



FALL 2023

TRAILWALKER

BUILDING, MAINTAINING, AND PROTECTING MORE THAN
2,000 MILES OF PUBLIC TRAILS & LANDS

WEATHERING THE STORM

When trail lands are threatened, we respond:
How we're rebuilding for a resilient future

Updating an Icon: Trail Walker
Gets a New Look

Honoring the Legacy
of H. Neil Zimmerman

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TRAIL WALKER

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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 powered, non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization.

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Cover photo: Major trail destruction at Bear Mountain State Park | PLEASE RECYCLE TRAIL WALKER

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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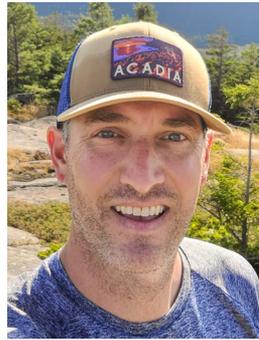
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By the time you come across this page, you will likely have noticed that the Trail Walker has undergone a redesign – perhaps “modernization” would be a more apt term. The decision to make changes to our iconic newsletter was not made lightly, and our goal is to provide our supporters, members, and volunteers with a newsletter that is equal in stature to their commitment and passion for our organization. This new format allows us to better share the images and stories of our remarkable volunteers and the significant accomplishments of the Trail Conference.

In recent years, the Trail Conference has been undergoing a similar process of modernization. We have expanded the scope and reach of our programs to encompass not only the construction and upkeep of trails, but also the monitoring and protection of the lands they traverse. As the coordinating agency for the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM), we have emerged as leaders in the fight against invasive species. Our Conservation Dog team and Invasives Strike Force crew, for example, have been at the forefront of the battle against the spotted lantern fly, while also restoring native habitats so that flora and fauna can thrive.

Our Outreach and Education Stewards share Leave No Trace best practices and warmly welcome both new and familiar faces to popular trails. Their efforts ensure that every visitor who wants to enjoy these astounding destinations has the same opportunity to be wowed by nature year after year.

Most importantly, our trail builders and maintainers are adopting innovative techniques to keep our trails open and accessible as the weather throws new obstacles our way. We are hardening our trails to withstand the massive rainstorms and deluges that have impacted our region. Wet summers lead to dense underbrush, and our maintainers are modernizing their tools to address the challenges of



JOSHUA HOWARD
Executive Director

keeping trails maintained and navigable. Conversely, warmer days and dry spells turn trails into potential access points for brush fires that threaten our parks.

Over the past 103 years, many things have changed at the Trail Conference, yet the heart and soul of who we are

as an organization, our values, and how we accomplish our mission have remained constant. We remain steadfast in our belief that *the joys of nature belong to everyone* and that creating and protecting trails is a labor of love. We celebrate our volunteers, members, and supporters – whose passion, dedication, and leadership have shaped the Trail Conference into a devout guardian of the lands and trails we all love.

Frequent severe weather continues to throw new obstacles our way, such as major trail destruction at Bear Mountain State Park.



Protecting the Lower Hudson Region's Rich Biodiversity

The Trail Conference has been awarded a new five-year contract with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to lead the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM) from 2023 to 2028. The LH PRISM is a coalition of 50+ partner organizations in the lower Hudson Valley committed to protecting the region's natural areas from the threats posed by invasive species. This opportunity affords the Trail Conference the ability to strengthen its partner and member connections in the region, ensuring that the trails and natural areas we share are sustainable, ecologically balanced, and acces-

sible for future generations.

Since 2013, the Trail Conference has coordinated the LH PRISM, protecting native habitats, biodiversity, natural areas, and freshwater resources through a collaborative approach to invasive species management, emphasizing prevention, early detection, rapid response, education, and outreach.

Under the new contract, the Trail Conference will enhance its trail programs, improve invasive species management strategies with partners, provide valuable training for volunteers and the public, and sustain volunteer initiatives, such as its Invasives Strike Force (ISF) Surveyor Program.

BOARD & STAFF UPDATES

Felicity Arengo

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Trail Conference welcomes Felicity Arengo, a distinguished conservation biologist, to our Board of Directors. Felicity recently served as the Associate Director of the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History, and also served as the Assistant Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the Wildlife Conservation Society. Currently, Felicity is collaborating with partners in South America to develop a regional conservation strategy for flamingo populations and wetland habitats. She also holds the role of Adjunct Research Scientist at Columbia University. Felicity is an avid hiker, swimmer and cyclist, and has been a trail maintainer since 2019. We look forward to Felicity's invaluable insights as we continue our mission towards preserving and protecting our region's trails and public lands.



Andrew Rosenthal-Baxter

TRAIL BUILDER

Andrew Rosenthal-Baxter joined the Trail Conference in April as a seasonal Trail Builder, bringing a wealth of experience from various trail organizations and conservation corps across the country, alongside a degree in Ecology and Environmental Sciences from the University of Maine. Andrew supervises the Conservation Corps' Harriman Trail Crew, who are working to improve the Ramapo-Dunderberg and Blue Disc Trails in Harriman State Park this year. He is also actively involved in a comprehensive, park-wide trail plan involving the assessment of all trails within Harriman-Bear Mountain State Parks. Beyond his trail work, Andrew finds joy in hiking, backpacking, and exploring new places.



IN MEMORIAM

Honoring the Legacy of H. Neil Zimmerman

H. Neil Zimmerman, a steadfast leader of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in various capacities for multiple decades, passed away in February at the age of 77.

Neil's contributions to the Trail Conference were multifaceted and impactful. Serving as the president of the Trail Conference Board of Directors from 1987 to 1999, he exemplified visionary leadership. His dedication earned him an honorary life membership and, in 2004, the esteemed Raymond H. Torrey Award – the Trail Conference's most prestigious volunteer accolade. Among his many achievements, Neil also served as the chairman of the Map Committee, where he led the efforts to produce our first maps of the Catskills and Shawangunks in the 1980s, and his advocacy work in the Catskills was responsible for the Trail Conference's initial trail adoption efforts in the region.

Upon Neil's completion of 12 years as board president, he was celebrated by nearly 250 friends at the Bear Mountain Inn, where he was also recognized with the National Park Service's Conservation Hero award and heartfelt commendations from the governors of New York and New Jersey.

Notably, Neil championed not only the preservation of trails and parklands but also the volunteers who are responsible for their creation and protection. As he said in 1997, "I will never cease to be amazed and delighted at the work of our volunteers."

Neil's profound impact on the Trail Conference



Neil Zimmerman
with JoAnn
Dolan, former
Trail Conference
Executive Director

and the countless lives he touched will be remembered fondly by many. His spirit lives on within the Trail Conference community, as his advocacy and unwavering commitment remain integral to our mission. We invite our readers to honor his legacy by making a contribution in Neil's memory at nynjtc.org/donate. Your gift supports our efforts to preserve the trails he loved and carry forward his impactful work for generations to come.

When Trail Lands are Threatened, We Respond

In a world contending with frequent and increasingly severe weather events, the Trail Conference faces a new frontier in its commitment to protecting and maintaining trails. From fierce storms and flooding to extreme wildfires, our response efforts now demand a multifaceted approach that encompasses both immediate trail restoration and thoughtful planning for the construction of resilient trails. As the impacts of a changing climate continue to unfold, the Trail Conference remains unwavering in its commitment to safeguard the local outdoor experiences we all treasure. Our organization is taking a collaborative, adaptable, and forward-thinking approach towards sustaining the trails we hold dear amidst a changing world.

Weathering the Storm

On July 9, 2023, a powerful storm swept through our region, bringing heavy rains, wind, and flash flooding that left a trail of destruction in its wake. Trails that had once welcomed hikers and outdoor enthusiasts were now unrecognizable. Black Rock Forest, Bear Mountain State Park, Harriman State Park, Storm King State Park, and Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, especially around the Anthony's Nose area, were among some of the hardest-hit areas. The damage was extensive, wiping some trails completely off the map and demolishing vital trail structures, hampering access and compromising hiker safety.

The impact of the storm was particularly pronounced on the east side of Bear Mountain, where sections of the Appalachian Trail faced significant destruction. "There is a large amount of debris that's now littering the trails, including stones, huge boulders, and downed trees. Trails located near any kind of water have collapsed due to the rapid rise of the water level and how quickly it was moving. It's like several years of erosion happened all at once," Zachary Cole, the Trail Conference's Long-Distance Trails Program Coordinator and a lead staff member in the organization's recovery efforts, notes.

Working alongside Zachary in the Trail Conference's response, Melissa Cascini, the New York Program Coordinator, also plays a vital role. "Since the July 9th storm, we've been working closely with the parks to catalog and quantify damage, then rallying our volunteers to help execute repairs and restoration efforts," Melissa says. "When severe weather hits our region, we also coordinate with other staff to ensure the Trail Conference is disseminating accurate information about the status of trails and parks to the public. We don't just rebuild physical trails and structures but equip trail users with the



The bridge over the Popolopen Creek at Bear Mountain State Park was destroyed and carried downstream.

“The Trail Conference is more important than ever. We just saw horrific weather where trails were washed out, trees came down, and people couldn’t appreciate the beauty of the Hudson Highlands. But the Trail Conference is making a continual effort to make sure those trails are open, accessible, and usable.”

Gov. George E. Pataki

information they need to safely and responsibly navigate our trail system.”

Together with our volunteers, the National Park Service, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Trail Conference staff has been working tirelessly to clear high-priority trails in the parks – high trafficked trails more susceptible to damage – to ensure they are safe and passable. But, the Trail Conference’s efforts go beyond the immediate restoration of trails, as we acknowledge the imperative to build sustainable and resilient paths in the face of more frequent and intense weather events. Melissa highlights the evolving nature of trail construction and the innovative solutions needed to accommodate the changing weather landscape.

“A large part of our work is having to look at the big picture and plan for the next big weather event, more so now than ever before. For instance, there might be stepping stones leading across a stream, but maybe

continued on page 8 >>

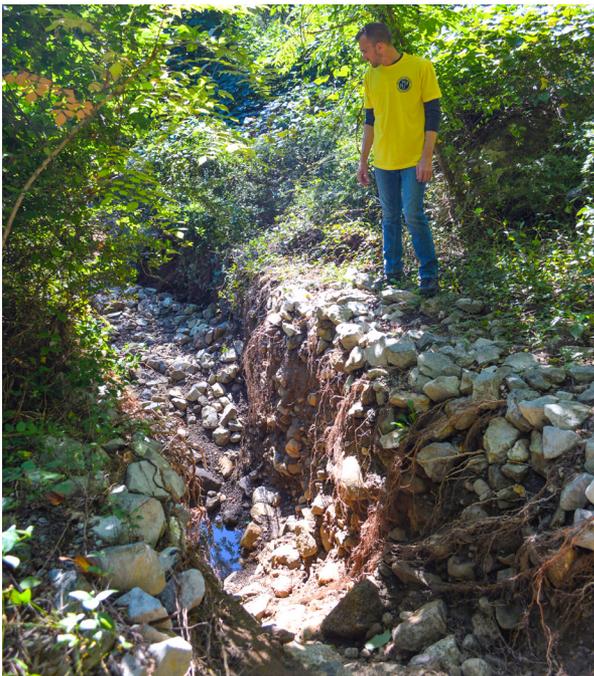
<< continued from page 7

now we have to plan for a bridge there instead," she says. "Our trail builders and volunteer trail crews are having to build using creative innovations to cope with these events. Our work is evolving."

As the Trail Conference moves forward, it remains aware of the challenging work ahead for our organization, volunteers, and partner agencies. Restoration timelines will likely extend beyond the next year, influenced by funding availability and project complexity. Some projects may see quick fixes, while others require longer timelines due to permitting issues and the scope of the work.

"Increasingly, we are dealing with emergency situations, such as the aftermath of the July 9th storm. But we're also planning for and mitigating the gradual effects of climate change. For instance, snow is melting sooner than anticipated on those early, warmer spring days. Water levels are on the rise and, because of that, some trails are now completely underwater for a portion of the year," Zachary states. "These events might not capture headline news, but they are equally important to consider in planning and preparedness."

Part of the 1777E trail at Bear Mountain State Park was completely washed away



Climate Challenges and Collective Action

By Eileen West

The deluge that swept through our area on July 9th marked just one of many severe weather events in recent months. Scientists have confirmed that July 2023 was the hottest month ever recorded. Designated as a "summer of extremes" by the World Meteorological Organization, this period saw unprecedented heat, rainfall, wildfires, and floods globally. Sea surface temperatures hit new highs in the Mediterranean and off the coast of Florida; parts of South America experienced a winter heat wave; in California, years of drought were followed by record-breaking destructive rains; and Canada saw its worst wildfire season ever, with fires burning even in the Canadian Arctic. In early June, for the first time, New York topped the list of cities with the world's worst air quality due to smoke and haze from the Canadian wildfires. According to climate experts from the World Weather Attribution Network, while certain events might have occurred sporadically without human-induced climate change, they are now becoming increasingly frequent.

Elected officials are now echoing the sentiment that this "new normal" demands action to address climate change. So, what actions can we take? We can exercise our right to vote and hold our representatives accountable. Engaging with climate action groups, we can contribute to collective efforts. Moreover, we should educate ourselves on the individual actions we can take to mitigate climate change. Supporting the ongoing work of the Trail Conference remains crucial, as it strives to make our forests, parks, and trail experiences better despite a changing climate. As the first generation to feel climate impacts firsthand, we bear the responsibility of being the last generation capable of making a difference.

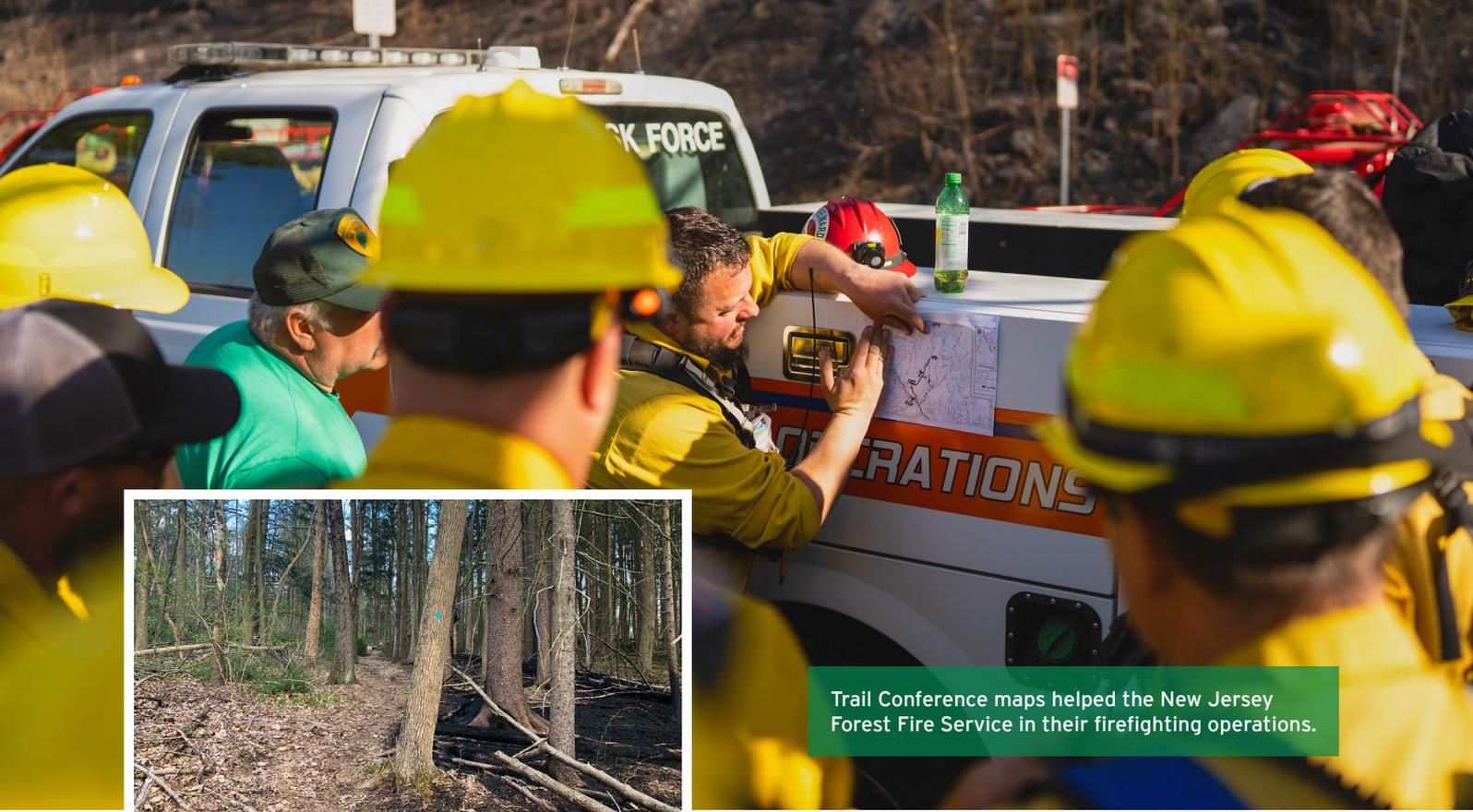


Photo courtesy of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Highlands Trail Proves Crucial in Fight Against Wildfires

Trails in the Pequannock Watershed around Kanouse Mountain and Echo Lake, including the Highlands Trail, were temporarily closed this past spring due to a severe wildfire. The fire, among several that swept through New Jersey in 2023, scorched 972 acres, marking it the largest wildfire in the region in a decade. The Highlands Trail, a long-distance trail spanning approximately 180 miles through New York and New Jersey, along with the Trail Conference's esteemed maps, played a pivotal role in combating the blaze.

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service utilized the Trail Conference's maps as indispensable aids in their firefighting operations. With these maps, firefighters strategically established backfires along the trail to create firebreaks – cleared pathways that obstruct a fire's advancement. The Highlands Trail corridor served as an open space within the dense woods and an important firebreak that was instrumental in containing the blaze.

In response to the fire, the Trail Conference voluntarily closed trail segments along the Highlands

Trail to prioritize hiker safety and allow foresters to assess the aftermath. Even as the fire waned, smoldering trees and concerns about falling debris persisted. Once the trails were reopened, our volunteers scouted the area for safety, and our sawyers diligently cleared any remaining fallen trees.

The rise in wildfires, both locally and globally, significantly impacts our operations. The Trail Conference, much like other organizations, was not spared from the effects of the smoke from the Canadian wildfires this summer. Hazy skies and dangerous air quality temporarily suspended our operations, serving as a stark reminder that the impacts of climate change around the globe are also diminishing our local hiking experiences. As your community's trail organization, we remain steadfast in our planning, preparation, and response to these growing threats, including heightened risk of wildfires and destructive storms. Your continued support allows the Trail Conference to address these evolving challenges and protect our shared, open spaces.

Conservation Corps Highlights

Partnership to Protect the Hudson Highlands

Since 2018, our partners at Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) have sponsored the Trail Conference's Breakneck Ridge Trail Steward Program, part of our Conservation Corps, thanks to generous funding provided by a private donor and a family foundation. In addition to sponsorship, HHLT assists in educating and training our Trail Stewards on the precious natural resources of the Hudson Highlands and how hikers can help protect them.

"We want everyone to be able to experience the beauty of the Hudson Highlands in safety," says Katrina Shindlecker, Executive Director of the HHLT. "Each year, Trail Stewards at Breakneck Ridge play a vital role in assisting visitors and keeping people safe. We're proud to partner with the Trail Conference on the Trail Steward program."

This partnership supports the program's Vernal Pool Stewards, Breakneck Ridge Stewards, and most recently, the Volunteer Trail Steward Program.

The Vernal Pool Steward Program educates

visitors about the ecological significance of vernal pools in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve. These seasonal wetlands, formed in early spring, serve as vital breeding habitats for several species of amphibians, such as spotted salamanders, wood frogs, and spring peepers, due to their lack of predatory fish. Two stewards were stationed on weekends during April and May on the Washburn Trail near Bull Hill, educating more than 300 visitors about the importance of vernal pools.

The Breakneck Ridge Trail Steward Program consists of four Trail Stewards assigned to Breakneck Ridge each weekend from Memorial Day through the end of October. Helping to safeguard one of the most popular hiking destinations in the country, the Breakneck Ridge Trail Stewards have their work cut out for them ensuring visitors have a safe and enjoyable hike.

Thus far, the Trail Stewards have engaged with over 6,500 individuals, helped 32 lost hikers, assisted 10 injured hikers, and suggested an alternate trail to nearly 140 visitors due to improper footwear, insufficient water, small children, and/or inadequate planning.

The most recent development in the Trail Conference's Trail Steward Program made possible by the partnership with HHLT is the **Volunteer Trail Steward Program**. This pilot program looks to recruit, train, and place volunteer trail stewards at the Breakneck Ridge and Wilkinson Memorial Trailhead area during peak visitation. Volunteer stewards will familiarize visitors with park regulations, suggest suitable trails based on individual expertise and preparedness, instruct visitors on Leave No Trace principles, and support lost or injured hikers and emergency responders whenever possible.

While this is a seasonal position from May through October, volunteers who are interested in a long-term position are also welcome. If you are interested in learning more and applying, visit nynjtc.org/vjob/trail-steward-hudson-highlands.

Our Trail Stewards receive training from Hudson Highlands Land Trust staff on vernal pool habitat



Summit Stewards: Keeping the Catskills Wild

The Catskill Summit Steward program, established in 2015, is a vital resource for individuals exploring popular hiking destinations within the Catskill Forest Preserve. In collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and with partial funding from the Environmental Protection Fund, the Summit Steward initiative aims to engage hikers and to ensure their preparedness and safety for day-hiking or backpacking trips. The focal points of this endeavor involve conveying DEC guidelines regarding camping and campfires, instilling general Leave No Trace principles and wilderness ethics, and safeguarding the delicate summit ecosystems situated above 3,500 feet. Summit Stewards actively strive to eliminate unauthorized trails, clear illicit fire rings and camping sites, and aid DEC in handling any unforeseen issues or emergencies. Besides informing the public of these important regulations, the Catskill Summit Stewards provide visitors with details about trail conditions, alternative route recommendations based on fitness level and time constraints, historical insights, identification of flora and fauna, and suggestions for exploring nearby towns and attractions.



In 2023, a team of six Summit Stewards has been stationed at various locations within the Forest Preserve, including Slide, Cornell, and Wittenberg Mountains; Giant Ledge and Panther Mountain; North Point; and the Blackhead Range. By midseason, the Stewards had interacted with nearly 5,500 hikers. Among them, 1,342 were offered valuable information, 28 were given directional assistance when lost, and four were helped when injured. Additionally, the Stewards assist with various trail improvement projects throughout the Catskill Forest Preserve, including work on sections of the Long Path, led by volunteer Andy Garrison, as well as projects with Trail Conference volunteers, partner organizations, and our Conservation Corps crews. The Summit Stewards enable hikers to achieve a balance between preserving the wild and pristine nature of the Catskills and responsibly enjoying the wonders of this very special area.

Invasives Strike Force Crew Drives Decline of Dangerous Giant Hogweed Plant



Our Invasives Strike Force (ISF) Crew has been diligently managing and eradicating terrestrial invasive plants throughout New York's lower Hudson Valley this season, including giant hogweed. This perilous invasive species has phototoxic sap, with the potential to cause severe burns, scarring, or permanent blindness to hikers. The ISF Crew has been focusing on a particularly large site, where they have reduced giant hogweed plants by tenfold over the last two years. Smaller sites around the region are also dwindling year-by-year, thanks to the efforts of the Crew and our partner agencies – making us well on our way to eradicating this dangerous invasive plant from our region!



Palisades Trail Crew

Making Strides in Sterling Forest

Led by Eric Nordfors, this year's Palisades Trail Crew has made remarkable headway in relocating the McKeags Meadow Loop within Sterling Forest State Park, an ongoing endeavor since 2020. This season, they've constructed roughly three-quarters of a mile of flowing multi-use trail, significantly improving the experience compared to the previous rutted and muddy woods roads. The crew also constructed hundreds of feet of retaining walls, ramps, turnpikes, and drainage, with assistance from numerous volunteers and the Corps' Hudson Valley Trail Stewards. Collaborating with our partners at Palisades MTB, they're finishing nearly two miles of trail reroutes, enhancing multi-use connectivity and marking a significant addition to the park's evolving trail network.



Taconic Trail Crew

Enhancing the Hudson Highlands

Back in action at Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, our Taconic Trail Crew is in its third year of enhancing the Wilkinson Memorial Trail to accommodate increased traffic from Breakneck Ridge. Guided by Crew Leader Ash Steimle with support from the Hudson Valley Trail Stewards, the crew is nearing completion of a challenging 750-foot reroute of a steep, washed-out and treacherous section of trail prone to hiker falls and injuries. The new winding route is more sustainable, is designed to preserve sensitive habitat, and offers scenic stream views. Once complete, the crew's work on this trail will help it withstand the increased foot traffic resulting from its recent surge in popularity. Additionally, the crew teamed up with volunteer Trail Supervisor Phil Heidelberger for a special one-day project to install waterbars – a critical drainage feature on older trails – on the Casino Trail in Mount Beacon Park.



Harriman Trail Crew

Revitalizing Historic Trails

The Harriman Trail Crew, led by long-time volunteer Trail Supervisor Keith Scherer, continues to focus on enhancing the historic Ramapo-Dunderberg (R-D) Trail, as well as other trails, in Harriman State Park. They spent a large portion of the season repairing a steep, washed-out section of the R-D Trail, using split rock and rot-resistant logs to construct steps. They also blocked and restored over 500 linear feet of informal paths, preventing further erosion and protecting the surrounding landscape. Additional projects include constructing and repairing several drainage structures on the Tuxedo-Mt. Ivy Trail and building steps up a bedrock ledge to allow hikers a safer descent on the Blue Disc Trail. A special project day with volunteers at Lusscroft Farm in High Point State Park involved drainage improvements in a wet area on the Green Dot Trail.



Funding from Veolia North America helps support the Conservation Dogs Program

PROTECTING NEW YORK'S NATIVE TURTLES

Many of our region's native turtles are bell-wethers of high-quality water and a healthy ecosystem. To help monitor these indicators of habitat health, the Trail Conference's Conservation Dogs Program is helping partners in Westchester and Rockland Counties to improve the survey efficiency of box and wood turtles. To properly manage habitat for these species of special concern, more information is needed to estimate population size, find the boundaries of populations, determine the location of nesting sites, and record what habitat types are being utilized.

Due to their secretive and cryptic nature, finding turtles through visual surveys can be difficult. Our Conservation Dog Peat is helping improve survey techniques through the power of smell. His enhanced ability to locate these species will enable researchers, biologists, and land managers to make better management decisions to protect these shy but vital reptiles, while also enhancing the overall health of the ecosystem for a more enjoyable experience on our region's network of trails.

Thank you to Veolia North America for their generous support of the program, which has made this initiative possible!



Conservation Dogs Program Coordinator Arden Blumenthal works with Conservation Dog Peat to survey for native turtles

IN RECOGNITION

Celebrating a Stellar Legacy of Service

Estelle Anderson's connection with the outdoors traces back to her upbringing in Newark, New Jersey, where she spent her childhood exploring the neighboring Eagle Rock and Watchung Reservations. These early encounters with nature ignited a spark that would eventually lead her to become an avid hiker and devoted volunteer.

In 2002, Estelle joined the Trail Conference as a volunteer Trail Maintainer in New Jersey, then becoming Co-Trail Supervisor overseeing trail maintenance in Norvin Green State Forest South. This trajectory eventually led her to the role of Co-Trail Chair for over 200 miles of trails, where her leadership flourished for several years before transitioning to her present position as the Co-Trail Supervisor in Morristown National Historical Park.

One of the defining hallmarks of Estelle's legacy is her commitment to safety. Over the past two decades, her contributions went beyond the trails themselves. Joining the Trail Conference's Sawyer Committee in 2012, she assumed the role of Sawyer Committee Chair, championing safety as an essential component of trail work. Under her guidance, the Trail Conference saw an evolution in safety and training standards. Her emphasis on first aid instruction, sawyer recertification, and meticulous organization reshaped the committee into the closely-knit community of trail enthusiasts it is today.

It was also during Estelle's tenure volunteering with the Trail Conference that her path crossed with that of her now partner and husband, Bob. Their introduction on the trail, while both volun-



teering, laid the foundation for shared hikes and eventually, marriage. As Bob adeptly cleared downed trees, Estelle swamped and carefully followed, maintaining the trails. Even in Bob's subsequent retirement as a sawyer, their shared passion endures as they continue to hike, volunteer, and maintain trails together.

Estelle attributes her enduring commitment to the Trail Conference to the remarkable people she's had the privilege to work alongside. For her, it's not just about trail maintenance; it's about preserving a sense of community.

"I love our volunteers. They are a great bunch of people," Estelle says. "We may be covered in dirt and sweat, but we work hard and always have smiles on our faces. They are like my family - a true Trail Family - and that's what makes it worthwhile."

As of spring 2023, Estelle has stepped down from her role as Sawyer Committee Chair and remains Co-Trail Supervisor in Morristown National Historical Park. The Trail Conference extends profound gratitude to Estelle for her years of service and unwavering commitment.

PUBLICATIONS UPDATE

Three Revised Map Sets Covering 500 Miles of Trails Now Available

The Trail Conference's Publications Committee proudly announces the release of three revised maps. **East Hudson Trails**, **Harriman-Bear Mountain Trails**, and **Hudson Palisades Trails** maps include 500 miles of trails. Visit nynjtc.org/shop to grab these maps, and check out other maps like Catskill Trails and Morris County Highlands Trails maps from earlier in 2023.

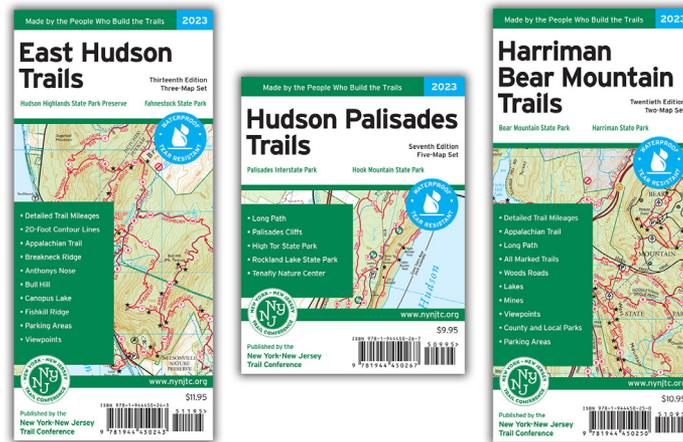
East Hudson Trails (13th ed.) features 160 miles of trails in the New York Highlands east of the Hudson River. This update includes new trails and significant trail changes, including the Ninham Trail, Hubbard Perkins Multi-Use Loop, Oscawana Ridge Trail, and a major reblazing effort in the Breakneck Ridge and Bull Hill areas, along with other improvements including more detailed trail lines and adjusted viewpoint stars.

Harriman-Bear Mountain Trails (20th ed.) features 230 miles of trails in Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks. The entire network of trails has been redrawn based on better GPS data. Other improvements include trail updates for the Appalachian Trail near Anthony Wayne Recreation Area and Surebridge Mountain, viewpoint star updates, parking access updates, and updates to the Fort Montgomery area. *Note that these maps were published just prior to storms in July that led to trail closures. Be sure to check our website to learn of any remaining impacts.*

Hudson Palisades Trails (7th ed.) features 100 miles of trails and bike paths along the western side of the Hudson River from Fort Lee, NJ to Haverstraw, NY, including 40 miles of the Long Path and parks such as Palisades Interstate Park, Blauvelt State Park, and Rockland Lake State Park. This update includes significant changes, including the new Boulders Loop Trail at Nyack Beach State Park, a more accurate depiction of the challenging Giant Stairs area, a new inset map for the area around the George Washington Bridge, and trail re-routes in Tenafly Nature Center.

All three map sets feature trail mileage numbers, 20-foot contour lines, and many other details. They are available in print format on waterproof, tear-resistant Tyvek and digital format on mobile devices through the Avenza Maps app. Built on more than 85 years of mapping experience, these maps are Made by the People Who Build the Trails, and sales of these maps directly support our organization's efforts to keep the trails open and safe for all to enjoy.

A special thanks to volunteer project managers Fred Stern, Daniel Chazin, and John Jurasek, and all the volunteers and park partners who helped produce these significant map revisions. We also extend our gratitude to Hudson North Cider and Subaru Distributors Corp. for their support in producing these valuable resources.



Restoring the Iconic Pochuck Boardwalk



The West Jersey Trail Crew continues its efforts in refurbishing the Appalachian Trail's iconic Pochuck Boardwalk in northern New Jersey. Over the last several years, this project has involved the tedious removal and replacement of worn deck boards, with about 400 feet (approximately 780 deck planks!) completed so far this year by the volunteer crew. This past spring, they dedicated 500 hours to the nearly mile-long, four-foot-wide boardwalk, with ongoing work planned this fall and into the year ahead.



Scouts and Volunteers Transform the Long Path in Schoharie County

David Bourque, Trail Conference volunteer and member of the Long Path North Hiking Club (LPNHC), successfully tackled wet areas along a two-mile stretch of the Long Path in Schoharie County, NY. Assisted by two Scout Troops, Trail Conference volunteers, and LPNHC members, they completed the construction of 190 feet of bog bridge in just under five hours, showcasing the collective power of our volunteers. The involvement of Michael, the grandson of Vincent Schaefer, one of the founders of the Long Path, brought a meaningful connection to the project and added to the trail's historical significance. We extend our gratitude to the LPNHC for coordinating the logistics of the project, as well as to Boy Scout Troops #1170 and #1264, and the nearly 20 volunteers who contributed to this accomplishment.

North Walk Provides Improved Access to the Long Path

A newly renovated accessible path on the north side of the George Washington Bridge has opened its gates! The North Walk now offers pedestrians direct – and improved – access to the Long Path, a 358-mile trail tended to by hundreds of Trail Conference volunteers. The trail begins in New York City, kicking off at the 175th Street subway station in upper Manhattan, and continues along the Palisades cliffs in New Jersey before heading into New York and extending as far as Albany County. With the opening of the North Walk, it has never been easier for New Yorkers to experience the Long Path and the benefits of a walk in the woods, whether you're planning a day-long adventure or an extended trek.



NEW YORK TRAIL UPDATES

Enhancing Accessibility in the Catskill Mountains



In the heart of the Western Catskills, a remarkable transformation has taken place, marking a significant step towards greater accessibility in the Catskill wilderness. Over the span of several months, nearly 30 volunteers contributed over 450 hours to the restoration of the Trout Pond lean-tos.

The focal point of the restorations was the rehabilitation of an ADA-compliant privy at one of the lean-tos, along with equipping the shelter with a wheelchair-friendly platform. The project also addressed the wear and tear that had taken its toll on the structures over time.

After an abundance of planning and communica-

tion with two 6'x6' timbers to form the platform's walls, strategically designed to contain stone and gravel infill, resulting in a sturdy, level surface. The result was the creation of a well-crafted, ADA-compliant privy platform, making this Trout Pond lean-to one of the few accessible shelters in the Catskills.

The remainder of the restoration work was not without its challenges, from repairing lean-to floors and roofs to replacing shingles. Each step demanded strenuous labor, accompanied by the logistical challenge of transporting lumber and tools across challenging terrain.

As the project neared completion, the refurbished Trout Pond lean-tos stand as a testament to the commitment of our volunteers in making the Catskill Mountains an open and welcoming place for all who seek to experience its beauty. *To access the ADA-accessible Trout Pond lean-to by vehicle, a permit must be obtained by contacting the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.*



Volunteers constructed an ADA-compliant privy.

tion with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the project, led by volunteer Crew Leader Eric Friedman, began. The team's primary challenge was constructing an ADA-compliant privy, complete with a 5'x6' platform designed for wheelchair access. To achieve this, volunteers repurposed the old privy floor to form the foundation for the platform. They further reinforced it

Trail Conference Adopts Additional Catskill Trails

The Trail Conference has adopted an additional 10.3 miles of trail in the Catskill Forest Preserve: the Huckleberry Loop Trail in Dry Brook Ridge Wild Forest. Neglected and overgrown, this path historically has seen little use. Thanks to our Catskills Trail Crew volunteers, over 250 hours thus far have gone into rehabilitating this trail – including clearing nearly 30 blowdowns with non-motorized crosscut saws donated by a generous supporter.

NEW JERSEY TRAIL UPDATES

Empowering the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

Over the past decade, the Trail Conference has proudly partnered with the Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO), an organization dedicated to empowering and training youth to become environmental leaders. This year, our New Jersey Program Coordinator, Jesse Merbler, led trail work training for MEVO interns at Ramapo Valley County Reservation, marking a significant milestone, as it was their very first hands-on trail work experience.

During a summer work trip at Parsons Pond Park in Franklin Lakes, NJ, Jesse worked with the MEVO youth trail crew to clear a new trail through an area where invasive species were previously removed. The project was funded by the Trails Capacity Program, administered by American Trails and primarily funded by Bronco Wild Fund, a Ford Motor Company program dedicated to connecting people to the outdoors.



Alongside our staff and volunteers, MEVO serves as one of the primary trail resources in Northern New Jersey. We are proud to work together with MEVO, united by our shared commitment to making a positive impact on New Jersey's parks and trails!

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trails Adopted at Eagle Rock Reservation

The Trail Conference has adopted 15.1 miles of trails in Eagle Rock Reservation! Spanning 400+ acres in Essex County, NJ, the reservation boasts a network of trails for hikers of all ages and abilities. The park also contains a segment of the urban-suburban Lenape Trail, offering views of the NYC skyline, and is home to the Essex County 9/11 Memorial. The Trail Conference is proud to assume responsibility for these trails, ensuring they remain well-maintained and accessible.

New Bridge Improves Bus-to-Trail Connectivity

The Posts Brook Trail has long connected the 197 bus line from New York City with Norvin Green State Forest, providing a rare opportunity for hikers to access these trails via public transit. However, the absence of a bridge across Posts Brook meant that visitors were faced with a step-stone crossing, which was often inaccessible during periods of high water or icy conditions. As a result of this unreliable access, the trail saw little use.

Thanks to the support of a generous donor, the Lake losco community, and the efforts of the West Jersey Trail Crew, a new bridge has been built over Posts Brook. Our volunteers are hard at work ensuring that the trail is clipped, freshly-blazed, and ready to greet visitors.

Please note that there is no parking available at the trailhead, so those arriving by car will need to park in town. When visiting, please be respectful of the park's neighboring community.

TRIBUTE SUPPORTERS

JANUARY 1 - SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

As we reflect on this year's field season, the Trail Conference staff would like to express our sincere appreciation for those of you who made meaningful gifts in honor or memory of someone special to them. Each contribution, no matter the size, has played an integral role in advancing our mission.

TRIBUTES

In memory of Alfred "Arnie"

Seymour-Jones
Ruth Riesbeck
Gordon Stetz
Shirley Brower
Charles Kruger
David Phillips

In honor of Arden and Peat

Blumenthal
B Verdi

In honor of Ben Copp

Monica Smith

In honor of Catskills Community

Trails Fund
Matt Smith

In honor of David and Marina

Orentreich
Nicole Ruth
Michele Beiny Harkins

In memory of Donna Rodriguez

Amy Czuchlewski
Paul Czuchlewski
Stefani Czuchlewski
Eve Tambini
Sandra Wilson
Regina Warren
Nikki Katt

In memory of Dr. George Petty

Nicholas Goodman

In memory of Florence Feuer

Richard and Tammy Feuer

In memory of George L. Becker, Jr.

Robert Jonas and Estelle
Anderson

In memory of Henry Taylor

Laura Hilton

In memory of John Blenninger

Maeve Maurer

In honor of Joseph Keating

Stephen Budinsky

In honor of Ken Posner

Connie and Bob Eby
Michael Embler

In memory of Ken Weissman

Ellen Jaffe
Karen Kasper
Heather Norfleet
Renee and David Ramirez
Diane Wrobleski

In honor of Kori Phillips

Daniel Backenroth

In honor of Linda Malkin

Kenneth and Katja Mayer

In memory of Lucy Rushton

Ulrike Lindauer and Mike Rushton

In honor of Lydia and Jack Zakim

Sarah Blecherman

In memory of Marcus Koops

Angelika and Oliver Koops

In memory of H. Neil Zimmerman

JoAnn and Paul Dolan
Henry Atterbury

John Grob

Peter Heckler

Manuel J Silberberg

Steven Jervis

John Kolp

Douglas Robins

Malcolm Spector

Alice Tufel

Mari Tuohy

Georgette Weir and Jean Claude

Fouere

Hanson Wong

Gary Haugland

In memory of Patricia O'Hara

Mauricio Miranda and Patricia
O'Hara

In memory of Paul Forste

Eric Goldman

In memory of Richard Warner

Frederick Smith

In memory of Steven R. Moses

Sofia Milonas

In memory of Stewart Maurer

Maeve Maurer

In memory of Thomas Dunn

Jim and Gail Brown

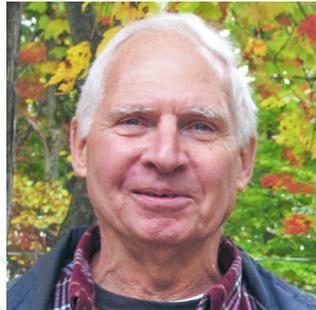
In memory of Wanda Giuffrida

Arlene-William and Bill Yarcich

IN MEMORIAM

John Mack

John Mack, a longtime volunteer leader of the Trail Conference who served in many different roles, passed away in July. John started volunteering in 2000 as a trail maintainer but quickly

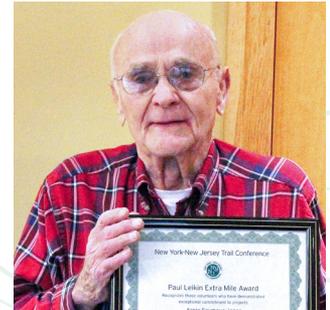


took on additional roles, including work with our Publications Committee, efforts related to construction of a network of hiking trails in Sterling Forest State Park, and advocacy efforts related to the Highlands Water Protection Act. He became the Trail Chair for the West Hudson South region in 2007 and was recognized for his exemplary leadership with the William Hoferlin Award in 2009. John continued his leadership by assisting with the West Hudson South Trail Crew as a crew member and sawyer, helping to lead numerous trail- and bridge-building efforts, serving as chair of a multi-use trails committee, and representing his region on the Trail Conference's Policy Council. John's work with the Publications Committee spanned more than 17 years and included serving as the project manager for the Trail Conference's North Jersey, Sterling Forest, and Harriman-Bear Mountain map sets, as well as contributing detailed GPS data and field-checking reports for these maps, as well as for other maps and books.

John was a Trail Chair "super volunteer" who approached his role as if it were a full-time job, forming close working relationships with state park staff and serving as a tireless advocate for trails. His passion and love of the trails he managed, especially in Harriman-Bear Mountain State Parks, was unparalleled, and we are grateful for his decades of service to the trail community. He will be greatly missed.

Alfred Seymour-Jones

Alfred Seymour-Jones, affectionately known as Arnie, passed away at the age of 95, leaving behind an indelible impact on the Trail Conference.



For nearly three decades, Arnie was a member of the Trail Conference and an active volunteer. He served as a trail maintainer in Harriman State Park and was one of the organization's most reliable map assembly volunteers, dedicating an afternoon every week to assembling maps. Over the years, Arnie assembled thousands of map sets.

When the pandemic forced the Trail Conference's offices to close in 2020, Arnie's dedication persevered. The Trail Conference enabled him to assemble maps at home, ensuring that this essential work continued safely. Even during a brief hospital stay, Arnie's daughter stepped in and took on the task of assembling hundreds of maps to keep the operation running.

The Trail Conference staff fondly remembers Arnie, with many cherishing the moments spent with him at the office. In recognition of his contributions and service, he received the esteemed Extra Mile Award in 2021.

Arnie's dedication to the Trail Conference is unparalleled, and we are grateful for his commitment and decades of invaluable service to our mission.

Setting the Women's Fastest Known Time on the Long Path

Imagine taking a 358-mile hike-run from Albany to New York City, traversing the highest peaks of the Catskills, Shawangunks, Hudson Highlands, and Palisades. Now picture yourself doing it in July with heat, humidity, wildfire smoke, and severe storms turning tiny creeks into raging rivers. Finally, imagine covering 38 miles per day and reaching Manhattan in just nine days and 10 hours. This superhuman feat was recently accomplished by Kim Levinsky, a generous Trail Conference supporter and head of Sassquad Trail Running. In addition to establishing the Long Path women's Fastest Known Time (FKT), Kim raised more than \$1,200 for the Trail Conference. We caught up with Kim to get her reflections on this epic trail experience.

Kim, congratulations on your amazing FKT! What made you choose to run the Long Path?

I credit Trail Conference board chair Ken Posner for planting the seed in my mind when we were volunteering at the Pocantico Hills Marathon last year. After researching the Long Path on the Trail Conference website, scouring social media groups, and chatting with friends, I started getting excited – and a little scared – about the journey. I began doing some scouting runs and just fell in love with the trail. I especially liked that so much of the Long Path is close to the New York metro area.

Why did you choose to raise funds for the TC, and what inspires you about the TC's work?

For me it was a no-brainer. The Trail Conference maintains the entire Long Path and is working to extend and improve it, so I wanted to support your work. Also, Sassquad Trail Parties [races] are held almost exclusively on lands cared for by the Trail Conference, so this seemed like a good way to raise funds and awareness for all that you are doing.

What did you enjoy most about the Long Path, and how does it differ from other long-distance trails you've run? My favorite sections were in the



Kim at a scenic view in Minnewaska State Park Preserve

Catskills. The Long Path is co-aligned with the region's most iconic and magical trails, like the Devil's Path, Burroughs Range, and Escarpment Trails. Minnewaska and the Gunks were hands down the most beautiful, with their pitch pines, ivory cliffs, and lakes. The Palisades are one of the unique, natural features of the east coast. I can't even describe the feeling as I crossed the George Washington Bridge at the end and was greeted by friends and supporters on the Manhattan side.

What did you consider to be your greatest challenges on this journey? Physically, the challenge of having wet feet for so long was very tough. The crew and supporters made such a difference by helping me cope with all the mental and physical challenges. The people supporting me helped me get up each morning and keep moving somehow. The power of community is incredible.

Why should people consider hiking or running the Long Path? I would encourage anyone to get out and experience the Long Path for themselves. It is totally unique, incredibly diverse, and so beautiful.

What advice would you offer to people considering a Long Path section hike or FKT attempt? Do your research and reach out to people who've done it before. I found fellow FKT holders to be very supportive when I reached out to them.

Thank you, Kim, for all the ways you support the Trail Conference and our work!

IN RECOGNITION

Celebrating a Legacy of Conservation: This Year's Gala Honorees

Anne Todd Osborn and Fred Osborn III serendipitously met in 1969, and after 52 years of marriage, three children and 10 grandchildren, their story is still being told. Conservation, advocacy, and service are the fabrics that weave this family together throughout generations. The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is proud to be a slice of this history and to include their family as part of our legacy.

In 1953, Anne's family donated more than 100 acres to the Nature Conservancy, creating what is now the Mianus River Gorge Preserve. This was the first land acquisition by the Nature Conservancy, and it was also the first National Natural History Landmark designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Ancestors of the Osborn family were instrumental in creating public-use lands, including the Garrison School Forest – 181 acres of wooded lands that includes a state Revolutionary War historic site – and portions of the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, whose trail network is maintained by the Trail Conference. In the 1960s, the family helped found the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference to fight the proposed construction of an enormous pumped-storage power plant along the Hudson River. The "Scenic Hudson decision," which blocked construction of the plant, is considered to be the start of the environmental movement.

Fred and Anne have both honored their families' traditional roots of land preservation and conserva-

tion, serving on the boards of various organizations within the greater Hudson Valley. Fred helped initiate the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, which continues to play a prominent role in their protection today. He is also proud to serve as a Commissioner for the Taconic Region of New York State Parks, enabling him to be an active participant in matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation. Anne was one of the founders of the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival and took on an increasingly involved role with the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater*, chairing its board for some 11 years. Anne's relationship with *Clearwater* helped make them a valued partner for our aquatics program with the Lower Hudson PRISM.

As visionary environmental leaders,

their shared commitment and affinity to conserve, protect, and advocate for the precious lands around our region was a natural segway to the impact they've had at the Trail Conference. The Osborns have been an integral part of our Trail Family for nearly four decades as volunteer supporters, serving on numerous advisory boards and volunteer committees. Fred's experience in his 35-year career as the Director of Philanthropic Services for the National Episcopal Church enabled him to assist with the search for a Trail Conference Development Director in the early 2000's. Having earned a Masters degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Science, Anne served as



Fred and Anne Osborn circa 2013

Science Committee Chair, helping to lead the invasives efforts and to design the program now known as Invasives Task Force. Anne also served on the Trail Conference Board of Directors for several terms, and as a member of the Steering Committee for the restoration and renovation of the Darlington Schoolhouse as our new, permanent Headquarters in Mahwah, NJ. Over the years, the couple opened their home, "Cat Rock," in Garrison, to host gatherings to bring awareness to and raise funds for land acquisition efforts in the Hudson Valley.

Continuing their legacy by passing down the environmental values that were instilled in them to safeguard our shared spaces, their son, Hank Osborn, is writing the next chapter of this family's rich history in conservation and advocacy as the Director of Programs at the Trail Conference. Hank continues to build off the legacies of those who came before him with the creation of our Trail Stewards Program, which is being implemented and replicated at high volume trailheads to mitigate ecological impacts in natural areas. Hank's daughter Lila is also joining the family tradition, earning a Masters in Environmental Planning from the University of Montana and now serving as the Senior Planner for Butte-Silverbow County, MT. Also on the path are grandchildren Freddy and Maya, who are National Outdoor Leadership School graduates.



Fred and Anne hiking at Ram's Head in the U.S. Virgin Islands



JOIN US!

The Osborns' service in advancing the Trail Conference's mission is commendable and deserving of a special celebration as the honorees at our 2023 Annual Gala on October 13th in Garrison, NY. Please join us! Tables and individual tickets can be purchased at nynjtc.org/gala23.



TRAIL CONFERENCE SELECTED AS LOCAL CHARITY OF CHOICE

The Trail Conference expresses its gratitude to Subaru Distributors Corp. and the DeSilva Family at Liberty Subaru in Emerson, NJ for their ongoing support, through sponsorships and Subaru's annual Share the Love® event. Since 2020, Subaru has generously sponsored our volunteer training and chosen the Trail Conference as a Hometown Charity. This year's total contributions of \$71,000 will enable us to further improve our trails by supporting trail work throughout the region.

The Trail Conference is honored to be chosen as a Hometown Charity for the fourth consecutive year in the 2023 Subaru Share the Love® event, running from November 16, 2023 to January 2, 2024. During this time, Liberty Subaru will generously donate \$50 for each new car purchased or leased. In addition, Liberty will donate \$250 for each new vehicle purchased or leased when the customer chooses to support the Trail Conference at their Emerson, NJ location, as well as at Liberty Hyundai and Genesis in Mahwah, NJ and Liberty Kia in Ramsey, NJ. Trail Conference members can also receive special pricing on select models at Liberty dealerships.

Thank you to Liberty and Subaru Distributors Corp. for their ongoing support of our mission!

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Stay Connected!



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Help the Trail Conference rebuild and protect vital trails in our region after this summer's intense storms by taking part in our annual Trail-A-Thon!

Our Trail-A-Thon is a month-long event open to all, regardless of experience! Contribute to our work, including our storm recovery efforts, win prizes, and have fun by raising funds from your circle of friends and family while exploring your favorite park, hiking a new trail, taking a stroll around your neighborhood, or even hitting the treadmill. Set your own mileage and fundraising goals and hit the trail throughout October!

Where will your Trail-A-Thon challenge take you? Hike, bike, walk, or run to support your favorite places!



SCAN THE CODE TO
LEARN MORE AND REGISTER!

