



TRAIL WALKER

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

The New Hiking How-tos

As caretakers of the region's trails and natural areas, the Trail Conference puts the safety of our volunteers, Corps members, staff, and trail users first and foremost. As restrictions on activity ease in the midst of COVID-19, safety remains our number one priority.

When heading outdoors, the following is recommended:

► **STAY LOCAL**

Park agencies and health officials continue to recommend keeping your outdoor activities close to home. Particularly if you live in a highly affected region, please be mindful of the distance you travel and respect communities that have not been as impacted—the virus is still spreading. Check out “less traveled” trails to avoid popular areas that already see an abundance of foot traffic, both for your safety and protection of the land (see [page 12](#)), and use our Hike Finder tool and Top Trails page at nynjtc.org to find the right trail for you. Aim to keep your visits short. Before heading out, check park info and our Trail Alerts webpage for potential closures and restrictions. NYS Parks' (@nystateparks) and NJ Parks' (@newjerseystateparks) Facebook and Twitter pages are your best resources for up-to-date information.

► **STAY SMALL**

Avoid crowds and groups. Recreate only with members of your immediate household.

► **STAY FLEXIBLE**

Take note of several hikes in the area you plan to visit. It's good to have alternatives ready to go in case trailhead parking lots are full. Amenities—such as bathrooms—remain closed in some parks that are open, and parking restrictions are in



The Trail Conference has joined REI and dozens of partners in the Recreate Responsibly Coalition. Recreate Responsibly is both a website and movement to help all of us return to our public lands and waters in a responsible manner. Find out more at RecreateResponsibly.org.

effect in almost all areas. Consider alternative days and times to go out; expect parking areas to be at capacity very early on weekends. If parking lots are full, do not park along roadsides or other undesignated areas. You may be ticketed.

► **BE SAFE**

Wear a face covering when you cannot maintain physical distancing, especially in parking lots and at the trailhead. Keep a distance of 6 feet or more from others. Alert others as you're about to pass, or step aside to

let people pass. Our medical professionals and first responders are already overburdened. Refrain from risky activity that could result in injury.

► **BE SMART**

It's important to be prepared on your hike. That means wearing weather-appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes. These days, outdoor essentials also include a face covering and hand sanitizer. It also means knowing where you're going and carrying a physical and/or digital map—don't rely solely on trail

markers or the person ahead of you. Bring plenty of water and snacks and a bag to carry out your trash.

► **BE ECO-SAVVY**

The Trail Conference encourages all trail users to learn, practice, and share the seven Leave No Trace principles. (Learn more about them at nynjtc.org/leave-no-trace.) These simple steps keep you safe and help protect the environment. Particularly with many people using disposable masks and gloves, be sure to

bag and carry out your own disposable protective gear.

► **BE UNDERSTANDING**

We are eager to resume the care of parks and trails to help ensure everyone has a safe, enjoyable experience in nature. With that in mind, please understand that many trails have been without volunteer attention for nearly the entire spring and may be overgrown or visibly in need of maintenance. Not all parks are allowing volunteer activity to resume, and not all volunteers are comfortable getting out just yet. Be understanding and patient in the coming months as we work to bring all trails back to their best condition. If you encounter trail conditions that are damaged or unsafe, use the Trail Issue Report on our website to let us know.

To learn more about how the Trail Conference's efforts today are improving your future outdoor experiences, read about our Recovery and Response initiative on [page 3](#).

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New Ways of Adventuring on National Trails Day

The Trail Conference has been connecting people with nature for nearly 100 years. Of course, outdoor recreation circa 2020 has looked a little

different, so we've been getting creative with our events. In the lead-up to National Trails Day this year, we shared tips on great local trails and how to enjoy them responsibly through virtual programming. It was fun celebrating trails with friends both old and new, even via a screen. Thanks to all who participated, including our partners Hudson North Cider Company and Hoka

One One for their generous donations to our Trivia for Trails and National Trails Week Giveaway. We hope to meet you on the trails soon!

Did you miss our digital National Trails Day celebration? Check out a selection of the webinars we offered at nynjtc.org/content/online-learning-library.



AmazonSmile Now Available on Mobile App

Did you know that you can support the work of the Trail Conference simply by shopping online? When you shop AmazonSmile at **smile.amazon.com**, the retailer donates a portion of eligible purchases to the nonprofit of your choice. (We hope you'll choose the Trail Conference!) Thanks to you, we received \$214.39 from the AmazonSmile Foundation for purchases made Jan. 1 through March 31 of this year. Making it even easier to support great trails and healthy ecosystems, AmazonSmile customers can now support the Trail Conference in the Amazon shopping app on iOS and Android mobile phones. Simply follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start generating donations for the natural areas you love.

1. Open the Amazon Shopping app on your device.
2. Go into the main menu of the Amazon Shopping app and tap into Settings.
3. Tap AmazonSmile and follow the onscreen instructions to complete the process.

If you do not have the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app, update your app. We are grateful for your support!



Thank You for 'Paying It Forward' This Earth Week

Thanks to your generosity, over \$11,000 was raised and then matched by the Haas Family during our Earth Week campaign. Your support funded our innovative efforts to digitally train our volunteer force in sustainable trail building, maintenance, and invasive species identification, which enabled us to hit the ground running as field work resumed. Thank you for "paying it forward" and doing your part to ensure your next big hike, run, or ride out on the trails is a safe, enjoyable experience. Thank you for supporting the hard work of Trail Conference volunteers!

Staff Update

Welcome Tracy and Melissa



Tracy Arcella joined the Trail Conference staff in January as **Field Trail Builder**. Her love of nature and the outdoors began at an early age and led her to study biology at the College of William and Mary and the University of Notre Dame. In 2017 she joined the Trail Conference's Conservation Corps working on the Bear Mountain Trails Project and discovered a passion for trail building and for stonework in particular. She returned to the Conservation Corps in 2018 to serve as the crew leader for the Bear Mountain Trail Crew. Tracy has also worked with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission and most recently spent a season building trails in Maine. She is excited to return to the Trail Conference and is looking forward to sharing her love for the trails with new Conservation Corps members.



Melissa Cascini joined the Trail Conference in March as a **Program Coordinator**. She grew up in northern New Jersey exploring the trails in Norvin Green State Forest, Ringwood State Park, and the Delaware Water Gap, where she found her passion for hiking and the outdoors. After graduating from Ramapo College in 2017 with a degree in sociology, Melissa joined the Trail Conference Conservation Corps in 2019 as the crew leader for the Trail Steward Outreach and Education Program. She spent the entirety of the program educating hikers and assisting volunteers with trail maintenance in the Hudson Highlands and Catskill Park. These experiences, as well as the volunteers she was able to engage with, further prompted Melissa's passion for the environment and drove her to seek a career with the Trail Conference. When she's not working on trails, Melissa enjoys gardening, baking, kayaking, and exploring new local hikes.

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600 Ramapo Valley Road
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201.512.9348

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STEPHANIE HINDERER DESIGNER

MISSION STATEMENT

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.

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

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email: info@nynjtc.org
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Promoting a Love of Nature as Part of the 'New Normal'

Many things have changed over the past three months. It started with the recommendation to wash our hands more often, then suddenly we were encouraged to stay home. A new term called “social distancing” became the in-vogue way to appreciate someone else’s personal space.

Next, we started wearing masks and gloves when we dared to venture out for groceries or to the post office. We saw the stock market crumble, unemployment skyrocket, and a “new normal” way of living evolved, though it is anything but normal.

Life has not been easy. Schools were closed, many stores and companies are now



out of business, and people are still scrambling to figure out what to do next.

Many of us have learned how to be teachers for our children while attempting to be remote employees living in a virtual world of video chats with bosses and co-workers. New hobbies and activities are crammed in to fill the time. There are new cooks and bakers, puzzles and games are all the rage, and the outdoors has become a refuge from the confinement of our homes. People are flocking to the streets, bike paths, and

trails all over the region.

We have seen acts of heroism from doctors, nurses, and all the others who helped keep our society from falling apart. We call them essential workers, and during these tough times, they became society’s angels.

For many, nature and trails became “essential” for their survival. Parks and trails have seen unprecedented visitation. New hikers and those with miles and miles of experience depended on the work that 99 years of volunteerism has provided—a network of trails that would be there when we needed it most.

Without making a headline or an afternoon briefing, the work of generations of Trail Conference staff and volunteers quietly provided the masses of people the elixir of sanity, serenity, and exercise we needed to survive these difficult times.



I hope that this newfound affinity for nature continues. I hope that the public’s love affair with trails continues and becomes a part of our new normal.

Howard



Without promotion or encouragement, society turned to trails and nature when we were the most vulnerable and scared. As we return to functioning as a “normal” society, I hope that this newfound affinity for nature continues. I hope that the public’s love affair with trails continues and becomes a part of our new normal.

I am optimistic for that future. As leaders of responsible

recreation in a growing community of walkers, hikers, and riders, the Trail Conference can cultivate this new interest and turn it into a real passion for the care of nature. And we can do that right now.

We’ve outlined parts of our 2020 season’s Recovery and Response plan below. As we continue to respond and adapt to this changing landscape, your feedback on engaging a new generation of trail users is invited. Send me your thoughts at executivedirector@nynjtc.org, or share them during an upcoming Trail Conference Town Hall meeting. (Find the schedule at nynjtc.org/events.) Because working together, we are stronger.

Stay safe. We hope to see you on the trails soon.

Joshua Howard

Executive Director
executivedirector@nynjtc.org



Resiliency Through the Care of Nature

As leaders in helping people connect with nature for the last 100 years—in helping them through this pandemic today—the Trail Conference is supporting safe, enjoyable outdoor experiences for all through the Recovery and Response Fund.

Launched in April, the Recovery and Response Fund has enabled us to develop a digital platform to train volunteers, collect data to inform state and local officials, and provide education and guidance for the public. As states reopen and our volunteers begin to deploy, our response now is vital to the health of parks and trails and the well-being of our communities.

Recognizing our responsibility to aid in the recovery—and resiliency—of our region, our updated plan includes:

- ▶ Keeping trails in good repair and our natural areas healthy. Online webinars have kept our volunteer force trained and ready to deliver the essential services land managers rely on us to provide. Their

needs are compounded by increased park usage, creating greater demand for skilled maintainers, surveyors, crews, and stewards.

- ▶ Planning and reprioritizing field projects to direct efforts where they are needed most. Great trail experiences start with the Trail Conference’s ability to work with our partners in assessing needs and providing the expertise and volunteer power necessary to care for increasingly overburdened parks.

- ▶ Regularly evaluating and implementing new best practices in caring for the land and the people who protect it. The safety of Trail Conference volunteers, Corps members, staff, and all trail users is our number one priority.

- ▶ Educating the growing trail community about responsible recreation. Trail Conference Stewards provide invaluable assistance and education to park visitors. We are further enhancing our digital plat-

forms to complement our trailhead presence, providing information on using our maps, planning outdoor excursions, and practicing safe behavior on the trails.

- ▶ Motivating state officials to prioritize the needs of parks and trails in the health and wellness recovery of our communities. This includes investments needed to prevent damage to trails, conserve open space, and maximize the impact of our volunteers.

The Recovery and Response Fund empowers every one of us to play a role in creating a more resilient region. Your support protects and preserves the parks and trails that record numbers of people are turning to for refuge and solace. Now more than ever, we need our leaders in responsible recreation to make a deeper investment in the care of natural areas. Learn more about the impact your gift to the Recovery and Response Fund has today and for the future at nynjtc.org/recovery.

In Memoriam



Charles Cook

Charlie Cook, a dedicated outdoor educator and member of the Trail Conference, passed away at Joe Raso Hospice in Rockland County, N.Y., in October 2018. He was 73. His life’s work was focused on helping people commune with nature in a simple, direct manner. He wrote five outdoor books, including *Awakening to Nature: Renewing Your Life by Connecting with the Natural World*. In 1973, he became one of the first 100 people to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail. He then led more than 2,400 trips outdoors and hiked an estimated 75,000 miles. Charlie founded Wild Earth Adventures, based in Suffern, N.Y., and guided all its hikes: two hikes per week, 50 weeks per year, for decades. His presence on the trails is missed. The Trail Conference’s Charles Cook Maintenance and Education Fund has been created in his honor. Learn more about the fund at nynjtc.org/donate.



Benjamin Frankel

Ben Frankel, a dedicated Trail Conference volunteer and friend, passed away on May 27 at his home in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. He was 89. Ben graduated from the University of California-Berkeley and Harvard Law School, and spent his entire career at Kelley Drye, LLP, where he served as head of the

Real Estate Department. Ben served as President of PEF Israel Endowment Funds and was among the founders and first presidents of Temple Beth Shalom in Hastings. He was an environmentalist and avid hiker, traversing trails from England to Japan, and was a beloved volunteer maintainer, then supervisor, of the South Taconic trails for more than two decades. Ben was a long-time Trail Conference member and a significant supporter over the years. He was a William Hoeflerlin awardee in 2000 and remained active on the trails even after his “retirement” from volunteer positions. He will be missed.



Marianne Gunzler

Marianne Gunzler, a longtime Trail Conference member, supporter, and lover of the outdoors, passed away in April. Marianne immigrated to the United States from Germany. Trails were a life-long passion for Marianne and her husband John; in fact, it was on a hike in Harriman State Park that they met. They continued to hike together until John’s passing in 2017. For decades, Marianne and John generously gave back to the trails they frequented through volunteer service and financial gifts to the Trail Conference. In 2011, they inaugurated the Trail Conference’s Legacy Fund with a very generous gift of \$100,000. Remembered for her unconditional kindness, Marianne was a beloved mother, grandmother, and great friend of trails and the Trail Conference. She will be missed.

Planning in Uncertain Times

“How are you?”

It's a question that, not long ago, was likely asked out of polite custom rather than seeking the play-by-play of one's current events.

But then COVID-19 hit and stay-at-home orders were enacted. And suddenly, those three simple words—“How are you?”—took on significant weight. Our focus quickly shifted and sharpened on the wellbeing of our families, friends, neighbors, and communities.

Through the mere act of asking, “How are you?,” we began reprioritizing what truly mattered and, for many, thinking longer term about our collective wellbeing.

In fact, according to a CNBC article published in April, the demand for wills jumped 76% in the last two weeks of March. Meanwhile, life insurers have reported a spike in new business of as much as 50%. In a dramatic time of uncertainty, people have begun to take charge of their future in the ways they can: protecting themselves, the people they love, and the causes they believe in.

The Trail Conference is incredibly lucky to have a Life Member among our ranks who has long championed and encouraged others to safeguard their most valuable assets—theirself and their



ADOBE STOCK

spouses, children, and other loved ones. Robert C. Ross has been sharing his insights and wisdom on estate planning in Trail Walker for the last year (find our archives at nynjtc.org/trailwalker/index) and was a catalyst in forming our Trail Angel Society.

Members of this special group have chosen to secure not only their own future, but that of the Trail Conference as

well, through planned gifts. They share the common bond of generosity and vision to ensure that the trails and natural areas we share are sustainable and accessible for all to enjoy for generations to come. If you are one of the thousands of people currently updating their wills or creating one for the first time, we invite you to join with others who share that passion for nature by be-

Tips

- 1 Commit to put your affairs in order.
- 2 Provide for yourself first.
- 3 Provide for the people you love next.
- 4 Then provide for the organizations you love.
- 5 Finally, implement your plan.

coming a founding member of the Trail Angel Society.

By filling out the non-binding intention form at nynjtc.org/trailangel, you will ensure the Trail Conference benefits from the philanthropy of our Trail Angels both now and in the future. For every intention form we receive, Robert will generously give the Trail Conference \$500 to support our efforts today.

For further questions, please visit nynjtc.org/trailangel or contact Development Director Don Weise at dweise@nynjtc.org or 201.512.9348 x813. We want to know how you're doing, and how we can help you protect the future you envision for your loved ones.

Trail Angel Society Founding Members

- ▶ Anonymous (14)
- ▶ Hatire Aikebaier
- ▶ Jill H. Arbuckle
- ▶ Frank M. Bamberger
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FEBRUARY 1 - APRIL 30, 2020

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In honor of Lucy Meyer

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In honor of Yan Gladkov

Rivita A Goyle

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In memory of Bradley Jordan

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Elisabeth Mannschott

Christopher Mount

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David Howard

Thomas Pushie

Blue Hills Neighborhood of Mahwah

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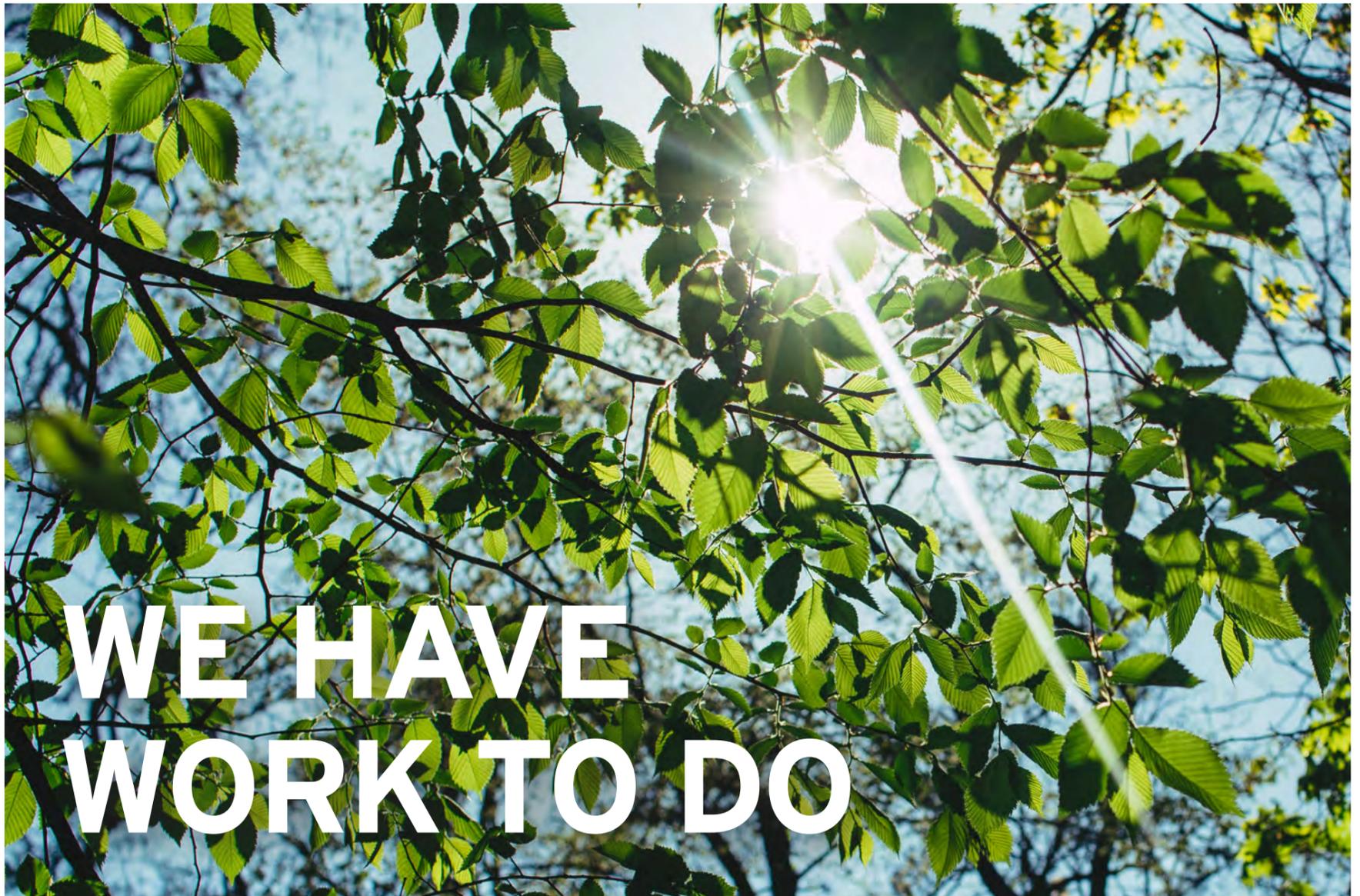
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WE HAVE WORK TO DO



JOSHUA HOWARD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The injustice faced by Black communities across America has made the need to listen, learn, reflect, and change imperative. All aspects of society must examine their behavior and do better. This includes the Trail Conference, particularly if we are to hold true to our mission and values.

We have been listening to the conversation and reflecting on what our organization can do to be part of the solution. We recognize that there is no quick and simple answer to undoing decades of exclusionary behaviors and policies, but that we have an obligation to do our part. Every organization adapts, adjusts, and evolves—or else it becomes insignificant and disappears. To remain impactful, we must admit some hard truths. That starts with acknowledging our shortcomings surrounding a lack of diversity, equality, and inclusion within our organization and on the lands we love. That includes recognizing we have a lot of work to do.

The barriers between people of color and equitable access to the outdoors are dramatic. We believe the joys of nature belong to everyone and that all people—regardless of race, age, ability, sexual orientation,

or location—should be able to experience the rewards of connecting with nature. It is our job to work with our partners to help make trails and parks safe and welcoming for those who might not know the joys of nature exist, might not have access to trails, or aren't yet comfortable being alone in the woods.

We all must play a role in fighting systematic racism and discrimination. The outdoors are a place of peace and healing, and denying that respite to people of color is something we cannot stand by any longer. While so many of us feel our fellow trail users are family regardless of our backgrounds, not everyone shares that point of view. And access to nature isn't always as equitable as our mission and values may imply. As an environmental organization and leader in the outdoor community, the Trail Conference will address the issues that have been ignored for too long, both internally and within the outdoor industry.

We have launched a new webpage dedicated to elevating the voices of people of color in the outdoor industry: nynjtc.org/content/diversity-outdoors. We hope you find this to be a valuable resource for learning about the outdoors—it will be for us, as we join this movement for change. We hope you will join too.



The Next Steps

The eye-opening death of George Floyd has made so many organizations stand up and say, “Enough. We must change.”

The Trail Conference was one of those voices. Our passive approach to diversity, equity, equality, and inclusion (DEEI) for the past 99 years has contributed to society's acceptance of discrimination and racism.

In January, the Trail Conference Board approved the organization's first formalized DEEI policy. That was just the first long-overdue step. As with every hike we take, the only way to the summit is by taking many small steps. We now are tasked with taking that next step... and the next.

With a century of experience as a convener of organizations, it is our responsibility to actively seek out and engage groups that are diverse and passionate

about making the outdoors accessible and safe for all users. We are reaching out to our partners to find new collaborators to help us learn about the challenges and difficulties that come with being a person of color in America. As a respected source of information, we will share these stories, beginning with a collection of resources at nynjtc.org/content/diversity-outdoors.

The Trail Conference's greatest impact on racial equality will not be organizing protests on the streets of our communities or reforming police departments. We will focus on the lack of diversity, equity, equality, and inclusion on trails and in parks. We will examine our programs and internal structure and processes, and work with our outdoor industry partners to learn how we can use trails to overcome social injustice.

It may seem early, but planning for 2021 has begun. Our staff and volunteer leaders will be looking at strategies and specific, on-the-ground tactics to help make the Trail Conference an agent of change for the Black community.

There is a lot of work to do. But the Trail Conference has been steadfast in serving this region for a century, and we are up to the task. I look forward to working with new friends and partners. One year from now, we will review and report the progress we have made together and what is in store for the future.

As we have seen through the COVID-19 crisis, trails can heal, especially when we need them most. I am eager to see how we can improve access to nature for more communities and ensure that respite truly becomes an option for all.

PEOPLE FOR TRAILS TRAILS FOR PEOPLE

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



The Impact of Our Volunteers, in the Field and Online



OLIVIA SOHN
VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT
ASSISTANT

In 2019, Trail Conference volunteers and Corps members dedicated an incredible 102,952 hours of service to achieving our mission. They came together to build bridges, remove invasive species, assemble maps, and guide trail users—all to provide access to the beautiful lands that our original volunteers and founders strove to protect a century ago.

While we saw a slight decrease in trail service hours due to some smaller programming, we saw big increases in the following:

- ▶ Ecological Stewardship and Invasives volunteers dedicated 2,603 more hours in 2019 (6,512) than in 2018 (3,909) to the protection of our ecosystems.

- ▶ The inception of the Ashokan Rail Trail Steward program helped to greatly increase volunteer trail steward hours from 72 in 2018 to 1,694 in 2019. This program is run in partnership with the Woodstock Land Conservancy and Ulster County.

- ▶ Committee time climbed 2,055 hours from 2018 (3,046) to 2019 (5,101).

It may be easiest to see the passion of our volunteers when they are able to be in the field, gather in person,

and work together on these vital projects. In 2020, however, our volunteers have been showing their dedication in a different, but still meaningful way.

Respondents to the Trail Conference's most recent volunteer satisfaction survey indicated a desire for more trainings from the organization. With volunteer activity suspended due to COVID-19, we used this "downtime" as an opportunity to engage and train both current and new volunteers digitally. More than two dozen online webinars were held from the beginning of April through mid-June.

We saw a tremendous re-

sponse to our online content. Even without the allure of nature's beauty surrounding them, our volunteers showed up to participate in trainings ranging from trail maintenance and invasive species surveying, to general outdoor education, such as wilderness navigation.

Through their participation, our volunteers have been keeping the spirit of the trails alive during the pandemic—a positive outcome in a really difficult time. We have placed more than 120 new volunteers (65 invasive surveyors and 55 trail maintainers or corridor monitors) in assigned roles, with more people receiving their field

assignments each week.

Of course, nearly three months lost in the field has resulted in a backlog of work, and your help is still needed. Many more volunteer assignments need to be filled as our volunteer leaders and program staff continue to reassess what needs to be accomplished this year to adequately care for trails and parks this season.

To find out where volunteers are needed most and discover the right opportunity for you, visit nynjtc.org/volunteer or email volunteer@nynjtc.org.

With your support, we can come back stronger than ever as we cautiously and optimistically return to the field.

Updated Trail Maintenance Manual Now Available

Finally, what you've all been waiting for: 13 years since the last revision, the new, 8th edition of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference Trail Maintenance Manual (TMM) is now available at www.nynjtc.org/tmm! This edition was written by a committee of the Trail Conference's Policy Council consisting of Walt Daniels, Bob Gurion, Phil Heidelberger (subcommittee chair), John Magerlein, Nick McKenna, and Keith Scherer. Artwork was provided by Bob Jonas, with expert assistance from staff members Melissa Cascini, Peter Dolan, and Hank Osborn. We also received suggestions and improve-

ments from numerous trail maintainers and supervisors, as well as other Trail Conference staff members. Our committee had a wide range of experience, from the relative novice with only a few years as a maintainer (me) to over 40 years (Walt).

We kept what was good in the 7th edition (you may recognize "steeling of the will") but have greatly expanded a number of sections. In particular, we placed increased attention on the safety of maintainers. The new section on blow-downs is also much more detailed, including providing advice on when to walk away from potentially dangerous



situations and instead, report such situations to your supervisor. The 7th edition was written in 2007, just before the use of smart phones

became ubiquitous. In the 8th edition, we emphasize how to leverage your smart phone by taking pictures of problems with GPS location data to email to your supervisor. The 8th edition also includes hyperlinks to many other Trail Conference resources related to maintenance.

As the manual increased in length, it became obvious that carrying the hard copy of the full manual on the trail was not practical. To address this problem, a version of the full manual formatted for easy viewing on a smart phone is available. (It's also available for download at nynjtc.org/tmm.)

In addition, we created a greatly abbreviated "pocket" version of the TMM, available for download on your phone. We are looking into producing this pocket guide on three, 3-by-5-inch plastic cards, suitable for carrying with you into the field. The cards have not yet been produced, and a timeline for getting them in stock is not yet available.

As we return to the trails for maintenance this season, we encourage everyone, even experienced maintainers, to review good maintenance skills by reading the new 8th edition of the Trail Maintenance Manual. Phil Heidelberger, Policy Council Member

Ecological Stewardship Team Update



Invasive Species Citizen Science Coordinator Brent Boscarino leads the Invasives Strike Force (ISF) Survey Program. Training workshops to become an ISF surveyor are now being offered as free webinars.

Despite recent hurdles to in-person field activities, the Trail Conference's Ecological Stewardship team has made a remarkable push to share the value of caring for native habitat, as well as educate the public about ways to have a positive impact on the environment.

EARTH DAY 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In April, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by launching a successful social media challenge asking everyone to share personal messages about what Earth Day means to them. We encouraged our volunteers with more time at home to explore the diversity of life inhabiting their yards with the citizen science mobile apps, Seek and iNaturalist. As part of these efforts, we created a five-part video tutorial on how to use these apps. We also ran citizen science-themed webinars and facilitated participation in the 2020 City Nature/BackYard iNaturalist Challenge. Many of our volunteers took the extra step to choose an invasive found in their yards and remove it during a Weed Wrangle Challenge organized in May.

ONLINE LEARNING

To further illuminate the impacts that invasive species have on our native habitats and trail systems, the Stewardship staff also created a series of videos highlighting specific common, emerging, and/or aquatic invasive species in our region. Each species spotlight featured information on the species' introduction history, ecology, impacts, and key ID features. For the species included in our Invasives Strike Force Survey program, we additionally created field identification videos.

In total, we ran six full

training webinars for our ISF Survey program, which had close to 400 participants; created 27 species spotlight videos; and completed 12 standalone field identification videos through the end of May. You can find these resources, including recorded versions of these webinars, in our Online Learning Library at nynjtc.org/content/online-learning-library. Sign up for upcoming webinars, including Invasive Species for Trail Maintainers, at nynjtc.org/events.

PROHIBITED INVASIVES AWARENESS

We were also able to harness the power of remote working situations. Nine dedicated volunteers spent an incredible 58 hours researching online nurseries that were selling any of the 69 invasive plant species prohibited in New York State without displaying a message that those plants may not be shipped to New York. The good news is that no nurseries were selling 34 of the prohibited species, but we still have a long way to go to keep invasive plants out of the nursery trade. The information about nurseries found selling prohibited plants without the requisite message will be given to New York's Department of Agriculture and Markets. They will then send these nurseries letters asking them to correct their webpages.

CONSERVATION CORPS CREWS

Although this season in the field looks different than the last, our Conservation Corps Crew leadership is meeting these challenges head-on with unparalleled flexibility and creativity. Our Terrestrial Invasives Species Project Manager, Ryan Goolic, has been busy

ing, and coordinating with project partners to prepare for the 2020 field season. This summer, he will lead the **Terrestrial Invasives Strike Force Crew**, a team of four AmeriCorps members, to manage emerging invasive plants throughout the Lower Hudson Valley. Invasives like sapphireberry, giant hogweed, and Linden viburnum won't stand a chance against the efforts of our ISF team!

In partnership with Teatown, the **Aquatic Invasives Strike Force Crew** is ramping up efforts to protect New York's waters through the Watercraft Inspection Steward program, aquatic invasive species monitoring, and water chestnut management. In addition to invasive plant surveys of over 35 lakes throughout the Hudson Valley, the team will also be sampling for zooplankton and mollusks, as well as assessing multiple water quality parameters. Water quality is an important consideration regarding habitat suitability for invasive species. Using the data the crew collects, we hope to create a model that assesses risk of new invasions. This will be critical as the climate continues to change, impacting a variety of other environmental factors. This expansion of crew tasks will increase their contribution to stewardship and ecosystem resilience.



CONSERVATION DOGS

Similarly, the Conservation Dogs Program aims to repeat the success of last year's field season by sniffing out the invasive plants, Scotch broom and slender false brome. Thanks to support from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, dogs Dia and Fagen will be adding two more species to their repertoire: kudzu and sticky sage. You can follow the Conservation Dogs' progress @diasavestheforest on Instagram. You can also check out the Conservation Dogs program's feature in the North American Invasive Species Management Association's April newsletter at bit.ly/tc-naisma0420.

Lastly, the Stewardship team would like to recognize the phenomenal efforts of our volunteers in keeping our natural areas and trail systems intact and free of invasive species. They have helped make all this possible. We are all looking forward to a successful and productive field season!

REFLECTIONS: LOOKING BACK AT 100 YEARS OF SERVICE

As the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference prepares to mark our centennial this October, we're turning the spotlight on some of our longest-serving volunteers for reflections on their time with the organization.



ESTELLE ANDERSON & ROBERT (BOB) JONAS

Estelle's roles

Local Trail Chair: Central North Jersey; Sawyer Committee Chair; Trail Supervisor: Central North Jersey Morristown

Bob's roles

Local Trail Chair: Central North Jersey; Sawyer; Trail Supervisor: Central North Jersey Morristown

With over 50 years of collective trail work between them, Bob and Estelle have touched almost every program and committee within the organization—particularly in their home state of New Jersey, where they co-chair the Central North Jersey region. They have led trail crews, taught workshops, trained countless trail maintainers, recruited volunteers at trailheads, designed and installed all manner of signage, negotiated trail access with dubious landowners, assisted with land acquisitions, contributed to multiple books, facilitated Regional Trails Councils, and otherwise excelled as volunteer leaders.

A Close Encounter

Retold by Bob Jonas

This is one of our funnier memories of trail work.

A few years ago, while we were installing a directional post at a confluence of trails in Jockey Hollow, I found that I needed a pry bar to get past some rocks. So I headed back downhill to the car for necessary tools.

Estelle parked herself on the small bridge over the Primrose Brook to enjoy a snack and listen to the critters of the forest. The snack was peanut butter crackers—apparently

very enticing to a local bear and cub, who were making a beeline to her!

Walking back uphill I observed, unbeknownst to her, there was a mama bear and cub strolling down the hillside right behind her. As large as they are, they move very quietly, and were about to surprise her... right into the brook!

Seems peanut butter crackers might not be the best snack while sitting quietly in the forest.

Once I informed Estelle of her soon-to-be companions, she shrieked, and climbed a tree.

Actually, she didn't—but it makes for a better story!

Share Your Trail Conference History

As the Trail Conference approaches its 100th birthday, we're looking for memorabilia and photos that demonstrate our mission and growth, from our earliest days, right up to the present. We're seeking old trail signs and blazing materials, as well as tools of our trade. Photos that show group trips, work trips, clubs, youth

endeavors, and projects both underway and completed are encouraged.

While we have two cabinets to fill, space is not unlimited. Please email Central North Jersey Trail Co-Chair Bob Jonas at yvoke70@gmail.com with items that you might be willing to contribute. Looking forward to a broad assortment of interesting artifacts!

👉 Bob Jonas

Loop Trails Coming to Terrace Pond



MELISSA CASCINI
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The interest in hiking and the outdoors has spiked in the last decade, compounded by the additional increase in trail use once COVID-19 hit the region. A rise in lost hikers has accompanied this rise in visitation, leading to a persistent need for the services of local search and rescue agencies. With the safety of trail users a top priority, Trail Conference volunteers and staff have come up with a

simple solution: the introduction of new loop trails.

Crisscrossed trails with numerous different blazes have a tendency to be confusing, particularly if you're unfamiliar with using a map. This technique simplifies a trail system by reblazing trails to create several loop hike options. The only on-the-ground work required is changing the color of existing trail blazes.

The concept has already been successfully introduced at Ramapo Valley County Reservation in New Jersey, where

reports of lost trail users have been drastically reduced and the overall hiking experience has been greatly improved.

Hoping to re-create that success story, Trail Conference volunteers will be applying these same techniques at Terrace Pond in West Milford, N.J. The new loop options at this very popular day-hike destination will consist of the blue-blazed Terrace Pond North Loop, the yellow-blazed Terrace Pond West Loop, and the white-blazed Terrace Pond Connector Loop. Both the



NICK MCKENNA

Terrace Pond

Terrace Pond North Loop and Terrace Pond West Loop allow access to the pond from two different entry points. They also offer an enjoyable hike through wooded forests and spectacular views of the surrounding Bearfort Mountain area, including glimpses of

the New York City skyline. For those who wish to extend their hike, the Terrace Pond Connector Loop, which circumnavigates the pond, allows for easy access to both the North and West loops. Work is expected to be completed this summer.

Protecting Vernal Pools, Educating Trail Users

In early spring, amphibians like wood frogs and spring peepers travel across roads and through underbrush to lay their eggs in vernal pools like the one found on the Washburn Trail in Hudson Highlands State Park. Vernal pools are essentially isolated and temporary wetlands. Vernal pools are filled each year in late winter or early spring by snowmelt, rain, or groundwater. Then, usually in the drought months of summer, they dry up. Due to the lack of predatory fish to threaten eggs and vulnerable larvae, vernal pools are vital habitats for several species. Wood frogs, for example, can lay over 1,000 eggs. If disturbed, the eggs may stop development altogether.

Thanks to concerned Nelsonville, N.Y., citizen Heidi Wendel, the Trail Conference formed the Vernal Pool Steward position in 2020 to protect this important habi-



ARDEN BLUMENTHAL

The wood frogs' vernal pool breeding ground is sensitive to disturbance.

tat. The program was meant to illuminate the challenges facing the vernal pool along the Washburn Trail; educate visitors on vernal pools and best practices for enjoying the area; and engage visitors in follow-up actions in the stewardship of vernal pools.

Over four and a half days of stewarding, 689 people and 58 dogs, 18 of which were un-

leashed, were recorded passing by the vernal pool. Generally, those who were asked to leash their pups did so; most didn't realize that leashing their dog is a requirement, or know the possible harm an off-leash dog could cause to a sensitive environment. In fact, most people (82%) had little, if any, idea what a vernal pool is.

Most visitors expressed their gratitude for the information. They had learned something new, either about breeding frogs, hydrology, or Leave No Trace principles. If you visit the Washburn Trail in early spring, keep an ear out for breeding frogs. The Trail Conference recommends you stick to Leave No Trace principles, which include leashing your pup—both for their safety and that of native wildlife. If you're passing by a vernal pool with awe and appreciation, you're doing the exact right thing.

Arden Blumenthal



New Skills, Better Trails

As the Trail Conference shifted to a period of digital-only workshops this spring, our volunteers took full advantage of learning new skills, such as graffiti removal, through our online webinars. Once volunteers were given the green light to resume field work, leaders Walt and Jane Daniels put their education to good use, removing graffiti on park property. When Felicity Arengo, one of Jane's maintainers, was looking for something to do, Jane encouraged her to watch the webinar. Armed with new skills, Felicity and her friend Elaine Chapnik then showed impressive effort obliterating graffiti on boulders in Sylvan Glen Park Preserve in Mohegan Lake, N.Y. A huge thanks to these volunteers for improving the trail experience in Westchester County!

TAKE A HIKE!

RAMSEY OUTDOOR

FREE Trail Conference cap offer with new membership!

Ramsey, NJ | Succasunna, NJ
1-800-699-5874
www.ramseyoutdoor.com

Thanks to Our Supporters!

Thanks to the following organizations and foundations for supporting the work of the Trail Conference in 2020.

Trail and Summit Steward Program

The Trail Conference has been awarded a \$27,000 grant from the **REI Co-op** to help support the 2020 Trail and Summit Steward program. REI funds will help protect both visitors and the land in "hot spots" in New Jersey and New York parks.

The **John and Frank Sparacio Charitable Foundation** has donated \$10,000 to our Trail and Summit



ANDRE NIZZARI

Steward program. This gift supports the hiring of a Steward Program Assistant, who will help create a Volunteer Steward program in the Hudson Highlands.

Additionally, the **Catskill 3500 Club**, one of the program's longest and most dedicated partners, has continued their support of our Stewards' service in the

Catskills with a \$5,000 gift.

The Trail Conference's Steward program mitigates growing threats to popular outdoor destinations in the greater New York metropolitan area through user education, public participation, and sustainable, on-the-ground solutions. We believe partnering with land managers and utilizing this three-pronged approach is the most effective way to advance positive change.

Over the last seven years, Trail Conference Stewards have interacted with and educated nearly 400,000 visitors. They serve as an invaluable resource that has lessened the negative impacts from trail overuse and misuse. They have made a powerful impact in reducing

threats to these special places in danger of being "loved to death." Ultimately, Trail Conference Stewards inspire a deeper appreciation for the care that open space requires.

New Jersey Trail Stewardship

The Trail Conference is grateful for the support of the **Dodge Foundation** to help us connect the people of New Jersey with nature, engage volunteers in the care of public land, protect open space, and improve public access to trails. The \$20,000 grant is an investment in our shared goal of improving the quality of life in communities and creating better outdoor opportunities for all New Jerseyans.

Businesses Prove They're Trail Tough



HEATHER DARLEY
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT

The local outdoor community has shown its incredible perseverance and resiliency throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We checked in with a few of our favorite trailside businesses to see how they have been weathering the quarantine storm.

Hudson North Cider Co.

In February, Graft Cider launched a new cider brand with the focus of protecting Hudson Valley trails: Hudson North Cider Co. Their mission is to protect, maintain, and preserve the parks, trails, and waterways of New York State and New Jersey by partnering with organizations such as the Trail Conference. They also work to support local agriculture by sourcing their apples from local orchards and farms in the Hudson Valley.

When stay-at-home orders hit, Hudson North turned to online sales to help recover



some of the loss from the closure of bars and restaurants and having limited contact with people in independent beer stores and grocery stores. The Hudson North crew is looking forward to the day when they can open their tasting room doors and resume their Taps for Trails events.

In the meantime, we highly recommend you try out their Standard Cider. It's just apples and all delicious. It tastes like the cider you get right off the orchard! Grab yourself a six-pack at hudsonnorthcider.com. Get 10% off your first purchase with the code STAY HOME.

Valley Rock Mountain Market

If you're hiking in Harriman State Park, a visit to the Valley Rock Mountain Market: Café & Provisions located at 27 Mill Street in Sloatsburg, N.Y., is a must. Dishing up wood-fired pizza and a delicious variety of prepared foods, it's the perfect place to fuel up before or after your trail adventures.

As part of their mission and through the pandemic, Valley Rock Mountain Market supports and invests in local organic farmers. The market's parent company, Valley Rock Inn, has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars

to buy farmland, then lease it to young farmers, ensuring a steady supply of organic produce for the local community. So when you support the Valley Rock Market, you are supporting local farmers, local business, and the future of our local food supply.

At press time, the market was offering online ordering only with curbside pickup and delivery available Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. To learn more and place your order, visit valleyrockmountainmarket.com.

Campmor

Since 1978, Campmor has been inspiring a love for the outdoors by preparing the public for great adventures with the gear they sell. When stay-at-home orders were enacted, the Paramus, N.J.-based retailer worked hard to ensure the outdoor community was ready for safe and responsible recreation by fulfilling orders through curbside pickup and shipping. Some of their best-selling items have been the BlackStrap facemask and bandanas available in multiple colors. At press time, their retail store had just reopened Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (subject to change); their online store is always open. Campmor is currently



offering \$20 off \$100 with the code SPRING20. The company is also generously extending their 10% Trail Conference member discount to online purchases. Just use the code NYNJTC10 at checkout and be sure to use your email registered to your Trail Conference membership. To receive your Trail Conference discount in the retail store, please make sure to have your membership card with you. Contact Brendan at bcunningham@nynjtc.org with any questions.

Dottie Audrey's

A Tuxedo, N.Y., favorite, Dottie Audrey's opened their doors in 2015 with the mission of nourishing and entertaining the community with scratch cooking and baking. Their claim to fame is their nice people in a clean environment with welcoming vibes and excellent coffee and desserts.

But since the start of the

quarantine, owners Jen and Pat Jenkins said, "We feel like a dancing bear." They've adapted in real-time to retool their business, including shifting to 100% takeaway with curbside delivery, adding ordering technology to speed up the process, developing over 50 new recipes for family-sized meal offerings, including flatbreads to help families feed kids inexpensively, and working with the community to help feed the healthcare workers at Good Samaritan Hospital.

"Get outdoors and get some vitamin D, then stop by for some vitamin Dottie Audrey's," Pat and Jen recommend. They're open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Treat your family to one of Dottie Audrey's weekly special family meals or any of their innovative menu items that are healthy for you and the planet.

Report Illegal ORV Use for Safer, Healthier Trails

The illegal use of off-road vehicles (ORV) on New Jersey state land is an issue that has been on the radar of the Trail Conference for decades. This continues to be a growing issue, even though the use of ORVs is prohibited on most state land by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

In April 2020, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy announced the temporary closure of all state and county parks and forests to fight the spread of COVID-19. A dramatic increase in visible OVR damage to trails throughout the state was subsequently seen. Legal



activities such as hiking help reduce ORV traffic, in part because permitted

users report illegal incidents to the NJDEP Hotline at 1-877-WARNDEP.

Since the reopening of New Jersey state and county parks in early May, the Trail Conference has seen a rise in reports of illegal ORV sightings and the damage these vehicles are causing on the trails. Not only does the prohibited presence of these vehicles on trails pose a very serious safety risk to other users, it also irreversibly damages trails and fragile lands. To help combat these issues, the Trail Conference is working with several organizations throughout the region to stop illegal ORV use.

While the Trail Conference continues to advocate for stricter enforcement of

illegal ORV use, we are calling on all our volunteers, members, and lovers of trails to report what you see. As you return to the trails and seek solace in nature during the ongoing pandemic, it is your responsibility as a trail user to call NJDEP to alert them of any ORV sightings and damage. Remember to only report sightings; do not confront ORV users yourself. Pick up your phone right now and save 1-877-WARNDEP in your contacts. By reporting sightings, you can take an active part in combating the impact of illegal ORV use.

Melissa Cascini,
Program Coordinator

NYS Bond Act, Budget Put Focus on the Environment

The 2020-21 New York State budget passed with a strong focus on environmental protection, including \$300 million for the EPF and authorization to create the “Restore Mother Nature” Environmental Bond Act.

Governor Andrew Cuomo and the legislature agreed to a \$177 billion budget on April 3. Cuomo said of the budget, “It would have been very easy to say, ‘Oh, this is an extraordinary year; let’s just do the bare minimum and go home.’ We did the opposite. We said, ‘There is a lot of need and there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed, and we stepped up to the plate and we got it done.’”

The governor’s Climate Change Plan invests in environmental conservation and

resiliency supported by the \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act. The Bond Act is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create jobs and help restart the economy while protecting clean water, improving public health, and expand access to nature. The Bond Act will also save taxpayer money by preventing costly damage from extreme weather.

If the Bond Act is approved by voters in November, it will fund critical environmental restoration projects in every corner of the state to ensure New York is able to withstand the threat of more intense and frequent storms fueled by climate change.

“As a lifelong New Yorker and father of two, I agree with Governor Cuomo that it



STEVE ARON

Bond Act Vote in November

Vote Yes for Clean Water & Jobs is a diverse campaign working in support of the \$3 billion “Restore Mother Nature” Environmental Bond Act on the New York State Ballot in November 2020. A “yes” vote supports

the bond measure to issue \$3 billion in general obligation bonds for projects related to the environment, natural resources, water infrastructure, and climate change mitigation. The Trail Conference supports the passage of the Environmental Bond Act.

is our responsibility to leave our planet cleaner and greener and more sustainable for future generations,” said Trail Conference Executive Direc-

tor Joshua Howard. “The Environmental Bond Act is an aggressive proposal, but one that could have a positive impact on the lands and trails we

all love. The projects funded by the act directly align with the Trail Conference’s stewardship efforts to protect our trails from increased use, threats from invasive plants and animals, and engage the public to help protect the lands we love.”

We’re proud to work in New York State, one of the nation’s leaders in safeguarding natural areas. And we applaud Governor Cuomo for including such a strong focus on environmental protection. Learn more about the environmental highlights in the 2021 budget at bit.ly/tc-nysb20.

Hikers' Directory

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 Membership and Development team at 201-512-9348.

ADK Long Island
www.adkli.org

ADK Mid-Hudson Chapter
www.midhudsonadk.org

ADK Mohican Chapter
www.adkmohican.org

ADK New York Chapter
www.adkny.org

ADK North Jersey Ramapo Chapter
www.hudsonhikers.org

AMC Mohawk Hudson Chapter
www.amcmohawkhudson.org

AMC New York North Jersey Chapter
www.amc-ny.org

Black Rock Forest Inc.
www.blackrockforest.org

Boy Scout Troop 8, Brooklyn

Boy Scouts of America-Northern NJ Council
www.nnjbsa.org

Canal Society of New Jersey
www.canalsocietynj.org

Catskill 3500 Club
www.catskill-3500-club.org

Catskill Mountain Club
www.catskillmountainclub.org

Chinese Mountain Club of New York
www.cmcny.org

Closter Nature Center Association
www.closternaturecenter.org

Dyke Hikes
www.meetup.com/Dyke-Hikes/

East Hampton Trails Preservation Society
www.ehtps.org

Flat Rock Brook Nature Association
www.flatrockbrook.org

Friends of Garret Mountain Reservation
http://friendsofgarretmountain.blogspot.com

Friends of Pelham Bay Park
www.pelhambaypark.org

Friends of the Hackensack River Greenway in Teaneck
www.teaneckgreenway.org

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, Inc.
http://aqueduct.org

Friends Of The Shawangunks
http://shawangunks.org

Hilltop Conservancy, Inc.
www.hilltopconservancy.org

Hunterdon Hiking Club
www.hunterdonhikingclub.org

Interstate Hiking Club
www.interstatehikingclub.org

Jolly Rovers Trail Crew Inc.
http://jollyrovers.org

Little Stony Point Citizens Association
www.littlestonypoint.org

Long Path North Hiking Club
www.schoharie-conservation.org

Manitoga / The Russel Wright Design Center

Mohonk Preserve
www.mohonkpreserve.org

Monmouth County Park System

Morris County Park Commission
www.morrisparks.net

Nassau Hiking and Outdoor Club
www.nassauhiking.org

The Nature Place Day Camp
http://thenatureplace.com/

Nelsonville Greenway Committee
VillageofNelsonville.org

New Jersey Highlands Coalition
www.njhighlandscoalition.org

New Jersey Search and Rescue Inc.
www.njsar.org

New York Alpine Club

New York City Audubon Society, Inc.
www.nycaudubon.org

New York Ramblers
www.nyramblers.org

NJBG/Skylands Association Inc

The Outdoors Club, Inc.
outdoorsclubny.org

Palisades Parks Conservancy

Pine Hill Community Center
www.pinehillcommunitycenter.org

Proactive - Adventure, Health & Wellness
www.proactiveahw.com

Protect Our Wetlands, Water & Woods (POWWW)
http://box292.bluehost.com/~poww-worg

Rock Lodge Club
www.rocklodge.com

RPH Cabin Volunteers
rphcabin.org

SAJ - Society for the Advancement of Judaism
www.thesaj.org

Salt Shakers Trail Running Club
www.saltshakersrun.com

Sassquad Trail Running
www.sassquadtrailrunning.com

Sierra Club Lower Hudson Group
www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/lower-hudson

Sierra Club Mid-Hudson Group
www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson

South Mountain Conservancy Inc.
www.somocon.org

Sundance Outdoor Adventure Society
www.meetup.com/Sundance-Outdoor-Adventure-Society

Take A Hike! N.J.
takeahikenj.com

Teatown Lake Reservation
www.teatown.org

Tenafly Nature Center Association
www.tenaflynaturecenter.org

Thendara Mountain Club
www.thendaramountainclub.org

Town of Lewisboro
www.lewisborogov.com/parksrec

TriState Ramblers
www.tristateramblers.org

Urban Trail Conference, Inc.
www.urbantrail.org

Valley Stream Hiking Club
www.meetup.com/vshclub

Warren County Board of Recreation Commissioners
www.warrenparks.com

Westchester Trails Association
www.westhike.org

Get the Most Out of Avenza Maps



JEREMY APGAR
CARTOGRAPHER

Did you know that nearly 250,000 Trail Conference maps have been downloaded by Avenza Maps users? Our digital maps have continued to grow in popularity, and a record number of downloads this spring highlighted how Trail Conference maps are a very important resource as people seek refuge in the outdoors. If you have yet to try out the Avenza Maps app on your Apple or Android phone, now is the perfect time to explore our 75-plus offerings. You can use the GPS capa-

bilities of your device to pinpoint your location on our up-to-date maps, record tracks and waypoints, and even report trail issues. Learn how to use the app at nynjtc.org/pdfmaps, where you'll find the latest version of our Trail Conference User Guide. The guide includes step-by-step directions for how to use the app, as well as other helpful tips for getting the most out of this resource, such as how to report trail issues.

For existing users, there have been several improvements to Avenza Maps, so be sure you have the latest version on your device. It is now easier than ever to search for and find



our maps within the app: use locations and/or keywords to get what you're looking for. (A quick way to find all our maps is to search "nynjtc.") Another helpful update is seeing notifications when a new edition of a map is available. If you have an old edition, you will see an "update available" notice. For paid maps, if you purchased the previous edition, you will have the option to receive the update with the latest trail changes at a discount.

Our latest maps on Avenza Maps include a detailed map of the entire Lenape Trail through Essex County, N.J., our brand-new Westchester maps covering popular parks

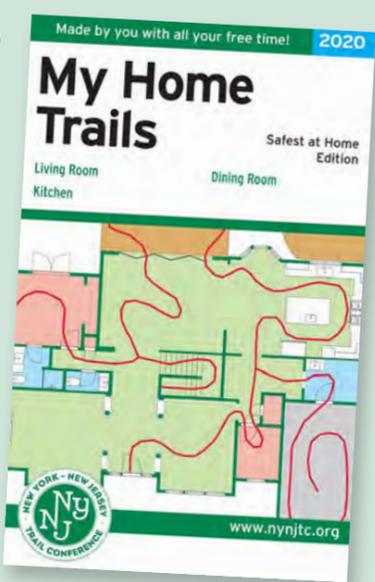
in Westchester County, N.Y., and a set of five maps covering parks and preserves in Yorktown in northern Westchester.

If you enjoy the Avenza Maps app, thank you for your support, and please help us spread the word by being a map advocate! Show the app maps to others out on the trail (especially if you run into people who may need help navigating the trails); recommend Avenza Maps to people on social media and provide direct map links; or if you have the time, consider joining our volunteer publications efforts to further develop and market our digital maps and other publications!

My Home Trails a Hit

On April 1, we announced the release of an all-new map set: My Home Trails. Our "safest at home" edition—an April Fool's joke shared on our social media accounts during the height of the COVID-19 crisis—was promoted as covering .05 miles of trail with endless possibilities for both loop and out-and-back adventures.

Hoping to find laughs, we encouraged people to "enjoy the (kitchen and bathroom) waterfall features, soak in the (houseplant) foliage, and explore the vistas (from the top of your stairs or couch). As always, remember to practice Leave No Trace by



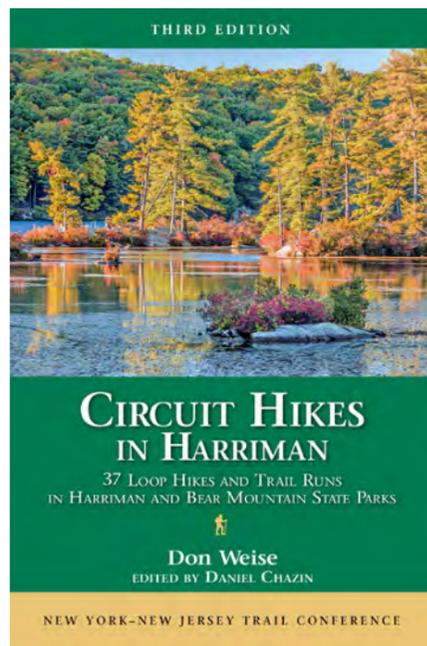
packing out all trash and respecting the diversity of wildlife—from cats and dogs to flies and spiders. Take nothing but Zoom calls and naps, leave only for essential travel."

While response to the post was positive, we're happy to be promoting real map releases and outdoor recreation once again!

Revised Circuit Hikes in Harriman Now Available

A new, 3rd edition of our *Circuit Hikes in Harriman: 37 Loop Hikes and Trail Runs in Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks* guidebook has arrived! This very popular paperback is a comprehensive guide to 37 loop hikes in the highly visited Harriman and Bear Mountain state parks. This revised edition includes two hikes with significant route changes, and several existing hikes have been updated with the latest trail changes.

Nine of the loops are suitable for trail runs, and there is one approved mountain biking loop. Many chapters offer shorter and longer options, making this guidebook perfect for a wide variety of users, including those new to hiking as well as experienced hikers and trail



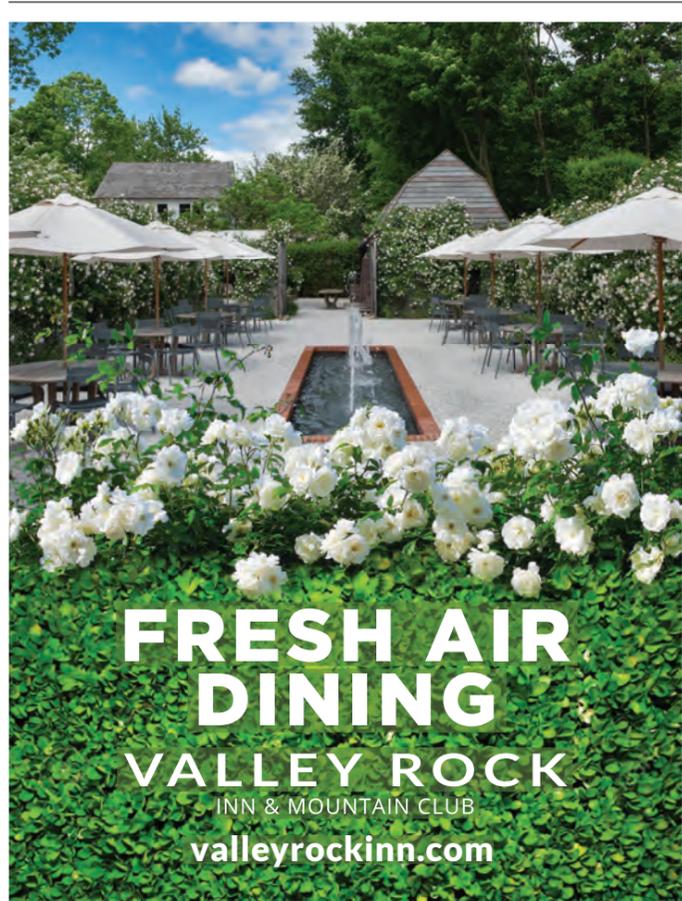
runners looking to expand their horizons. As with the previous editions, each loop hike chapter features a detailed description, loop hike

map and elevation profile, and multiple photos of outstanding views and interesting features.

Hike routes were selected by author/Trail Conference Development Director Don Weise, who has more than 25 years of experience leading hikes and runs through the parks. The book was edited by Daniel Chazin and field-checked by volunteers. Maps were designed by Allison Werberg with assistance from Trail Conference cartographer Jeremy Apgar. This edition was designed by graphic designer Nora Porter.

This guide is perfect for anyone interested in exploring the rich network of trails in these parks, so grab your copy today at nynjtc.org/books/circuit-hikes-harriman.

Jeremy Apgar



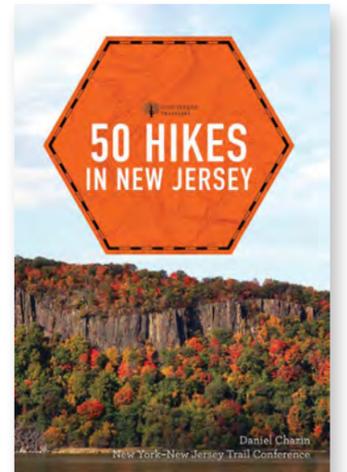
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50 Hikes in New Jersey Guidebook Updated for 2020

A revised 5th edition of *50 Hikes in New Jersey*, written by Trail Conference volunteer Daniel Chazin, is now available to help you discover outstanding hiking destinations throughout the Garden State! While New Jersey may be known more for its urban areas than its green spaces, the state is actually a crossroads for major long-distance trails including the Appalachian Trail, Highlands Trail, and Delaware and Raritan Canal

State Park Trail. The 50 routes described in this guidebook range from 1.5 to 12 miles in length, making it ideal for a range of users—from families out for a nature walk to adventurous hikers up for a challenge. The roster of hikes covers the entirety of the state, from the Kittatinnies to Cape May County.

This latest edition includes three completely new hikes: the Blue Mountain Loop Trail in Stokes State Forest, Ramapo Valley County Reservation, and Dismal Harmony Natural Area. In addition, many other hikes have been significantly revised and updated, and many new photos have been included. Each hike is accompanied by driving directions, trailhead information, difficulty ratings, detailed maps with elevation profiles,



and color photos to highlight special views and features.

So if you are looking to explore more of the great trails in New Jersey, check out nynjtc.org/nontcbooks/50-hikes-new-jersey to get your copy today! Jeremy Apgar

How to Hike a Trail Less Traveled

The most popular trails and outdoor destinations in our region all have alternatives that are equally spectacular—and we’re sharing our favorite trails less traveled at nynjtc.org. When you opt for a hike that sees less foot traffic, you’re helping to alleviate stress on the land. You’re practicing Leave No Trace principles to help prevent the overuse of popular trails and helping to keep these special places from being “loved to death.” You are

part of the solution! We’ve organized the “less traveled” list by state, further broken down by county, at nynjtc.org/news/how-hike-trail-less-traveled. Parks and trails listed as areas to “avoid” are heavily visited, do not have sufficient parking areas for crowds, and/or are already suffering from the effects of overuse. That’s not to say you should never visit these places; however, avoiding them at popular times, such as week-

ends, is highly encouraged. Even some of these “less traveled” suggestions may still be busy in fair weather at peak times of the day, so be sure to take note of several hikes in the area you plan to visit so you have alternatives ready to go in case trailhead parking lots are full. We will be adding new hikes and other resources, including free maps, to this list. Be sure to check back periodically for updates.

STEVE AARON



The Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in New York offers spectacular views.



JEREMY ARGAR

Stokes State Forest in New Jersey offers great hike options that see less traffic than more popular areas.

Trail Alerts

As caretakers of the region’s trails and natural areas, the Trail Conference strives to be a trusted source of information and expertise for the outdoor community. We regularly post updates on closures and restrictions affecting trails on our Trail Alerts page at nynjtc.org/trail-alerts.

There you’ll find information on **closures and modified park operations due to COVID-19** throughout the region.

You’ll also find updates on

trail closures in Schunemunk State Park. At press time, there are currently no trail connections within the park between the east side (Taylor Road and meadows) and west side (Otterkill Road and mountain) of the railroad tracks. This includes the Jessup Trail (Yellow) near its junction with the Otterkill Trail (Red), and the Sweet Clover Trail (White) near its junction with the Dark Hollow Trail (Black).

The parking lot on the east side along Taylor Road is closed. To access all trails on the west side of

the railroad tracks, utilize the Otterkill Road parking lot (see map; visit the Trail Alerts page for a larger map.) Please do not attempt to cross the active railroad tracks anywhere in this area.

These closures are due to an increase in trespassing at the Moodna Viaduct trestle. Anyone crossing the railroad tracks will be ticketed by MTA police, who are actively monitoring the area. A solution for reopening access is being sought but it will take some time. Your patience and cooperation are appreciated.

Rail Corridor Crossing on Trails Forbidden
Schunemunk State Park - May 2020

Attention hikers planning to use the Jessup, Sweet Clover, Otterkill, Dark Hollow, or Highlands trails: the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) forbids crossing its rail corridor in Schunemunk State Park. Trespassers may be fined or charged with criminal trespass by MTA police. There are currently no trail connections within the park between the east side (Taylor Road and meadows) and west side (Otterkill Road and mountain) of the railroad tracks. This includes the Jessup Trail (Yellow) near its junction with the Otterkill Trail (Red), and the Sweet Clover Trail (White) near its junction with the Dark Hollow Trail (Black).

The parking lot on the east side along Taylor Road is closed. To access all trails on the west side of the railroad tracks, utilize the Otterkill Road parking lot (see map above). Please do not attempt to cross or walk along the active railroad tracks anywhere in this area.

These closures are due to an increase in trespassing at the Moodna Viaduct trestle. Anyone crossing the railroad tracks will be ticketed by MTA police, who are actively monitoring the area. A solution for re-opening access is being sought but it will take some time. Your patience and cooperation are appreciated.

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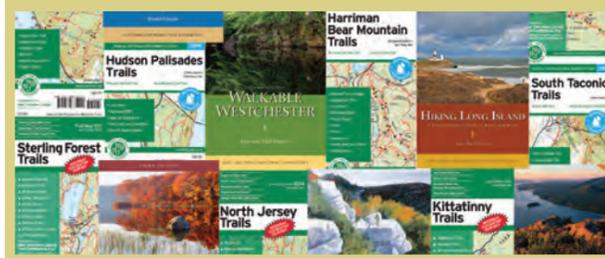
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HIKERS' MARKETPLACE

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