our partners and volunteers—particular- ers also may be needed as representatives for the relevant land owners, to discuss ways to save the Highlands Trail and Long Path at this critical time. The N.Y. Trail Conference staff and volunteers are currently working on a proposal to obtain either an easement or land purchase for these trails. The negotiating process is slow, but we hope for a good outcome. This and other issues have gal-vanized our partners to create an official plan for a greenway system through the Storm King (see letter from our executive director above).

In Memoriam

John B. Blenninger,

John B. Blenninger, of Wallkill, N.Y., died last summer at age 79. He grew up in the northeast Bronx, graduated from the City College of New York with a major in earth sciences, and went on to serve as a laboratory specialist with the New York City Board of Education at the old Stuyvesant High School for over 30 years.

John’s true passion was for hiking and trail main- tenance. In the early 1970s he joined the Trail Confer- ence, where he put in more than 40 years of dedicated service, eventually be- coming trails supervisor for Black Rock Forest and Storm King State Park.

Strengthening Our Voice with a Trail Advocacy Roundtable

Sona Mason
West Hudson Program Coordinator

In the not-so-distant past, the only available trail advocates in Chers- Tey, N.Y., that is now part of Goosepond Mountain State Park—on which the High- lands Trail has since been relocated—seemed destined to become a suburban subdi- vision. If not for the diligent pushback from members of the community and groups like the Trail Conference, this important greenway linking isolated parks would have dis- appeared in the increasing tide of development.

These kinds of issues are common. It’s creating and protecting long-distance trails like the Long Path and High- lands Trail—a system of many un- protected acres along their tra- jectories, they need champions to defend them.

That’s why the Trail Confer- ence is organizing a Trail Pro- tective Roundtable. The purpose of the roundtable is to share knowledge from experienced trail advocates and to help equip those who would like to do something positive for our trails. At the Trail Symposium held at our headquarters on April 7, staff and volunteers will speak about the nature of trail- related issues and the urgen- cy that surrounds them. We’ll discuss how threats to trails often pop up when we least expect them and require im- mediate action, which ne- cessitates attendance and/or speaking at public hearings and strategy meetings, making calls or writing letters to town planning boards and elected officials, reviewing and writing documents, and occasionally, in-field surveying. We hope to continue the momentum from this conversation with regular roundtable meetings.

While the Trail Conference’s nearly 100-year history is full of advocacy success stories, we do not fight these battles alone. Our actions and voice are am- plified when we work together. If you would like be a part of the Trail Protection Round- table, contact West Hudson Program Coordinator Sona Mason at smason@nynjtc.org or 201.512.9348 x816 for more info.

Planning, patience, and a fair amount of luck are required when working on completing a long-distance trail—not just in the advent of a new era. We have the chance, but even more so in the actual creation of one of these trails. Years—often decades—of coordination among public, private, and non-profit agen- cies and organizations gives in- developing a long-distance trail, followed by the ongoing coordination that its existence then requires. Early in the conceptions of a long-distance trail, the path is often laid out on the side of country roads or on private lands with per- mission from the trail users. But in the continuous efforts to reroute these trails onto unde- veloped land—not only to pro- ect the trail user, but also to improve the overall user experience—the d i s t a n c e trails actually have a tendency to create new parks and greenways.

The Trail Conference has played a significant role in establishing and stewarding not just one, but four long- distance trails in the Greater New York metropolitan region: the Appalachian Trail, Long Path, Shawangunk Ridge Trail, and Highlands Trail. And through our efforts to conserve and preserve and expand our long-distance trail corridor(s) Learn more and discover all the ways you can get involved by emailing volunteers@nynjtc.org.

More Progress in Orange County

Last August, the Trail Conference strongly objected to the potential loss of the last greenway connection for the Long Path and the Highlands Trail to the Shawangunk Moun- tain Preserve in Orange County. The powerful response of our trail family and friends caught the attention of legislators and community leaders, resulting in meetings with state and park officials, as well as representatives for the relevant land owners, to discuss ways to save the Highlands Trail and Long Path at this critical time.

In January, the N.Y. Trail Conference staff and volunteers are currently working on a proposal to obtain either an easement or land purchase for these trails. The negotiating process is slow, but we hope for a good outcome. This and other issues have gal-vanized our partners to create an official plan for a greenway system through the Storm King (see letter from our executive director above).

It will be a challenge, but it is one the Trail Conference is well prepared for, and eager to see “thru.”

Edward Goodell
Executive Director
goodell@nynjtc.org
Save Our Oak Trees This Season

Who doesn’t love oak trees? Dead leaves, and turkeys all fatten up for winter on their nutrient-dense nuts, while squirrels have the added bonus of using their branches for shelter. Humans have an affinity for these trees, too. With their spreading canopies and majestic trunks, oaks inspire awe and wonder in their old age.

Unfortunately, a new disease threatens our oak trees. Oak wilt, caused by a fungus that blocks the flow of water and nutrients through the tree, causes the leaves to fall off and ultimately kills the tree. It can affect all species of oaks, although red oaks (those with pointed leaf tips) are more susceptible than white oaks (those with rounded leaf tips). The fungus moves from tree to tree via sap-eating beetles. These beetles are active throughout the spring and early summer, and are attracted to new cuts in the bark and branches—exactly the kind of cuts made by a pair of pruning shears.

You can help prevent the spread of oak wilt. If you need to prune trees, either in your yard or on the trail, please do so in the winter or fall, when the fungus and beetles aren’t as active. If you must cut a live oak branch during other times, please make sure to paint a wound-sealing compound onto the new cuts to prevent the beetles from feeding on the tree. It is absolutely possible to stop the spread of this disease. Although widespread in the Midwest, in New York, oak wilt has so far been found only in Brooklyn and Suffolk, Schoharie, and Ontario counties. No infestations are currently known in New Jersey. Trail maintainers and homeowners near oak trees should be especially careful to follow the preventive measures outlined above.

Advocacy Days: Encouraging Support for Trail Lands

Our voices are one of the most powerful tools we have in ensuring trail lands remain protected, open, and safe for all people to access. That’s why Trail Conference staff and volunteers head to Albany every winter to speak with elected officials about the importance of connecting people with nature. This year, we focused on the following issues:

February 6: Catskill Park Day As a member of the Catskill Park Coalition, the Trail Conference asked state representatives to support $14.3 million Catskills Package. This funding would directly impact our ability to improve the trail experience in the Catskills through support of our Trail Stewards program and our work as managers of the Catskill Conservation Corps.

February 12: EPP Day Last year, Governor Cuomo appropriated $300 million for the 2017 Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), continuing the historic funding level he established the previous year. The EPF has directly supported the Trail Conference’s rehabilitation of trails on Bear Mountain, including the original section of the Appalachian Trail, as part of the Bear Mountain Trails Project. It funds the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), for which the Trail Conference and the Friends of Long Pond Ironworks were key partners. In 2021, we focused on the following issues:

March 5: Park Advocacy Day The Trail Conference supports the continued revitalization of the New York State park system, home to a significant number of trails that we maintain and monitor. We work with representatives to stress the importance of funding for state parks, particularly the operating resources that keep our parks open. Inadequate staffing of maintenance crews and forest rangers affects park accessibility and visitor safety. It is a perennial issue that we will continue to raise.

Ceremony to Officially Open New Long Pond Ironworks Bridge

At Long Pond Ironworks State Park, the restoration of the the Wanaque River bridge—washed away in Hurricane Irene in 2011—was finally completed at the end of 2016, with the finishing touches added late last year. At 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 14, the Friends of Long Pond Ironworks will be holding a ceremony with speakers from the Trail Conference and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to officially open the bridge. Following the bridge dedication, an opening ceremony for the newly redesigned Long Pond Ironworks Museum will take place. Park for both events in time. Visit bit.ly/tc-lpiwb for more info.
New Signage Takes Guesswork Out of Your Trail Experience

We’ve all been there before—slowing the car to a crawl on some backwoods road, craning our neck for the telltale 2x3-inch splash of color that indicates a trail crossing. Or standing puzzled on a roadside pull-off, trying to figure out if the short stretch of gravel is indeed the parking “P” indicated on our map. Or staring, bemused, at a beautiful kiosk stockéd with little but cobwebs.

The Trail Conference is continuing to work with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on providing quality trailhead signage, and over 300 sign panels have already been delivered to nine different state parks across northern New Jersey. The current phase of the project is producing trail parking signs with blazes, making it easier to tell that you’re in the right place when looking for those sneaky “hidden” trailheads.

Several state park superintendents have also provided lists of confusing trail intersections so that we can help ensure the fewest lost hikers possible. Our ability to get so much done on this project is due in large part to volunteer involvement.

When volunteer Glenn Gross saw a Trail Walker article about kiosk construction and offered to help, his background as a professional sign maker came up—and turned out to be a perfect fit. Now Glenn is using his tools and skills to churn out beautiful routed signs with professional text and logos, producing far more than we ever expected to be possible on our grant budget. Just one more way in which volunteer expertise allows us to go further and do more in our mission!

Keep an eye out for these new materials as they go up over the coming year, and if you spot them in the wild, be sure to snap a photo and tag us @nynjtc on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter for a chance to be featured on our feed.
2018 TRAIL CONFERENCE AWARDS

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS

Trail Conference volunteers make incredible commitments to the trails and lands they love. With more than 2,400 people donating their time and energy to our mission, there are many award-worthy volunteers in our ranks.

On March 10, we honored those who have gone above and beyond in the last year at our annual Volunteer Appreciation event, held at Ramapo College of New Jersey. Trail Conference awards are given by the Board of Directors upon recommendation by staff and volunteers.

PAUL LEIKIN EXTRA MILE AWARD
Recognizes those who have demonstrated exceptional service and have gone "the extra mile.”

Steve Aaron, nominated by Heather Darley Steve, of Valley Cottage, N.Y., takes phenomenal photos of trails in our region and shares them with the Trail Conference for use in our communications. Steve’s generosity, passion for the outdoors, and creative contributions allow us to increase our visibility and outreach. The use of Steve’s photography in our social media has received a lot of meaningful attention and sparked a lot of conversations with potential volunteers and members. Steve enthusiastically shares his photography, and he’s told us that it fulfills his passion for the art to see his work used in our work. Photography at the level of Steve’s skill is a true donation to our organization. The Trail Conference is lucky to have such talented and passionate in our ranks!

Glenda Haas, nominated by Brendan Cunningham As chair of the Art Selection Committee, Glenda has added “gallery” as a new function of the Hain Hall at Trail Conference Headquarters. A resident of Mahwah, N.J., Glenda was responsible for the installation of the building’s history wall and gallery system. She has screened or assisted with every art exhibition the organization has hosted since its move to Darlington Schoolhouse, and has art exhibitions and events planned through 2020. Since 2015, Glenda has done a phenomenal job of bringing together professional artists, casual photographers, trail users, and the local community, creating a space for all to enjoy.

Jim Piombino, nominated by Erica Colacal & Gary Willick As a front desk volunteer, Jim is welcoming and knowledgable—the best for someone who greets visitors at Trail Conference Headquarters. Jim, of Fair Lawn, N.J., is also an at-large voting member, which means he represents the interests of 400 individual members at voting member meetings. He understands the inner workings of the Trail Conference and brings his expertise to these meetings. As if this weren't enough, he was instrumental in helping us secure a matching $5,000 donation. Jim's passion and expertise make him one of the best Trail Conference volunteers!

Pete Talgner, nominated by Don Weiss One of the longest-serving volunteers to the Trail Conference, Pete, of Tenafly, N.J., has most recently functioned as a volunteer extension of the Membership and Development department, sending donation acknowledgments and membership gifts on a weekly basis. This important work requires focus and organizational skills. It can be tedious and long, especially at year's end. We rely on Pete for his speed, accuracy, and consistency to make sure we “get it right” every time. Pete and his wife Susan also served for more than a decade as the trail supervisors of Sterling Forest State Park. After the installation of the trail, Pete’s contributions have made us proud to call him a member of our trail family.

Paul Leikin Extra Mile Award: Steve Aaron

Glenda Haas, nominated by Brendan Cunningham

Jim Piombino, nominated by Erica Colacal & Gary Willick

Pete Talgner, nominated by Don Weiss

Paul Leikin Extra Mile Award: Pete Talgner

Glenda Haas, nominated by Brendan Cunningham

Jim Piombino, nominated by Erica Colacal & Gary Willick

Pete Talgner, nominated by Don Weiss
Enthusiastic about protecting trails, TJ of Harriman, N.Y., is passionate about the protection. “I’m very excited about cranking new material in. He was and hauled scrap out and worked on hundreds of feet of Pochuck Boardwalk. He was instrumental in helping the committee identify and secure numerous parcels for conservation, particularly in New Jersey, where he previously lived. In the recent past, he has been a great benefactor to many projects and programs, such as restoration of the Darlington Schoolhouse and enhancing Trail University. There were two recent land acquisitions for which Bob went above and beyond as a volunteer. First, as our legal representative, Bob helped close on a property in Orange County. N.Y., that is crucial to the protection of the Hunterdon Trail. Bob has also been a key asset in acquiring a 13-acre property in Albany County, N.Y., that would protect the Long Path. His hard work and dedication over the years has helped ensure the protection of trail lands across the region.

TJ Robinson, nominated by Tom Brown
TJ is 13 years old and has been working hard with Wayne County State Park staff and the West End Trail Crew on restorations on the Appalachian Trail’s Pocohock Boardwalk. He worked on hundreds of feet of curbing, laid decking, and hauled scrap out and fresh mulch in. He is very excited about protecting nature for others to enjoy. He is an eager and steady worker who understands the importance of the job and of giving back.

Long Path End-to-Enders
The Long Path offers a unique view of an end-to-end patch “rocker” to anyone who hikes the entire length of the Long Path. The trip can be completed in one continuous trip or in a number of hikes over many years. The following people began end-to-end trips in 2007 and were acknowledged at the Volunteer Recognition event.

- #149 Ken Morgan finished on 1/1/2006
- #148 Franklin Marra finished on 1/10/2007
- #149 Laura Smith finished on 1/22/2007
- #150 David Booth finished on 1/17/2007
- #151 Heather Housekeeper finished on 10/17/2007
- #152 Scott Weis finished on 10/17/2007
- #153 Nick Baldwin finished on 10/17/2007
- #154 Daniel Anderson finished on 11/17/2007

Donna Ritterchildren Conservation Award
Presented to a person or organization that has made a significant contribution to the protection of our trails and/or the natural lands that surround them.

Bob Ross, nominated by Ed Goodell, Sara Mason & Peter Dolan
As an active member of the Conservation Committee, Bob is a dedicated champion of protecting open space for trails. Bob, of New York, N.Y., has been instrumental in helping the committee identify and secure numerous parcels for conservation, particularly in New Jersey, where he previously lived. In the recent past, he has been a great benefactor to many projects and programs, such as restoration of the Darlington Schoolhouse and enhancing Trail University. There were two recent land acquisitions for which Bob went above and beyond as a volunteer. First, as our legal representative, Bob helped close on a property in Orange County, N.Y., that is crucial to the protection of the Hunterdon Trail. Bob has also been a key asset in acquiring a 13-acre property in Albany County, N.Y., that would protect the Long Path. His hard work and dedication over the years has helped ensure the protection of trail lands across the region.

Nate Zakim, nominated by Sara Mason & Noah Gold
Nate is a talented and dedicated trail builder who has done excellent work in our urgent push to protect the Green corridor for the long-distance Long Path and Highlands Trail in Orange County, N.Y., which are at risk of being severed by development. As an attorney generously donating his time to our Trail Conference program, Noah, of Franklin Lakes, N.J., is a valued member of the Trail Conference. For his tireless dedication and volunteer work, he was given the award.

Don Derr Award
Recognizes those who have provided exemplary service and outstanding contributions to major projects, such as our trail maps and publications.

Don Burdy, nominated by Jeremy Appar & the Trail Conference Map Team
Don has made consistent and long-time contributions to several Trail Conference maps. Ed, of the Trail Conference Map Team, has done excellent work in our urgent push to protect the Green corridor for the long-distance Long Path and Highlands Trail in Orange County, N.Y., which are at risk of being severed by development. As an attorney generously donating his time to our Trail Conference program, Noah, of Franklin Lakes, N.J., is a valued member of the Trail Conference. For his tireless dedication and volunteer work, he was given the award.

Corporative Partner Award
Given to businesses or their employees for outstanding service to the hiking community.

Mountain Tops, nominated by Hills Orange, Mountain Tops’ support of the Breakneck Ridge Trail Steward program is unparalleled. Based in Beacon, N.Y., Mountain Tops has been the most consistent sponsor of the program since its creation in 2013. Every season, Mountain Tops has provided uniforms of the highest quality to each Breakneck Steward, fitting more than 30 Stewards over the years. They have been exceedingly generous with their time and commitment to this program.
The ecological integrity of the region’s most beloved outdoor destinations is being threatened by the unexpected high volume of use at these special places. The Trail Conference is responding to this challenge by taking a leadership role in coordinating stewardship efforts to keep up with growing threats.

To help mitigate the impact from high use and educate users, we have partnered with land managers to begin a multi-phased approach on the Appalachian Trail, at Breakneck Ridge, and in the Catskills. It is our belief that the most effective way to advance change is through user education, public participation, and sustainable, on-the-ground solutions. We can create Better Outdoor Opportunities Through Stewardship (BOOTS). Our Trail Steward program is an integral part of our response to these threats.

When designed and used responsibly, trails protect both the people who use them and the environment that surrounds them—but without education, trail lands are subject to mistreatment and misuse. With lead support from REI and generous contributions from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Catskill 3500 and other partners, we have created the Trail Steward Program to help educate and assist nearly 88,400 trail users at safe, responsible, and enjoyable use of trails during 2017.

From spring to fall, Trail Stewards were deployed at four parks in New York State: in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve at Breakneck Ridge; in the Catskill Forest Preserve on the summits of Slide, Giant Ledge, North Point, and Blackhead, and at the popular Peekamoose Blue Hole; at Bear Mountain State Park on the Appalachian Trail; and at the Reeves Meadow trailhead in Harriman State Park. Stewards provided outreach and information about park regulations, hiker safety, preparedness, and other best practices. In addition to readying hikers, Stewards helped discourage and mitigate misuse of trails and the surrounding lands through their education and public relations work.

In partnership with each land manager, we were also able to leverage our presence at these outdoor destinations to conduct a Trail User Survey. Stewards collected 303 survey responses; we found that roughly half of the respondents were first-time visitors to their respective parks. Gender and race were nearly equal representation, and two-thirds said they were between the ages of 18-45. Understanding more about trail users, their expectations, interests, and other key data enables the Trail Conference and its partners to be better prepared to support and educate the public.

In 2017, the Trail Conference served as the stewards of more than 2,150 miles of trails throughout the greater New York metropolitan area—from Manhattan to Albany, the Delaware Water Gap to the Taconics and beyond. Check out the achievements of our volunteers and staff over the last year, and see what’s to come in 2018.

**How We Create Better Outdoor Opportunities Through Stewardship**

**2017 Trail and Summit Stewards**

In 2017, the Trail Steward program educated and assisted 88,329 visitors across three parks in New York State. They counted 9,485 visitors in the Catskills, 28,556 visitors at Breakneck Ridge, and 50,288 visitors at Bear Mountain on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day Weekend through November. Twenty-one Stewards shared information about park regulations, hiker safety, preparedness, and other best practices.

**Catskills**

- The new German Hollow and Batavia Kill lean-tos, built in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, were officially opened for visitors.
- The Trail Conference-managed Catskill Conservation Corps coordinated a litter clean-up at Peekamoose Blue Hole as part of the Leave No Trace Hot Spot Week held at this popular outdoor destination. Over 40 volunteers removed more than 18 bags of trash from the swimming hole area.
- The Rockalaka Trail Crew made improvements to the Quarry Loop Trail in Sloan Gorge Preserve and constructed reroutes on the Gorge Loop where the trail was steep or susceptible to flooding. In Platte Cove Preserve, the crew built a nature loop trail where a social path formed to bring visitors closer to Plattekill Creek. The crew also performed maintenance on the Waterfall Trail, a heavily used trail to Plattekill Falls that was narrow and eroded. Throughout the season, four Conservation Corps members served alongside 15 volunteers.

**2018**

- Stewards will patrol the summits of Slide, Giant Ledge, North Point, and Blackhead mountains from Memorial Day through Columbus Day.
- Lean-to maintenance and construction will continue in several locations.
- Trail improvements are anticipated to take place on Overlook Mountain, and on the Red Hill and Haverly trails.
- We’ll continue our efforts to improve the user experience in the Catskills by holding several litter clean-ups at some of the region’s most popular destinations.

**East of the Hudson River 2017**

- In FDR State Park, the Crow Pond Trail, featuring a 32-foot outlet bridge with a 50-foot boardwalk on the north side and a 25-foot ramp on the south side, was officially opened by the volunteers and park staff who worked together to build it.
- The Taconic Trail Crew continued its efforts to make the Undercliff Trail more sustainable and user-friendly for hikers looking for options around Breakneck Ridge. This year alone, they set more than 100 stone steps on the trail. The crew also built a 1-mile new section of the Highlands Trail connecting Hudson Highlands and Falmerstok state parks. In 2017, four Conservation Corps members served alongside 15 volunteers.

**2018**

- Trail Stewards will once again be stationed at Breakneck Ridge from Memorial Day through November. We will help host the Leave No Trace Hot Spot Week at Breakneck Ridge Oct. 29-Nov. 5.
- From NYC to the Taconics, expect to see significant trail improvements throughout the East Hudson region. Our volunteers will be fixing worn-out trails and scouting new ones. From relocating bridges to improving signage, exciting things will be taking place all year to improve the trail experience. Some of the biggest projects include the Trail Tramps’ new lean-tos at the swimming hole and a bridge at Hudson Highlands Gateway Park, and the Taconic Crew finishing the rehabilitation of the Undercliff Trail.

**Read more on page 9**

**The East Hudson Trail Crew**, along with members of the Trail Tramps, completed an extreme reroute of the Cornish Trail in the East Hudson Highlands. Read about their adventures on page 9.

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RPH Cabin Volunteers: From A.T. Maintaining Club to Trail Crew

Sometime back in the spring of 2007, I was asked by Jim Haggett, chair of the Dutchess-Putnam Appalachian Trail Committee, “Do you want to build a new bridge behind RPH cabin?”

Since 1998, the Ralph's Peak Hikers (RPH) Cabin Volunteers, a member club of the Trail Conference, has maintained the Appalachian Trail’s RPH Cabin in East Fishkill, N.Y. I knew the current bridge was getting completely flooded out at times, and a new bridge would be needed soon. After some short deliberation, I said, “yes.” I had designed and built a bridge before! No problem.

With the help of the Trail Conference, design work started immediately. Excavation work went on throughout the spring; sponsors were lined up by June, and by the third week of July, 50 people showed up for the build. Thus, a trail maintenance club was catapulted into major work projects. Since that summer of 2007, RPH Cabin Volunteers have taken on large projects along the A.T. from Fahnestock State Park to the Dover Oak in Pawling, N.Y.

Over the past 10 years, our club has procured a significant cache of tools and equipment. We have developed a network of volunteers both near and far who faithfully give their time and expertise each season to these projects. Several club members have used their specialized training in stone work to put in stone steps and retainers at numerous sites along the Trail. We continue to maintain waterbars and treadways over wet areas to inhibit trail erosion. In 2013, we built another bridge at the trailhead off of Stormville Mountain Road. In 2017, we removed and replaced deteriorated steps at Miller Hill Road where the A.T. crosses the Taconic State Parkway.

The club has scheduled an annual work weekend every July for the past 15 years, during which major projects are completed. Over these three days, volunteers set up an outdoor kitchen to provide hot meals for A.T. thru-hikers. Many hikers stay a day or more and participate in the trail work tasks. All year long, the RPH Cabin maintenance is carried out by local volunteer club members. The tasks are endless: Biweekly garbage removal, mowing, cleaning and painting, invasive vine and tree control, privy maintenance, grounds mowing, gardening, repairing doors, and bunk repair is ongoing.

We look forward to another year of service to the A.T. and are planning projects for the 2018 July work weekend and BBQ, to be held July 13–15. We hope to see you there! For more info, check out rphcabin.org.

Mary Dodos
Trail Crew Chief

Tramps celebrate their many and diverse hats! Read more about the crew at bit.ly/tc-ttt7.

Trail Tramps: Changes, Activities, Musings, and Hats

It’s been awhile since you’ve heard from the Tramps, and I know you are curious to know what we have been up to.

CHANGES

We dropped “Westchester” from our crew name and now, just plain old “Trail Tramps” This reflects our determination to go where we are needed beyond Westchester County. We regularly stray into Putnam County, and the crew is “sent out” as needed.

ACTIVITIES

The Tramps ranged far and wide in 2017. As part of the Hudson Trail Crew (HTC), we completed an extensive reroute of the Cornish Trail in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve. Working with volunteer leader Jane Daniels, we built a trail and bridge at FDR State Park, and improved tread in wet sections of Sylvan Glen Park Preserve trails by installing boardwalks. We cleared a section of the Briarcliff-Peekskill Trail blocked by invasive plants and did a reroute around another heavily invaded section. For a third winter, the Tramps also participated in wildlife tracking programs sponsored by Teatown. Late in the year, we concentrated our efforts on a reroute of the red trail at Hudson Highlands Gateway Park that involves sidehilling and building crib wall and stone steps. Soon, we will start building an extension of the yellow trail at Gateway.

Musings

I got to thinking about all the different hats Trail Conference volunteers (especially supervisors) wear. I am the supervisor of the Trail Tramps crew and of individual maintainers for trails in Westchester and Putnam. I am on Geoff Connor’s Westchester East Trail Crew (WETC) and on Andrew Seip’s EHTC. I also am a main-tainer for several Yorktown trails under Jane Daniels’ supervision, and Jane in turn is the supervisor of the Westchester Trails Chair. She is also on my crew and the WETC. Fred Stern is all over the place—as sawyer, supervisor, crew member, maintainer, and A.T. monitor. We have fun explaining this to crew members who care about one thing only—working on trails. It doesn’t really matter to them who is supervising or which crew is officially doing the work. They just love being outdoors. The best crew days are those where we worked hard and were rewarded by the completion of a new trail or bridge, boardwalk, crib wall, or stone staircase.

What can the Tramps expect in 2018? More big and small trail projects, another science project, lunches, hikes, and the camaraderie of people who love working outdoors! For more information on the Tramps and to find out how you can get involved, visit bit.ly/tc-ttt7.

For more information on joining the RPH Cabin Volunteers, contact Tim Messerich at bascompgrillmaster@yahoo.com or 845.401.8817.

Conservation Corps

In 2017, seven Trail Conference Conservation Corps crews served throughout the region improving trails and the lands they traverse. Thirty-five crew members were joined by 737 volunteers, together serving a total of 28,432 hours. Check out the accomplishments of the Bear Mountain, Floworks, Palisades, Rockclaksa, Taconic, and Sweet Water crews throughout our regional trail system. Look back highlights.

Trail Walker • New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

Spring 2018 | 9

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NEW JERSEY

The trails at Campgaw Mountain County Reservation, along with underutilized trails in Norvin Green and Long Pond Ironworks state parks, were realigned to make them more user-friendly “loop trail” systems.

Around 300 people celebrated National Trails Day on June 3 at Trail Conference Headquarters. At this combined open house event/day of service, sponsored by REI, volunteers helped remove 38 bags of garlic mustard, six bags of litter, and even a kitchen sink from neighboring Ramapo Valley County Reservation.

In April, Greater Blairstown officially became the first Appalachian Trail Community in New Jersey. The Trail Conference, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), developed a new set of signage for installation in most of the New Jersey state parks and forests where we maintain trails. These signs not only educate visitors about the importance of trail stewardship and encourage people to get involved. Read more on page 5.

Today, the Worthington core sites are visible links to a failed past. The 3-foot-wide, cylindrical samples of the rock underfoot can now be found along the newly rerouted Rock Cores Trail.

Thanks to Jon’s advocacy of a remote to avoid a washed-out section of the West Jersey Trail Crew recently completed a relocation at the Rock Cores Trail’s northern end. They installed a bridge over a stream that affords views leading to a giant rock cairn. The cairn draws the hiker’s attention to the cores and serves as a monument to the victors of the environmentalists whose determination and perseverance prevailed in keeping the Delaware River in its natural state.

Rock Cores Trail

Rock Cores Trail Reroute Brings History Into View

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The Invasives Strike Force Crew monitors and removes invasive species in our region.

INVASIVES

The Invasives Strike Force (ISF) Crew monitors and removes invasive species in our region.

In 2017, the Trail Conference was awarded a new, 5-year contract from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation to continue leading the Lower Hudson region’s invasive species management efforts from 2018 to 2022.

The Invasives Strike Force removed the first known infestations of slender false brome, a plant that has spread aggressively in Western New York and can fully take over the understory wherever it’s found.

We completed the first year of full-scale efforts to remove sticky sage along the Appalachian Trail. This plant, with sticky seeds, has the potential to spread quickly along the trail corridor and neighboring waterways. It is only known at one other location in New York, which we are actively managing.

Invasives volunteers finished surveying our New Jersey Trails for phase 1 invasive plants. We brought on two new full-time staff to organize and educate invasive volunteers and manage the seasonal Conservation Corps crew.

By the end of the season, 439 volunteers devoted 5,024 hours to invasives surveying and management and native plant protection. The Invasives Strike Force (ISF) Crew removed 108,612 invasive plants. The program held 206 eradication projects for 57 species.

The ISF Crew looks forward to removing every slender false brome plant in the area and hopefully eradicating it before it can get a foothold in the Hudson Valley. We are also planning another year of heavy management and research of sticky sage along the A.T.

With increased staff and generous donations of time and funds from volunteers, we’ve been able to expand our efforts into new programs for 2018 including:

1) The creation of a photographic database for invasive and native species;
2) Invasive Species for Trail Maintainers, a workshop for current trail maintainers on how to identify and manage invasive plants along their trail section; and
3) A possible drone program that would allow us to perform aerial surveys for invasive plants and forest pests and complete days of work in a matter of hours.

We will continue our Invasive Strike Force surveys in New York and will resurvey many of the New Jersey Trails that haven’t been surveyed in five or six years.
Welcome Ben and Nancy

Ben Sugar, Field Manager, joined the Trail Conference in February. A Virginia native, Ben discovered a love of the outdoors and trails in particular while building them for Americorps in New Hampshire after college. Since then, he has led crews and managed trails for the Green Mountain Club, Montgomery County, Md.; and the U.S. Forest Service in Utah. Ben holds a B.A. in history from James Madison University and has studied Recreation Resource Management at Utah State University.

Nancy Krause, Executive Assistant, joined the Trail Conference staff in March. Nancy was a church office manager for the last 14 years while raising her family in Oakland, N.J. During that time, she was very active in and is now chair of the local Environmental Commission. She is also on Oakland’s Shade Tree Commission and Green Team. Nancy has held several other community volunteer positions in schools and recreation programs as well.

Prior to moving to New Jersey, Nancy was park ranger at Gateway National Recreation Area and worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a wastewater specialist. Nancy has a B.A. in economics and a M.A. in environmental science. She is an avid cook and outdoors person who is most at home when she is camping.

TRIBUTES

In memory of Ali Ghahari
Jennifer Ghahari

In honor of Dr. Joseph Barbato
Susan Barbato

In honor of Josephine Baro
Jane Steinerwald & Jon Cole

In honor of Brian Collins
Patricia Mazzoni

In honor of Karen Dillon
Diana Dasparran & Bruce Duesterhoft

In honor of Mr. & Mrs. Charles & Marion Fromm
Mark Fromm

In honor of Jeanne Gibbs
David Gibbs

In honor of Geoff Hamilton
Elizabeth Wright

In honor of Lori Hershenhart
Amanda Hiller & Beth Hershenhart

In honor of Annie Jamieson
Peter Schaeling

In honor of Bill Kern
Emily Yarch

In honor of Linda Malkin
Kenneth Mayer

In honor of Dean & Hayley Nichols
Gary & Jindie Heise

In honor of Glenn Okouak
Barry Oleskak

In honor of Giacomo Servetti
Amy Waldhauser

In honor of Richard Vasok
Sarah Pavliczak

In honor of Dan & Vivian Van Angel
Anonymous

In honor of Ken Waldhauser
Amy Waldhauser

In honor of Mr. Donald Weiss
Cheryl & Robert Lehmann (Happy Birthday!)
Audrey Roco

In honor of Judith Wetz
Nahum Felman

In honor of Harvey Zanger
Kathleen Caren

In memory of Dr. George Becker Jr.
Anthony Palladino

David & Helen Crowell
The George Becker Jr MD Family Charitable Fund
Jules Royak

In memory of Alice Becker
The George Becker Jr MD Family Charitable Fund

In memory of John Blenninger
Alvin DeMaria
Steven & Suzanne Moses
Gary Haugland

In memory of Sandy Caciao
David Webler

In memory of Ramon deTorres
Jules Royak

In memory of Zori Dog
Leon Maleson

In memory of Don Erbe
Clifford Gerena

In memory of Jakob Franke
Steve Aaron
Sam Gellueng
Gary Haugland

In memory of Monty Grebula
Rose Bonanno

In memory of Trail Angels

Heather McHale
In memory of John Gunzler
Anonymous
Donald Anderson
Timothy Ayens
Joel Brehon & Charles Maples
Norman Blumenstein
Ginny Brach
James & Sherry Buchanan
Rick Cesere
Carol Chimenti
William Christian
Audrey Curwin
Gary Curwin
Ron & Eileen Curwin
Cathleen Dainiak, on behalf of the following:

• The Finks

• The Newlin/Savaggio

• The Lawlors

• The Shapiros

• The Earnsbirts

Jane & Walter Daniels
Geoff Dunn & Laura Novick-Dunn
Gregory & Diana DeVincenzo
Fred & Joan Ellis
Ronnie & Barry Gardiner
George & Diana Allen Family Foundation
Karen & Eric Ginsburg
Shirley & Joseph Giovannoli
Frank Goldsmith
Sheridan Greemanis
Paul Gunzler
Myna & Ernest Haas
Audrey Hale
Gary Haugland
Headmost International Inc
Michael Hymanson
Robert Jonas
Amy & Jeffrey Kaplan
Michael & Marline Karpas
Edward Goodell & Lynne Katzmann
Ian Krer
Philip Kirstein
Anonymous
Richard & Barbara Kraft
Ruth Kramer
Diane & Richard Levine
Taryn Lloyd
Ann Loeb
Paul C Mendelovitz
Dana & Adam Meyers
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Robin & Larry Osman
Peter Oswald
Sherry Raquet
Bell Ravi
Frederick Reeves
JoAnn Ribudo
Felicia Rosen
Susan & Arthur Rothman
Janet Sandler
Charles Santore
Richard & Judy Siegel
Sandra & Michael Skodnik
Joy Slainoff
Solon & Son Contracting Corp

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NOVEMBER 1, 2017 – JANUARY 31, 2018

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Martin Ushen
Danise & Lynne Van Engel
Candi Vine
Alan & Barbara Wain
Wittenhoffer/Semiole Foundation
In memory of Ann Haffy
John Haffy
In memory of Eugene Jockey
Anonymous
In memory of Vitamin Joseph Smepler
Vasim Solomon
In memory of Marilyn Katz
George Petty
In memory of Dean Kelly
James Hourihan
In memory of Jeffrey Tezfly Lee
Cynthia Lee
In memory of Jane Lennon
Patricia Runge
In memory of Kenneth Lutters
Wilfredo Chakaisait
In memory of my father Toreif Melo, who continues to blaze trails from above
Erica Melo
In memory of Irene Pappas
James & John Pappas
In memory of June Parisi
Natalie Macke
In memory of Molly Paus
Jennifer Paus
In memory of Fr. Mark Payne
Brian Collins & Michelle Tuorto-Collins
In memory of Joseph Parasino
Joseph Parasino
In memory of Kirk Rodgers
Walter Pollard
In memory of Howard Saul
Nancy Nitzberg
In memory of Margaret Schwinn
Steve & Susan Schewlin
In memory of Jonathan Trumbull
Matthew Trumbull
In memory of Dongsiang Wang
Huijiang Gong
In memory of Richard Wolff
Eck Khoon Goh
Fredric Kruevant on behalf of The Chanler at Montclair
(Montclair Gardens, LLC)
Gari & Lori Ledyard
Ann Loeb
Don & Merryl Richards
Phyllis Salter
Now Wammon & Len Friedman
Marianne Zwisota
In memory of David Woolf
Nola Gersten-Woolf
In memory of Margaret Stummer
Janet Plattner
For the Conservation Corp, from our littlest love Benjamin Pond, Thalipinthiker
David Pond

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Anonymous Donor
Kathryn & Paul Abdis, Bernard Baron & Robin Abish, Mrs. Marilyn Adams, Dr. John Adams, Anita & Richard Adelman, Kathryn Adorney, Robi Agarwal, Abe Allen, Emily Anderson, Kevin Andreano, Kitty Angelo, Daniel Antognini, Felicity Armergo, Michael Ashton, Michael Augerbroun, Kathy & Michael Azzara, Len Baldwin,
Happy Trails to Erica

Erica Colace
has left her position as executive assistant to the executive director of Grow It Green Morris.

Duffy Bailey, Heather Baiman, Peter Balderston, Joyce Ball,
Caroline Baldauf, John Barry, Beth Beek, Jennifer Biggs,
Rachel Billimoria, Ryan Billingsley, Virginia Blacker, Anne Blaake,
Catherine Bland, Elton Blank, Brian Blum, Eliza Boas,
Kerry Brock, Todd Brodersen, Jake Brodsky,
Michael Brown, Tacy Brown, Linda Brink, Brandon Bronzini,
Joseph Brown, Roberta Burton, Christopher Busch, Anna Burtenshaw,
Jason Cadman, Kevin Cady, Cate Cadman, Janie Cadman,
Brian Cahn, Kate Calahan, John Calhoun, Steven Callahan,
Brian Callum, Paul Calhoun, Brian Callum, Brian Callum,
Mary Cameron, Gary Cameron, Robert Cameron, William Cameron,
Sally Cane, John Canfield, Susan Canfield, Nancy Canfield,
Ellie Cane, Brian Cane, Marc Cane, Rosemary Cane, Patrick Cane,
Eugene Canfield, Susan Canfield, John Canfield, Nancy Canfield,
Ellie Cane, Brian Cane, Marc Cane, Rosemary Cane, Patrick Cane,
Eugene Canfield, Susan Canfield, John Canfield, Nancy Canfield,
Ellie Cane, Brian Cane, Marc Cane, Rosemary Cane, Patrick Cane,
Eugene Canfield, Susan Canfield, John Canfield, Nancy Canfield,
Explore ‘Trails Near and Far’ with Artist-Volunteer Pete Tilgner

The Trail Conference invites you to take a journey with photographer-volunteer Pete Tilgner in the new exhibition “Trails Near and Far,” on view March 8 through May 7 at our Headquarters. Travel along as March 8 through May 7 at our “Trails Near and Far,” on view photographer-volunteer Peter you to take a journey with the Trail Conference invites and Far” featuring the work of Artist-

If You Go

› What: “Trails Near and Far” featuring the work of Pete Tilgner
› When: March 8 through May 7 during regular Trail Conference hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday (and Saturdays, beginning April 7)
› Where: Trail Conference Headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, N.J.
› Details: Find out more at nynjtc.org

seams around the country, as well as internationally. Pete’s photographs are in the public collections of the Newark Museum, Prudential Insurance Company, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Ridgewood Public Schools, and the Trail Conference.

Pete has curated two exhibitions for the City Without Walls Gallery in Newark, N.J., and “Cuba Today, Through the Eyes of Twelve Photographers” for the Monmouth Museum in Lincroft, N.J.

Pete and Suzan were Sterling Forest Trail Supervisors for 14 years. Pete now maintains trails at the Tenafly Nature Center in Tenafly, N.J., and volunteers with the Trail Conference’s Membership and Development department. For his exceptional work and dedication to the organization, Pete received a Distinguished Service Award in 2017.

Pete has had one-person shows of his photography displayed at numerous cafes, galleries, and public buildings throughout the region. His work has been shown at museums around the country, as well as internationally. Pete’s photographs are in the public collections of the Newark Museum, Prudential Insurance Company, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Ridgewood Public Schools, and the Trail Conference.

Pete has worked as a visual artist for more than 40 years, 37 of which were as an artist-educator in the Ridgewood Public Schools in New Jersey. Photography and darkroom skills were among the subjects he taught.

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Taxes and Charity: Money-Saving Tips

David J. Haas CFP®
President, Cereus Financial Advisors, LLC

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), signed into law late last year, may have reduced your ability to deduct charitable contributions from your taxes. Donations given to charitable organizations by individuals or couples are deductible on schedule A of the IRS 1040 tax form as itemized deductions. You can deduct your contributions if your itemized deductions are greater than the standard deduction. The TCJA has both increased the standard deduction and reduced the types of expenses that qualify for deductions. This means that many taxpayers will be hard-pressed to find expenses to itemize in 2018 and later. But there are solutions to this problem.

Bunching Deductions

Using a Donor Advised Fund

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is actually a charity itself. So when you contribute money to a DAF, you get a tax deduction. At any point in time, you can tell the DAF to distribute your funds to your favorite charities, including the Trail Conference. You could do this monthly, quarterly, or annually. Contributing to a DAF allows you to bunch two or more years of deductions into a single year. You’ll be able to itemize one year and take the standard deduction the next year. Using this method, you may be able to take full tax advantage of all your charitable donations.

Qualified Charitable Distribution

For those over age 70 ½, the Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is another option. Many people have significant savings in their Qualified Retirement Accounts, such as IRAs and 401(k)s. Once you reach 70 ½, the government obligates you to start taking Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from these accounts every year. You need to take these distributions and pay tax on them whether or not you need this income for your living expenses. The QCD is a special distribution you can make from your IRA directly to a 501(c)(3) charity tax-free instead of your RMD. This allows you to donate to a charity and avoid paying income tax on the distribution. You get the tax equivalent of a full deduction on your contribution from the first dollar you donate. Everyone’s tax situation is different. While these options may work for you, discuss it with a tax advisor before taking any action.

David is president and founder of Cereus Financial Advisors, LLC in Franklin Lakes, N.J., which specializes in comprehensive financial planning and wealth management for executives, professionals, and small business owners. He has been a Trail Conference member and volunteer for over 30 years.

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Revised Hudson Palisades Maps Include Mileages

This spring, look for a revised, sixth edition of the Hudson Palisades Trails map set to connect you to more than 100 miles of marked trails and bike paths along the western side of the Hudson River from Fort Lee, N.J., northward to Haverstraw, N.Y. This newest edition features junction-to-junction trail mileage numbers on the map front and includes trail changes and map adjustments. Trail mileage numbers give distances between trail junctions and important features along the trail, and this popular feature is now on more than half of our trail maps. The Hudson Palisades set includes approximately 40 miles of the Long Path, as well as trails in Palisades Interstate Park, Blauvelt State Park, High Tor State Park, Rockland Lake State Park, Tallman Mountain State Park, Buttermilk Falls Park, Clausland Mountain Park, Flat Rock Brook Nature Center, Tenafly Nature Center, and Rockleigh Woods Sanctuary/ Laurelwood Reserve.

All maps include UTM gridlines, parking areas, viewpoints, and other points of interest. The set, sponsored by REI, will be available in print and loadable in digital format on Apple and Android devices through the Avenza Maps app. The sixth edition of Hudson Palisades Trails is likely to be available in May, so be sure to look for its arrival on our website or sign up for our e-newsletter to stay in the know!

Thank You
Special thanks to the volunteers and park partners who helped produce this map revision!
Explore New Trails and Parkland in Orange County

The Trail Conference has been busy improving public access in and around Goosepond Mountain State Park in Orange County, N.Y., over the last year. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers, a precarious road-walk section of the Highlands Trail in Chester has been rerouted into the park. Approximately 2 miles long, this new section is a beautiful, well-graded multi-use trail, built for use by hikers and non-motorized bikes.

The Highlands Trail at Goosepond Mountain has a lot to offer over a relatively short distance. One can travel from the parking lot at Bull Mill Road to Laroe Road for an approximately 3-mile hike, or continue along Lazy Hill Road to the parking at Route 17M for an approximately 5-mile hike (both are out-and-back or two-car shuttle options).

For either option, start at the parking lot on Bull Mill Road near the corner of Laroe Road. Follow the blue diamond Highlands Trail blazes along an avenue of grand sycamores, which overlook the wetlands of Trout Brook. Contemplate the stream as the path begins to climb the hill before continuing uphill toward a spectacular overlook of Sugar Loaf Mountain. Continue through aromatic red cedar outcrops down to Bull Mill Road. Cross the road, then hop over the Seely Brook stepping stones before reaching a bog bridge walkway. Head northward through more cedars, past massive, old field-grown oaks and along hillsides down toward the original trail route on Lazy Hill Road.

Here you can turn left, across the newly restored Seely Brook bridge to the Laroe Road parking. If you head right toward route 17M instead, keep an eye out for the unmarked entrance on the left to the Board Family Cemetery Trail. This semi-circular loop leads to a bench on a knoll overlooking the vast, open wetlands below Goosepond Mountain. Take a seat on the bench, inhale deeply, and let the birdsong fill your ears.

Details
- Trail: Highlands Trail
- Park: Goosepond Mountain State Park, Orange County, N.Y.
- Difficulty: Moderate
- Length: Varies
- Dogs: Allowed on leash
- Features: Views, bikes allowed

For my membership of $60 or more, send me a:

Regular
- Membership # if available ____________
- Participants only: $40
- Participants and Nonprofit: $50
- Participants and Nonprofit (Senior 65+): $35
- Participants and Nonprofit (Benefactor): $40
- Participants and Nonprofit (Sponsor): $280

A joint membership is for two adults residing at the same address.

For my membership of $60 or more, send me a:
- Trail Conference Hat
- Harriman-Bear Mountain Map Set
- Follow us on Facebook or Twitter

Support trails, parks, and open space in the region by joining the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

The Trail Conference maintains more than 2,000 miles of trails, advocates for parks, protects open space, and provides volunteer service opportunities in the great outdoors.

Your membership supports the trails you love and gives you these additional benefits:

- 25% Discount on Trip Leader training, leadership training, wilderness first aid, environmental monitoring, GPS operation, and more. Find details at nynjtc.org/trail.
- Access to a wide range of volunteer opportunities on- and off-trail. Check out nynjtc.org/volunteer.

Join now at nynjtc.org/membership.