As we close 2021 and look forward to a new year, we send our gratitude to the trail community and all who believe in the power of nature. Thanks to you, the Trail Conference continues to be an incredible force multiplier, recruiting and training more than 2,500 volunteers who care for and protect our region’s natural areas and the trails that provide access to them. Our volunteers’ efforts result in approximately $3 million in labor given to the improvement of public lands annually. That’s $3 million of care given to local trails and parks to ensure your experiences outdoors are safe and enjoyable.

In 2021, the Trail Conference celebrated a century of providing that service to our friends, neighbors, and all who recreate on these lands. The pandemic continued to create unprecedented circumstances and challenges for the trails and our service community, yet we persevered. Although our headquarters remains closed to the public, our programs and operations found renewed success in a hybrid model of outdoor, in-person workshops and work trips while continuing to leverage our Online Learning Library and holding virtual meetings.

At the same time, we have continued to see trails face remarkably high usage with millions of people seeking respite outdoors. Despite these challenges, our Trail Family demonstrated resilience. We had many great successes this year. You’ll find these wins for the outdoors—from conserving critical land and trail access in New Jersey, to helping lead efforts to stop the dreaded spotted lanternfly in New York—highlighted on pages 6 through 10. As we look back on the 2021 successes we’ve had in improving access to nature, we look forward to 2022 and the ways we can use what we have learned to become a stronger, more impactful organization. Whatever the new year brings, we’re excited to continue this journey with you, and grateful to have you along with us.
We are still head over boots and buzzing from our Centennial Gala on the evening of Oct. 16. It was well worth the wait to celebrate a century of service with so many of the people who make our mission possible.

Just a few days later, on Oct. 19, the Trail Conference turned 101. We never could have made it to our second century—let alone through the last 20 months!—without the generosity of people who understand and value the power of connecting with nature. Without people like you.

Our gala honoree, Dr. Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, is a shining example of the incredible impact one person can have on protecting the integrity and accessibility of our natural areas. Her passion and philanthropy for conservation efforts have not only been a tremendous benefit to the Trail Conference mission, they’ve also helped shape the future of outdoor recreation and conservation throughout this region.

It is thanks to this Trail Conference community that millions of people throughout the region have been able to experience the outdoors for the last 100 years. Generations more will know the joys of nature through our—your—continued efforts. We are moved by nature; we are united by trails. Thank you for being part of such an important legacy.

Erik Kulisevski, left, and gala Master of Ceremonies Fred Osborn III.

Speaker Peter Dolan, Trail Conference Trail Program Manager.

Taconic Regional Commissioners and friends, from left: Edgar Masters, Emily Saland, Fred Osborn, Henry Neal, Lucy R. Waletzky, Arthur Gellers, Erik Kulisevski, and Linda Cooper.

NYS Parks Commissioner Erik Kulisevski with Gala honoree Dr. Lucy R. Waletzky.

Director of Programs Hank Osborn, left, and, Executive Director Joshua Howard.

Gala attendees, from left: Silvia and Kal Ghosh, David Epstein, President of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, Steve Aaron, and Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick.

Next Generation of Environmental Leadership speaker, Executive Assistant Kathleen Bezik.

Reflections: 100 Years of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What do you do for the end of the core to a Centennial celebration? That’s a tough question to answer, and I suspect the Trail Conference has successfully fulfilled its mission of providing access to the best system of trails for the public for 100 years. To remain an impactful organization, we need to grow and evolve. There is a delicate balance of old and new. Innovation solutions are required for new challenges; however, we also need to remain grounded in what has made us successful for the past century. As we look forward to 2022, I’m excited to see our organization continuing to fulfill the promise of empowering everyone who seeks nature to find safe, enjoyable access through trails. We continue to honor our past with a strong and vibrant volunteer program, which is supported and enhanced by our growing Conservation Corps and the service members who make a similar commitment to our mission.

As you read through this edition of Trail Walker, you will see our achievements from the past year and our ambitions for the year to come. While our trail work season may be winding down, the staff and volunteers are busy preparing for next year’s work.

That planning not only includes our work for 2022, but also preparing the organization as a whole to find success in our second century. We have begun reviewing and revising our strategic plan; we are assessing the tools and technologies we use to support our programs; and we are investing in our volunteers with a reinvigorated Trail UniverSity.

Excitement is palpable from our Conservation Dogs team and their successful training of a new dog, multiplying our ability to fight the emerging invasive species that are threatening the lands we love. Our outreach and education efforts are reaching more trail users than ever before through our website, books and nalps, and trailhead and summit Stewards. And I would be remiss without recognizing the amazing work of our trail volunteers like the Long Distance Trails Crew, who keep building amazing trails like the new Upper Nyack Trail on Hook Mountain.

The future of the Trail Conference is just as promising and exciting today for our new leaders like Amy Arato, Michael Fashley, and Rich Rockwell, as it was to Major Welch, Raymond Torrey, and Ashton Alls atop the ASCACOMBE & Green program. As we have seen when they met and formed the Trail Conference back in 1920. I can’t wait to see what comes next for our amazing organization.

Joshua Howard Executive Director executive.director@nynjtc.org

What Comes Next

Making Great Trail Experiences Possible

We send a hearty thanks to all who participated in our fundraising efforts this year. Our ability to remain steadfast in our mission not only this year, but for the last 100 years, is thanks to our donors like you.

Trail-A-Thon 2021
Trail lovers everywhere enthusiastically took on the Trail-A-Thon challenge to walk, hike, run, or ride 101 miles to help celebrate the close of the Trail Conference’s Centennial and our 101st birthday on Oct. 19. Over 100 Trail-A-Thoners from five states, ages 5 to 84, geared up to venture more than 8,000 miles. They came together in the spirit of what our organization was founded on: ensuring great outdoor experiences are possible today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

While ticking off those miles, our community helped raise nearly $29,000 to support our mission. When we work together, great things are possible. Thank you!

Trailsgiving
We asked our supporters to be part of the global giving movement known as Giving Tuesday—and the response was incredible! We challenged our friends, partners, and the greater community to show their support during our TrailGiving Week, Nov. 23 through Nov. 30. With your help, more than $20,000 was raised. With the match from our generous Board of Directors, over $30,000 raised during TrailGiving will go back supporting our volunteers caring for your favorite trails and protecting the land you love. Thank you for your generosity!

December Challenge: Your Gift Is Doubled
In the spirit of the season, your Board is extending this matching period (up to $115,000) through the end of 2021 to create our December Challenge. Through Dec. 31, 2021, your gift is doubled, meaning $50 automatically turns into $100. Donate at bit.ly/tc-eoy21.

We expect the increased usage of trails to continue in 2022. That means trails and natural areas will need the care and attention of even more Trail Conference volunteers and service members to remain safe and enjoyable. Because you value the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing found in nature, we are asking for your help by donating today. You will be contributing to the resiliency that ensures opportunities to connect with nature are available to everyone, both now and in the future. Your generosity makes a tremendous difference!

Welcome, New Board Members

New Board members SreeNi Nair, Kalyan Ghosh, Barbara Olevan, and Carol Ann Benton were appointed to the Trail Conference Board of Directors in November at the Trail Conference Annual Meeting.

Sreeni Nair lives in Mercer County, N.J. He has been an avid hiker all his life—first in the mountains of India, and later in the States. He got introduced to the Trail Conference through the Trail Conference’s group hike. Sreeni is also a well-known runner in the local community, where he has used his running fame to raise money for numerous causes. Professionally, he works for Bank of America. Sreeni is a member of the Trail Conference Strategic Planning Committee.

Kalyan “Kal” Ghosh is an avid runner and triathlete at Fisher Brothers and a graduate of DA College in Calcutta, India, with a degree in mathematics. Kal is an avid runner, hiker, skier, and swimmer. He has volunteered as a maintainer in the Catskills, attended the recent Gala, and participated on the Trail Conference DEI committee.

Barbara Evans is associate executive director, Institutional Advancement & Communication, at The City College of New York. She has extensive philanthropic fundraising and event management experience, including four years as solicitor development officer at Appalachian Mountain Club. An avid hiker and trail runner, she recently completed section-hiking the Long Path. Barbara has participated on the Trail Conference Board Development Committee.

Carol Ann Benton is a retired public school administrator and special education teacher with degrees in special education from University of Houston and Syracuse University. After completing her master’s degree, Carol Ann obtained a certificate of advanced studies degree in educational administration from Fordham University. She is a longstanding member of the Trail Conference, the AMC, the Sierra Club, ADK, Westchester Trails, and Tri-State Ramblers and is an avid hiker both in the U.S. and internationally. Carol Ann is a member of the Trail Conference Nominating Committee.

Staff Update

Welcome, Dan and Peat

Dan Cummings, Volunteer Engagement Associate, grew up in Bergen County and spent most of his childhood going on a different Scout trip or on one of his family’s car trips to a national park. After graduating from St. Thomas Aquinas College with degrees in psychology and philosophy/religious studies, he went on to work as their director of campus ministry and volunteer services. For the past 10 years, Dan has helped facilitate and organize different volunteer opportunities for students, including park clean-ups, clothing drives, social justice programs, and human rights advocacy. Dan loves spending time with his wife Amanda, son Elias, and dog Chewbacca. He is a fan of Star Wars, D&D, and reading anything he can get his hands on.

Peat Blumenthal, Conservation Dog, is an American Field Labrador born on Christmas Day, 2020. He started working on his first species, Scotch broom, at just 9 months of age. Peat is still a very visible puppy who loves giving sloppy kisses and learning new things every day. He’s a fast learner and is always ready to help with invasive species removal.

Peat loves going to the park, hiking trails, and just exploring. He loves to chase squirrels and shadow cats. When he’s not working, Peat loves to play, play, play!

To remain an impactful organization, we need to grow and evolve. There is a delicate balance of old and new.

Howard
Senator Cory Booker Hits the (Hiking) Trail

We love meeting new people on the trail. And we loved getting to show off the hard work of our volunteers and Corps members on a hike with U.S. Senator Cory Booker!

On a Saturday in late September, the United States Senator from New Jersey met up with Trail Conference Executive Director Josh Howard, Chief Financial Officer Mary Perro, and volunteer Juan Melli for a hike at Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area in Morris County. Several of Senator Booker’s aides, family members, and friends came along for the walk, which featured stops at Tripod Rock, Lucy’s Lookout, the reservoir, and the current worksite of our Conservation Corps crew. It was at least one person’s first hike!

Josh and Juan kicked off the hike with an introduction to the Trail Conference and info about the park. During the hike, we talked about the impacts of climate change on trails, spoke about our efforts to combat spotted lanternfly, and explained how our projects are mostly funded through the support of Trail Conference members and donors. The hike included a visit with our Conservation Corps crew working on trail improvements at Pyramid Mountain and throughout Morris County; that crew is generously financed by the county. The senator was very interested in the techniques and tools the crew uses and how they make decisions about where to build trails. He was impressed with the stone staircase the crew had built, which was part of the hike route, and the wild blueberry plants they helped to replant. Senator Booker was very grateful for the service of the crew’s Corps members and volunteers.

Juan and Mary showed Senator Booker how to read blazes, and Juan told him about the techniques he uses to touch up any blazes in need of care. The team shared our efforts to reflate trails at several parks in New Jersey to create better loop hike options and positive hiker experiences. It also spoke about our Trail Stewards and Leave No Trace efforts—fortunately, they didn’t pass too much trash!

At the end, the senator handed out vegan treats for everyone to enjoy. He said he would love to go out hiking again; our team gave him a map and a copy of Pinelands and more information about our organization. Everyone was super friendly and had a great time.

Our sincere thanks to Senator Booker, his staff, family, and friends for taking the time to share a hike with us!
Exploring the Outdoors and New Opportunities

Every Christmas before I turned 10, my parents would load up the car and drive my sisters and I 400 km (about 250 miles) from Lagos to our village in Edo state to visit our grandparents. We drove through the tropical rainforest dotted with red sand ant hills and thick fronds as far as the eyes could see. My sisters and I never stopped to explore these forests, nor did we know of any marked trails. Instead, our eyes could see. My sisters and I were not as accessible back home. Perhaps that is why I was privileged to access these spaces and I vowed to never take this privilege for granted.

One of the most important things I learned this summer from Dr. Dick, a veteran and wilderness first aid instructor, was to never let fear stop you from doing what you love. From the fear of leaving a stable job to the fear of moving away from your community and driving on the highway—I had to tackle all of these to fully access the outdoor spaces in Nigeria. The opportunity did not stop me from staying committed to hiking.

In the process, a whole new world in ecological conservation has opened up to me. I was privileged to access these trails—including our Conservation Dogs teams. Uninvited features the collaborative work of the New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation and its partners, including NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, the eight Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMS), including the Lower Hudson PRISM.

Six months, 100 constructed staircases, and 300-plus miles of hiking later, I can say that I’ve rekindled my connection with nature. I said yes to many new experiences and I’m so grateful that my parents cautioned me against hiking, that my parents cautioned me against hiking. I realized how important physical activity and time in nature is to me when I couldn’t go hiking anymore, and so I started looking for opportunities outside Nigeria to work outdoors. I found the Trail Conference Conservation Corps through a Google search and spoke with managers Tori Finn and Ben Sugar.

I have decided to “share the love” at Liberty Hyundai & Genesis in Mahwah, and Liberty Kia in Ramsey as well. Just show your membership card when buying or leasing through Jan. 3, 2022, and they’ll donate $250 to the Trail Conference, too. Don’t forget that Trail Conference members get special pricing on Subaru, Hyundai, Kia, and Genesis vehicles at the Liberty Family of Dealerships. This offer applies to the purchase of any new vehicle at any of the four Liberty franchises, except for special edition or low availability vehicles. The Liberty discount entitles Trail Conference members in good standing to purchase the vehicle they choose (subject to the previously mentioned restrictions) at a special price.

For more information or to find out how to become a Trail Conference member, visit nynjtc.org TRAIL WALKER • NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE Winter 2022 | 5
TRAIL CONFERENCE
2021 LOOK BACK,
2022 LOOK AHEAD

ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

RECRUITMENT
This season, we put an emphasis on volunteer leader recruitment and onboarding. So far, 21 new leaders (15 Trail Supervisors, five Trail Chairs, and one ISF Crew Leader) were placed and received an individualized onboarding. Previous years saw the following number of new leaders placed: 2020: 11 new leaders 2019: 11 new leaders 2018: 10 new leaders

NEW INITIATIVES
We launched a successful new initiative this season to deploy Corps crews to fulfill volunteer leader projects. Six volunteer leaders had one or two Corps crews come out to help execute projects—from removing invasives to building stone stairs to installing water bars. The feedback we received was all positive, including:

“We are grateful for the exceptional work they did. They exceeded our expectations by helping us clear a 5,000-square foot section of trail of Japanese barberry and multiflora rose. And, they said they enjoyed it!”

“Today was a huge success! I wish all my workdays were as productive as today.”

Online reporting for individual trail volunteers entered a trial phase in November, which is expected to run through mid-April. Five supervisor regions and one corridor manager region were selected to participate in the trial. The goal is to have a full launch in July 2022.

TRAINING (DIGITAL AND IN-PERSON)
Our volunteers, Corps, and staff held 43 live workshops to train volunteers in 2021. Additionally, we continued to leverage on-demand digital content in 2021 to train new volunteers. So far, we have trained 147 Trail Maintainers with our pre-recorded Trail Maintenance Workshop.

Photo: John H. Wells

In 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic began, hiker Mark Perreault walked the Briarcliff Peekskill Trail in New York’s Westchester County and became concerned about the trail’s need for extensive revitalization. He then contacted the Trail Conference and the county. Connie Stern and Michael Pashley, volunteer crew leaders of the Trail Tramps, sent him their proposal for upgrading the BPT to Trail Conference standards. Mark generously offered to finance its many major improvements.

The BPT, a 12-mile linear route from Ryder Road in Osining to Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill, was once earmarked as a major high-value trail. Now there is a serene, flat, paved route that runs through Westchester County and provides safe, dry passage. The Trail Tramps have taken great care in restoring the BPT. To date, they have blazed, removed fallen tree blockages, built and repaired over 300 feet of boardwalk and punchinon, re-routed tread from impassable wet areas, and cleared debris and invasives up and down the trail. Future plans for the BPT include building additional boardwalk through boggy stretches, further relocations to avoid road sections, the updating of kiosks and website information, and continued trail maintenance.

The volunteers of the Trail Tramps made significant improvements along the Briarcliff Peekskill Trail in New York’s Westchester County thanks to the support of a donor.
NEW YORK CATSKILLS

Memorial Lean-to.
The floor of the Baldwin Volunteers rebuilt the 189x1091 Baldwin Memorial Lean-to.

PARK PARK

of Bell Hollow Road where it may be reached

CATSKILLS NEW YORK

foot traffic, may be reached near Glenwood Road on the eastern part of the park near.

HARRIMAN STATE PARK

Nurian Trail had become very dangerous after most of the planks had rotted away.

The West Hudson South Trail Crew completed a project this summer to replace many broken planks on the bridge to ensure a safe crossing for hikers.

HARRIMAN CONSERVA-

CORNERS, ERIC FRED-

memorial Lean-to

The Long Distance Trails

HARRIMAN CONSERVA-

TIONS CORPS CREW

The 2021 TCCC Harriman Crew focused their efforts this year on restoration work on Harriman’s Ramapo-Dunderberg and Triangle trails.

The Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail is very popular with hikers and backcountry users, in part due to the trailhead’s proximity to the Tuxedo train station; this trail is also 100 years old and the first-ever built trail in Harriman. It was in need of improvements.

The beginning section was branded with social trails due to sections of rock staircases becoming unusable. Before this season’s improvements, this section of trail had flooded significantly, even with light rain.

Notably, the crew welcomed the completing new stonework at the entrance to the Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail. Improvements on the Triangle Trail included installing waterbars to improve drainage, setting stone stairs, and setting stepping stones across a river.

Highlights:

- 1.4 miles total trail improved (Triangle and Ramapo-Dunderberg trails)
- 200 linear feet trail rerouted
- 46 new stone stairs installed
- 24 steps repaired/ improved
- 7 square feet of stone curb wall constructed
- 12 drainage structures constructed or restored
- 250 feet of trail renaturalized

HARRIMAN STATE PARK

Nurian Trail improvements

ments: The bridge crossing the Ramapo River on the Nurian Trail had become very dangerous after most of the planks had rotted away. The West Hudson South Trail Crew completed a project this summer to replace many broken planks on the bridge to ensure a safe crossing for hikers.

The Taconic Crew worked on projects on high-

TRADEMARK STATE PARK

The Mossy Glen Trail is historically wet and has several drainage issues. The Hudson Nor’westers Trail Crew spent much of the 2021 season on improvements to the trail, including stepping stones, water bars, and drainage enhancements in wet areas.

NEVERSINK RIVER

The Wolf Brook bridge in the Neversink River Unique Area had been in need of repairs. It is essential in wet seasons for access to the Blue Trail East. Trail Supervisor Lou Baldwin, with help from other volunteers, led a work trip to repair the bridge and improve access to the trails south of the brook.

STERLING FOR-

The 2021 Palisades Crew consisted of four TCCC members working in Sterling Forest State Park along the McKee’s Meadow Loop and McKee’s Connector trails. Significant work has been put into building a network of multi-use trails in this park over the past few years; this year’s crew contributed to the efforts. The crew improved 0.4 miles of these trails with 165 linear feet of stone turnpike, 54 square feet of crib wall, and the construction of five drainage structures.

The Palisades Crew had a robust group of volunteers, which included several friendly returnees who proved to be essential to the project’s progress. Palisades Crew Leader Bob Delap appreciated the help and said, “It really can’t be overstated how important the hands of a volunteer can be. Thanks to those who turned out for us.”

The crew faced some challenges, including a stretch of oppressively hot weather. Despite the setbacks, the crew kept their morale high and made excellent progress on the trail this year. When fully opened, the loop is sure to be an enjoyable option for hikers and the mountain biking community.

Highlights:

- 9.4 miles total trail improved (McKee’s Connector and McKee’s Meadow Loop)
- 1,981 linear feet of trail rerouted
- 165 linear feet of stone turnpike
- 54 square feet of crib wall
- 5 drainage structures constructed

TACONIC STATE PARK

The Bash Bish Trail Crew, led by Crew Advisor Andrew Seirup, recently completed several projects over the course of 3 years to tackle issues and improve the experience for users on the Cedar Brook, Trail.

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The crew focused their efforts on rerouting and improving a particularly eroded and steep section of the challenging Quarry Trail in Taconic State Park. The crew worked to install stone steps and create a more sustainable reroute of the trail around a challenging rock scramble.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

The Trail Tramps continue to work on the Briarcliff Peek-skill Trail (see page 6).

MINNEWASKA STATE PARK PRESERVE

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STERLING FOREST STATE PARK

PALSADAS CONSERVA-

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NEW JERSEY

ABRAM S. HEWITT STATE FOREST
Relocated the intersection of the Ernest Walter and State Line trails to allow the Ernest Walker to follow a more sustainable route and to improve hiker navigation.

FARNY STATE PARK
- Relocated the start of the Winnibago Trail to reduce instances of lost hikers entering a neighboring Scout camp.
- Extended the red-blazed Durham Trail. It now ends at the blue-blazed Splitrock Loop Trail.
- Adopted the Orange Trail at the north end of Splitrock Reservoir. This trail offers scenic views and facilitates loop hikes.

HIGH POINT STATE PARK
- Iris Trail bridge repair
- West Jersey Trail Crew rerouted a section of the Mashipacong Trail from a badly eroded road drain to a more sustainable, walkable alignment.

JENNY JUMP STATE FOREST
The West Jersey Trail Crew created a new extension to the Orchard Trail, facilitating a neighboring Scout camp. Volunteer trail maintainers helped keep up with crowds of visitors—many novice hikers—which has been a goal of both the park commission and the Trail Conference.

MORRIS CONSERVATION CORPS CREW
The 2021 TCCC Morris Conservation Corps improved projects in multiple Morris County parks. The crew worked on the Green Trail in Lewis Morris County Park in Morristown and the Blue Trail in Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area in Montville. The goal of the Lewis Morris project was to reroute a section of the Green Trail that had several problems. Issues included erosion damage due to steep trail grades and trail bridging as a result of the trail not properly providing a durable and defined surface for users. In this case, problems of the original trail were too extensive to mitigate. Rerouting the trail was the best solution. The scope of the Pyramid Mountain project was to reroute sections of the Blue Trail that are suffering from issues like erosion, undefined tread, bridging, and hard-to-navigate sections of boulder scramble. Our crew is constructing a reroute of the Blue Trail that will connect from the Orange Trail on the southwest end of the mountain to the Yellow-Dot and Blue-Dot trails, giving hikers to an overlook and near points of interest such as Tripod Rock. The crew has been grateful to have an enthusiastic volunteer participate in work days. Throughout the season, this crew was met with challenges that interfered with the goal of completing the reroute by the end of the season. They remained hard-working. Though they were down a crew member beginning mid-July and their crew leader faced an injury toward the end of the season, the crew nearly completed the reroute, which next season’s Corps members will take on to complete.

NORVING GREEN STATE FOREST
MEVO Trail Crew rerouted over 700 feet of trail to improve the hiking experience and sustainability of the recently blazed Lake Sonoma Loop.

RAMAPO VALLEY COUNTY RESERVATION
MEVO Trail Crew improved the popular Reverence Loop by elevating a 60-foot section of trail above a perennial wet area. This involved creating a variety of technical trail structures—including a retaining wall, drainage lenses, and catch basins.

STOKES STATE FOREST
- West Jersey Trail Crew installed two larger stone-faced stream crossings on the Deep Root Trail.
- West Jersey Trail Crew installed step stones along the Stony Brook Trail.

SWARTHWOOD STATE PARK
West Jersey Trail Crew installed a cribbed timber stair case on the Grist Mill Trail.

WAYAWANDA STATE PARK
- Relocated the intersection of the Terrace Pond Red and Terrace Pond North trails due to beaver dam flooding. The West Jersey Trail Crew replaced a missing puncheon “bridge” on the Appalachian Trail near Long House Drive.
- In partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC), the Trail Conference spearheaded the revitalization of kiosk signage along the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain State Park, the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain State Park, the Croton Gorge Unique Area at the Old Croton Aqueduct, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, the Sant’s Point area of Minnewaska, and several summits in the Catskills. From May to October, Corps Stewards engaged over 50,000 trail users. They are key in protecting the ecological integrity of these special places being threatened by issues such as misuse and high usage.

CONSERVATION CORPS ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- Trail Conference Volunteer Stewards and Stewards working for other environmental organizations trained by the Trail Conference provided Steward presence in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, Fahnstock State Park, the Ashokan Rail Trail, and several NJ DEP parks. The visitor count at the Ashokan Rail Trail from January to October was more than 200,000 people.

CONSERVATION CORPS ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- The Trail Conference Conservation Corps Trail Steward program trained 18 AmeriCorps members to serve in the Hudson Valley and the Catskills in 2021. Locations included Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, Fahnstock State Park, the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain State Park, the Croton Gorge Unique Area at the Old Croton Aqueduct, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, the Sant’s Point area of Minnewaska, and several summits in the Catskills. From May to October, Corps Stewards engaged over 50,000 trail users. They are key in protecting the ecological integrity of these special places being threatened by issues such as misuse and high usage.

TRAIL PROGRAM
- The Morris Conservation Corps Crew enjoyed the help of volunteers on several projects this year.
- 2 drainage structures installed.
- 125 linear feet of trail closed/renaturalized.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Conservation Corps Trail Stewards also help with trail maintenance.

TRAIL STEWARD PROGRAM
For nearly a decade, the Trail Conference has joined with land managers and local partners to provide training, management, and oversight to several Trail Steward programs at multiple trailheads and summits in New Jersey and New York. Trail Stewards help to protect the trails, the environment, and the visitor experience and promote local communities—a vital job in 2021 as more people than ever before began to explore trails throughout the region.

VOLUNTEER ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Trail Conference Volunteer Stewards and Stewards working for other environmental organizations trained by the Trail Conference provided Steward presence in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, Fahnstock State Park, the Ashokan Rail Trail, and several NJ DEP parks. The visitor count at the Ashokan Rail Trail from January to October was more than 200,000 people.

PUBLICATIONS
The third edition of Walkable Westchester: the completely revised and improved guide to more than 225 parks and 635 miles of trails in Westchester County, was a record-breaking hit after arriving in early 2021. So was the eighth edition of our Delaware Water Gap & Kittatinny Trails maps set, which covers more than 325 miles of trails along the Kittatinny Ridge and adjacent Delaware River in three states. The much-anticipated new Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails maps arrived in December in print and digital Avenza Maps app formats. Additionally, Reflections, the 100th anniversary publication commemorating the Trail Conference’s first century of service, was published in honor of our Centennial Gala. Read more about both publications and how to get your copies on page 16.
Improvements Continue at WTEC

What a difference a year can make! The Welch Trail Education Center (WTEC) is blossoming into a seasonal home for our Conservation Corps members and a budding environmental center. With the COVID-19 vaccine came the help of volunteers that made all the difference last year. It was only my father, husband, and two sons pitching in this year, it was them plus four weekday volunteers and several weekend volunteers.

All windows are repaired and refinished in the kitchen. Most guided invasive walks were held in the main hall, plus more being done this winter. Two sets of newly made double doors, complete with panic bar locks, were installed in the main hall. Volunteer Robert Ward took home all the screens from one cabin to repair and refinish over the coming winter.

Bong Kim and his cheerful hiking friends came many weekends and replaced damaged siding on two of our buildings. I followed right behind with other volunteers and painted all the new boards. Except for some remaining touch-ups, three buildings were painted this summer. Mr. Kim’s dedication to the WTEC continues through the changing seasons as we have planned a variety of improvements that he will continue to work on, weather permitting.

The weekend volunteers—Gordon Pellegrini, Joe Henning, Marlys Litchfield, and Ray Grisdey—enabled us to keep everything running smoothly all season. No job was too big or too small. We worked away every weekend tackling a variety of jobs. I was very sad when first Ray moved on and then Gordon. Working with the volunteers had become so much more than a way to get more done; it was the connection with each of them that made the rewards so much sweeter.

Some other improvements for the year: new roofs on the main hall, boathouse, bathhouse; new roofs scheduled for two lakeside cabins. A bestos boards are cleared from the bathhouse and cabin 209 bathroom. A new dishwasher was installed, and the oven was repaired. Twenty-three gallons of tan paint—a little of which was donated by Ben-Jamin Moore. Architectural plans are being finalized for the new classroom building that is planned for 2022.

The 2021 AmeriCorps season may have ended and the WTEC is closed for the winter, but the wheels of progress continue thanks to our volunteers! If you would like to join this merry band, please contact volunteer@nynjtc.org.
In 2022, we will keep striving to inspire the next generation of trail users to become champions of the outdoors through user education, public participation, and sustainable, on-the-ground solutions. To meet the current demands on public lands, our volunteer force will continue to grow and be strengthened. Recruitment of both volunteers and Conservation Stewards is a priority for 2021 to surpass our expectations, with more people than ever before seeking opportunities to give back to nature. That includes the successful recruitment of several new leadership positions. We will build on this success by launching an online reporting system and investing more energy and efforts into our Trail University offerings.

We will continue to collaborate with like-minded organizations to address challenges facing trails and equitable access to public lands. Whether it is in organized coalitions like the New Jersey Trails Council, Catskill Park Strategic Planning Advisory Group, and New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition, or projects-based work sessions with partners like JORBA, Black Rock Forest, and the New Jersey Palisades Interstate Park Coalition, we will join forces with stakeholders to address issues such as overcrowding at trailheads and obstacles to diversity outdoors.

By providing outreach and education, we can empower the public to know and experience the joys of nature and all its benefits. Our Trail Stewards and Ecological Stewards will serve at trailheads, summits, and boatlaunches throughout the region to assist and educate visitors. We will publish new trail maps and hiking guides to make it easier for people to engage online to help them feel informed, safe, and prepared for the adventures that await them.

Critical Trail Lands Protected and Added to Wawayanda State Park

A vital tract of land needed to secure the connectivity of the Terrace Pond North Loop in New Jersey’s Wawayanda State Park has been purchased through efforts led by the Trail Conference, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Department of Transportation, the Nature Conservancy, the Land Conservancy of New Jersey, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey’s Shawangunk Ridge Trail, and the New York’s Shawangunk Land Trust. This 5.5-acre parcel, acquired with funds from New York’s Shawangunk Land Trust, is being offered to the State of New Jersey by the Trail Conference and the Land Conservancy of New Jersey. This acquisition is a very great victory, said trial Conference Executive Director Joshua Howard. “The protection of both parcels not only gives permanent protection to the beautiful land it crosses,” said Howard, “but also safeguards critical habitat for native flora and fauna. We are grateful for the partnership of The Land Conservancy in helping to identify, purchase, and protect critical trail lands such as this one, which offers further access to the crossing of Terrace Pond North Loop and improved series of trails around the pond.”

In 2022, the Trail Conference will continue to work to create green corridors, improve access to nature, and grow economic opportunities for trail towns. They are the Highlands West Trail Connectivity Plan (Orange County, N.Y.) and the Lake Hopatcong Regional Trails Plan (Morris County, N.J.). We worked with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC) to preserve two key parcels in New Jersey this year. In February, TLC announced the purchase of 40 acres of undeveloped land in Mahwah from the New Jersey Department of Transportation. This key parcel—an important wildlife habitat and watershed—borders 13,000 acres of county and state parkland that comprises the largest area of undeveloped land in Bergen County. Much of the land is rugged terrain and difficult for visitors to navigate, though its recreation potential—including a trail connecting Ramapo Mountain Preserve to New York State, through the village of Hillburn into Harriman State Park—is being assessed. Another 2.5 acres, nestled between Wawayanda State Park and Abram S. Hewitt State Forest, secures permanent public access for a trail through the property, which will also act as a buffer for sensitive wildlife habitats. The land purchase was completed by TLC in October with open space funds from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, in partnership with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Green Acres, and private donors. It will be donated to the State of New Jersey and become an addition to Wawayanda State Park. (See story at right.)

In the spring, the Trail Conference acquired 1.1 acres of forested land in New York’s Shawangunk region in Orange County. This property connects Gobbler’s Knob State Forest with the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area and allows us to move another section of the coalesced Long Path and Shawangunk Ridge Trail (SRT) off the road, away from homes, and into the woods. Additionally, this parcel extends an already protected trail corridor to a length of 20 miles, permanently protecting both trails. The next step is to completely move the trail onto the protected land.
Putnam County Woman Sets A.T. Record While Fundraising for Trails

The 93.3-mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail in New York means so much to the people who live near it. To Katharine Spector, a 40-year-old interior designer, wife, mother, and ultrarunner from Kent Cliffs, the A.T. is a quiet oasis and place to connect with her family in nature. It was the proving ground on which she completed her greatest physical challenge: running the entire New York section of the A.T. On a hot October 15th day, Katharine completed this feat in just 26 hours, 24 minutes, and 4 seconds, establishing the fastest Known Time (FKT) record for both male and female athletes. Spector’s special connection to the trails began decades ago on her high school cross-country team, where she ran the woods around Claremont, N.H. As a California transplant, she was struck by the friendships she made on the team and the like-minded people she met on the trails. After high school, she completed degrees in art history and interior design from Columbia and FIT, and her lifestyle shifted away from athletic pursuits. But after quitting smoking 10 years ago, she once again found the trails and with them, new friendships in the hiking and trail-running community. Many of those friends supported her as she completed her A.T. challenge. On the day of her big run, Katharine was confronted with 88 degree weather—less than ideal conditions for a 93-mile run. She managed to cool off by lying down in a stream along the way. “Trail running has taught me that if you’re creative and flexible, you can achieve big goals,” she says.

Katharine points out that she is not a pro athlete, but a regular person with a job, husband, and two sons. Despite working in Manhattan, she finds time to train by hitting Central Park, the Westside Greenway Park, and running from work to the Harlem train station! Katharine understands the crucial nature of the Trail Conference’s role in protecting and securing the future of trails. This was a key factor in her decision to do her FKT attempt as a Trail Conference fundraiser. Katharine regularly takes her boys on hikes and has recently signed herself and another person up to serve as A.T. trail maintainers. Thank you, Katharine, for inspiring us and demonstrating that regular people really can do extraordinary things.

In Memoriam
Jo-Anne Senterman, a longtime Trail Conference volunteer and supporter passionate about the Catskills, passed away on Oct. 19. She was 74. She was an administrative assistant for 16 years for IBM and had been employed by Package Pavement of Stormville, N.Y. She had been a summer resident of the Catskills since 1969, and full-time for approximately the past 10 years. She had a green thumb and enjoyed hosting family gatherings, as well as helping to run the Catskill volunteer picnics. Jo-Anne was a deeply caring individual who could be counted on to assist anyone in need. She will be missed.

Join the Archives Committee
The Trail Conference is poised at its 101-year history, much of which can be read in its archives. But more stories are waiting to be told—if you can find the details in the archives. In early 2022, volunteer Jane Daniels is forming an Archives Committee to organize and preserve more information about the Trail Conference’s history. Researchers who have developed and maintained the Trail Conference’s history. Researchers who have developed and maintained the Trail Conference’s history. Researchers who have developed and maintained the Trail Conference’s history.

NY Voters Say Yes to Green Amendment
This November, New Yorkers voted to approve a “green amendment” to the state constitution. This is a constitutional provision located under the state bill of rights that grants residents an affirmative right to clean air and water and a healthful environment. Check out some of the latest Trail Conference Retail Partners and their great members-only discounts. Visit nynjtc.org/retail-partners for details on all partner discounts.
In memory of Isaac Siskind
In honor of Lucy Waletzky
In memory of Rita Heckler
In memory of Joel Kazin
In Honor of Katharine Spector
In memory of Sol Braun
In honor of Chris Norris
In honor of Bobby Bridges
Steve Brown
In honor of Chris Norris
Albert Chan
In memory of soil Braun
David Braun
In memory of Sandy Beck
Joseph Pedorella
In honor of Joanna Rizman
Shawn DeLevie
In Honor of Katharine Spector
Susan Bell
In honor of Peter Cytowicz
Tylor Abelson
In memory of Gari Ledyard
Pat Yasawa-Rubin
In memory of George Yuzawa
In honor of Bill Blanke
At Boy Scout Camp Mohican, now AMC Mohican Outdoor
Conference!
at nature—thank you for your support of the Trail
of healthy trails and natural areas. You make a difference!
member clubs, and members ($250-plus in donations).
The Trail Conference's mission is made possible through
its forms—as volunteers, Conservation Corps members,
your supporters! For more information, please visit
The Trail Conference's mission is made possible through
Donations of $50 or more made in honor or in memory of
friends and family appear in each quarterly Trail Walker.

Steve Aaron, Daniel Abbazia, Kathryn Abdi, Paul Ad-
Rosa, William Alford, Leo Almy, Aldo Almeida, Joseph
vater's All-Star Yama-
In memory of Jesse Blanke
David Blanke
In memory of Gats Leyduard
Boulii Scoules
In memory of Mary Sillman
Barbara Sillman
In memory of George Yuza

New York- New Jersey Trail Conference

To our Trail Family!

To our Trail Family!

In memory of Isaac Sikind
In honor of Katrina Meite
Cora Randall
Diane Raynes
In honor of BKG Clark
Nancy Berger Revocable Trust
In memory of Artimius Razu
Gideon Rau

TRIBUTES

In honor of Jesse Blanke
David Blanke
In memory of Mary Sillman
Barbara Sillman
In memory of Jesse Blanke
Micheal Zaccardo

In honor of Jesse Blanke
David Blanke
In memory of Mary Sillman
Barbara Sillman
In memory of George Yuzawa
Pat Yasawa-Rubin
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Micheal Zaccardo

Our Trail Family
Steve Aaron, Daniel Abbazia, Kathryn Abdi, Paul Ad-
In honor of Jesse Blanke

New York- New Jersey Trail Conference

To our Trail Family!
Crowdsourced Maps: How and When to Use Them

The most important part of having a safe, enjoyable trail experience is being prepared. When you’re heading into the woods, that means having reliable navigation resources. In addition to traditional paper maps, there are online hike descriptions, guide books, trailhead kiosks, and a multitude of online navigation apps, including Avenza Maps app and a multitude of crowdsourced hiking apps. With all these options, it can be hard to know which one to use.

Some of these resources are curated, meaning that they are created by an authority or expert organization. Others are crowdsourced, meaning that anybody—regardless of their experience or expertise—can contribute information about an experience. Both types of resources are valuable, but it’s important to know when and how to use each one. Especially in the New York-New Jersey area, where trail networks are sometimes quite complex, curated information is an especially important resource.

The table shown here can help you decide which resource to use and when to use it.

To elaborate on the discussion surrounding crowdsourced trail information, we’re sharing the advice of Scott Heidelberger, an experienced outdoorsman and a Search and Rescue (SAR) team member. Scott has given both personal and professional experience with different navigation resources. Below Scott talks about his personal experiences with the relative benefits and drawbacks of the four types of resources.

A Further Note About AllTrails

When researching this article, volunteer Phil Heidelberger reached out to AllTrails for clarification on two topics that have led to confusion for hikers: inaccurate trail segments in trail data, and the app’s offline capabilities.

Inaccurate Information

When asked about incorrect trail information appearing on AllTrails, a customer service representative for AllTrails stated that “all trails that you see in AllTrails are considered ‘verified routes’ that are hand-curated. These appear as the black and blue lines on trail pages, which sometimes contribute to the confusion—the route might be mislabeled for one reason or another. When in reality it is several individually named and blazed trails.” The representative stated that the company’s goal is “that every trail on AllTrails has an accurate, hand-curated verified route.” When asked for clarification regarding their verification process, an AllTrails representative stated that their “team uses official maps, movement data, reviews, trail resources on the internet, other mapping apps to compare, and a few other methods to verify trails.” Inaccurate information can be reported to AllTrails via the Suggest Edit button found on trail pages.

Meanwhile, “the black and blue lines are called ‘verified routes’ that you see on the AllTrails map type come directly from Open-StreetMap—a collaborative mapping project which offers a free editable map of the world,” the representative said. If you see inaccuracies on these trails, AllTrails recommends using OSM’s online platform to edit these trail segments so that the changes will be reflected in their database as well.

For these reasons, we recommend that you always compare crowdsourced information with official trail information. For example, Trail Conference maps are built on more than 85 years of mapping experience and are provided by a professional cartographer with a team of trusted volunteers and staff.

Offline Capabilities

AllTrails has a “pro” version, which currently costs about $30 per year, as well as a free version. With the Pro version, you can download any AllTrails map onto the AllTrails app on your phone for no additional charge. Then when you are on the trail, your exact location on the map is shown using the phone’s WiFi capabilities (cellular service is not required). This is similar to downloading and then using a Trail Conference app map on Avenza Maps.

With the free version of AllTrails, you can view maps on the AllTrails website and app, but the AllTrails representative confirmed that “free users are unable to download maps for offline use. Therefore if you lose service they will likely be unable to see the map layers on an AllTrails map, which could be much more difficult.” They would continue to see their GPS location, and can still use search and rescue drills. If you lose your phone or GPS device or your batteries die, you lose your ability to navigate. One way to combat this is to keep a hardcopy map and compass with you at all times. The representative added that “free users are unable to download maps for offline use.”

While AllTrails is a great tool to help you navigate while you’re on the trail, it’s important to have a backup plan. AllTrails is a tool to help you navigate, but it’s not a substitute for a hardcopy map and compass, or for the skills of a professional cartographer.

Since I wear a uniform, I’m often approached by hikers asking me for directions during search and rescue drills. The first thing I always ask is what they would advise a stranger or a hiker who is more familiar with the area. More often than not they are relying on a crowdsourced hiking app on their phone such as AllTrails or Hiking Project.

Don’t get me wrong, I think crowdsourced hiking apps are an excellent resource. I use them all the time as a launch point and as a way to avoid common errors people make on the trail so I can avoid them, and take note of all the cool viewpoints and points of interest. However, as valuable as crowdsourced hiking apps are, people seem unaware of the potential for getting lost or injured when using them as their only means of navigation. Crowdsourced hiking data is just that—unvetted tracks and trail information appearing on the AllTrails map type. They appear as the thick red lines that you see in AllTrails are considered “verified routes” that are hand-curated. These appear as the black and blue lines on trail pages, which sometimes contribute to the confusion—the route might be mislabeled for one reason or another. When in reality it is several individually named and blazed trails.” The representative stated that the company’s goal is “that every trail on AllTrails has an accurate, hand-curated verified route.” When asked for clarification regarding their verification process, an AllTrails representative stated that their “team uses official maps, movement data, reviews, trail resources on the internet, and offline capabilities to compare, and a few other methods to verify trails.” Inaccurate information can be reported to AllTrails via the Suggest Edit button found on trail pages. Meanwhile, “the black and blue lines are called ‘verified routes’ that you see on the AllTrails map type come directly from Open-StreetMap—a collaborative mapping project which offers a free editable map of the world,” the representative said. If you see inaccuracies on these trails, AllTrails recommends using OSM’s online platform to edit these trail segments so that the changes will be reflected in their database as well.”

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Improved, Rebranded Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails Maps Are Here

In 1974, the Trail Conference produced its second official map, covering the Wyanoko- ses, which later was expanded into our popular North Jersey Trails map set. More than 45 years later, this map is now in its 13th edition, and it has been completely revised and rebranded as Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails. Rebuilt from the ground up, this map is not only a brand new map and the most significant update to these maps in nearly 15 years, with an expansion to a four-map set instead of just two maps, a major increase in scale, addition of trail mileage numbers, a new map showing portions of the Appalachian Trail, and many more improvements.

This four-map set now features more than 360 miles of marked trails in the northern Highlands region of New Jersey, more than 30 miles of the Appalachian Trail and nearly 40 miles of the Highlands Trail. More than 40 parks and preserves are featured, including Ahwahnee State Forest, Long Pond Ironworks State Park, Norvin Green State Forest, Pequannock Watershed, and Wawayanda State Park. Among the major improvements to this new map are:

• A brand new title replaces the former North Jersey Trails name to better highlight the actual coverage area.
• The scale is increased by 33% to improve the clarity of these popular trail networks, which has also required expanding from a 2-map set to a 4-map set.
• Detailed junction-to-junction trail mileage numbers are on the map front (a very popular request!).
• A new inset map shows the Appalachian Trail between High Point State Park and Po- chuck Boardwalk.
• Trails have been completely redrawn with our latest data. The 360-plus miles of marked trails is an increase of more than 80 miles compared to the previous edition.
• Upwards of 75 miles of trail updates for trail additions and changes completed recently by Trail Conference volunteers are included.
• New 20-foot elevation contours lines and a completely revised base map of up-to-date roads, lakes, streams, park boundaries, and other features were used.
• Enlarged inset maps of several popular areas are included.
• Orientation has been changed to put north straight up, consistent with our adjacent maps.
• The set features several additional parks and trails, including Highlands Preserve, Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve, Old Mill Woodlands, and Ramapo Mountain Preserve.
• Several birding hotspots were added with assistance from the Saw Mill River Audubon.

Major improvements include:

• New title
• Expansion to 4 maps
• Major 33% increase in scale
• Detailed trail mileage numbers
• New A.T. Corridor map
• Completely redrawn trails
• 75 miles of trail updates
• New detailed contour lines
• Additional parks and trails
• Addition of birding hotspots
• More viewpoint stars

More viewpoint stars, parking areas, and points of interest are now included.

All maps feature trail mileage numbers, 20-foot elevation contour lines, woods roads and unmaintained trails, parking areas and public transportation, viewpoints, waterfalls, shelters and campsites, mines and other points of interest, and UTM gridlines. The map backs include a complete trail index with blaze details and total trail mileage, as well as park contact information, history, and regulations. This new Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails map set is the most comprehensive and accurate map yet of this vast area of trails and parks in the northern Highlands of New Jersey. It is now available in print format in vibrant color or on our popular waterproof, tear-resistant Tyvek by shopping online at www.nynjtc.org/shop. It is also available in digital format on Apple and Android devices through the Avenza Maps app, including as a comprehensive app map that combines the four primary section maps. Learn more about our popular GPS-enhanced maps at www.nynjtc.org/pdfmaps. Built on more than 85 years of mapping experience, Trail Conference maps are your source for reliable trail information in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region. These maps are Made by the People Who Build the Trails and are regularly updated with changes to the trails. Sales of these maps directly support our organizations efforts to keep the trails open and safe for all to enjoy.

Special thanks to volunteer project manager Daniel Chazin who helped produce this significant map revision! The map was also produced with support from Storm King Adventure Tours, a proud supporter of our volunteers.

This new Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails map set is the most comprehensive and accurate map yet of this vast area of trails and parks in the northern Highlands of New Jersey. It is now available in print format in vibrant color or on our popular waterproof, tear-resistant Tyvek by shopping online at www.nynjtc.org/shop. It is also available in digital format on Apple and Android devices through the Avenza Maps app, including as a comprehensive app map that combines the four primary section maps. Learn more about our popular GPS-enhanced maps at www.nynjtc.org/pdfmaps. Built on more than 85 years of mapping experience, Trail Conference maps are your source for reliable trail information in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region. These maps are Made by the People Who Build the Trails and are regularly updated with changes to the trails. Sales of these maps directly support our organizations efforts to keep the trails open and safe for all to enjoy.

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