



SUMMER 2026

TRAILWALKER

BUILDING, MAINTAINING, AND PROTECTING MORE THAN
2,100 MILES OF PUBLIC TRAILS & LANDS

Trail and Summit Stewards: Protecting the Pathways You Love

6 Tips for Applying
Leave No Trace on Your
Next Hiking Adventure

Wanaque and Monksville
Reservoirs: Hidden Histories
Beneath the Water

CONTENTS

- 6** Trail and Summit Stewards:
Protecting the Pathways
You Love
- 8** A Day on the Path with Our
Trail & Summit Stewards
- 10** Voices from the Trail:
Returning Stewards
Share Their Stories
- 13** Wanaque and Monksville
Reservoirs: Hidden Histories
Beneath the Water
- 15** 6 Tips for Applying
Leave No Trace on Your
Next Hiking Adventure
- 17** Trails of the Revolution:
Hiking America's War for
Independence in the
Hudson Valley



6

15

Stay Connected

Trail news and stories straight to
your inbox—join our email list!



SCAN TO
SIGN UP!



TRAIL WALKER (USPS Permit #970-100) (ISSN: 0749-1352) is published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference as a benefit of membership. Periodical postage paid at Mahwah, N.J., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to the address below.

Copyright 2026 by:

New York-New Jersey
Trail Conference, Inc.
600 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, NJ 07430
Phone: 201.512.9348
Email: info@nynjtc.org
Website: www.nynjtc.org

Opinions expressed by Trail Walker authors do not necessarily represent those of the Trail Conference. Submission of photos and news for print consideration are welcome from members and nonmembers.



TRAIL WALKER

VOLUME LIV, SUMMER
No. 1 2026

PREVIOUS TRAIL WALKER: FALL/WINTER 2025-26 EDITION
MANAGING EDITOR: MATTHEW THOMPSON
MAGAZINE LAYOUT AND DESIGN: TRILLION

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.

Board of Directors

Ken Posner	Chair
David Felsenthal	Vice Chair
Alan Davidson	Secretary
David Togut	Treasurer

Directors

Felicity Arengo	Juan Melli
Alan Davidson	Sreeni Nair
Todd Finger	Michael Pashley
Charles Gadol	Seth Reichlin
Kalyan Ghosh	David Togut
Emily Hague	Mary Ann Villari
Sara Kleinberg	

Senior Staff

Joshua Howard	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Mary Perro	CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Hank Osborn	DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
Pat Gallagher	ADVANCEMENT DIRECTOR
Don Weise	DIRECTOR OF DONOR ADVISING
Brent Boscarino	DIRECTOR OF LAND STEWARDSHIP

For a full list of staff, visit nynjtc.org/about-us

Cover photo by Catskill Summit Steward Selena Flanigan

PLEASE RECYCLE TRAIL WALKER

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Trail Walker is a magazine published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430. The managing editor is Matthew Thompson, at the same address. The annual subscription price is \$15; contact person is Matthew Thompson; telephone number is 201-512-9348. Magazine layout and design by Trillion. The tax status of the organization has not changed during the preceding 12 months. As of the filing date of March 9, 2023, the average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months was 7,500; the actual number of copies of the single issue published nearest to the filing date was 7,500. The paper has a total paid and/or requested circulation of 4,454 (average) and 4,454 (actual, most recent issue). The free distribution for the 12 months preceding the filing date was 1,549 (average) and 1,549 (actual, most recent issue). The total average distribution was 7,036; the actual distribution of the single issue published nearest to the filing date was 7,036. This information is reported on U. S. Postal Service Form 3526 and here as required by 39 USC 3685.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

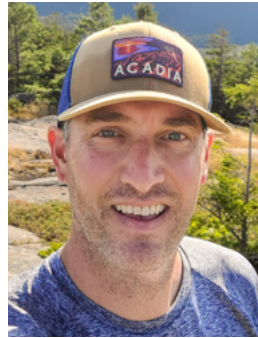
In 2019, I attended a 5-day Leave No Trace Master Educator course at the National Outdoor Leadership School in the Adirondacks. Ten strangers set out to hike, camp, and share the ultimate hands-on learning experience.

This was unlike any college course, professional development workshop, or online tutorial I had experienced. We lived what we learned. We planned our trip, traveled and camped on durable surfaces, disposed of our waste properly, left what we found, minimized campfire impacts, respected wildlife, and were considerate of others.

My course had a diverse group of students. There was a summer camp director from Canada, an NPS Ranger, a college outings leader, a father-daughter duo, and an avid trail lover. We all expected to learn a little more about Leave No Trace and apply those lessons to responsible trail stewardship. However, none of us, especially me, expected to walk away realizing that our individual experiences could impact tens of thousands of people. And yet that's precisely what happened.

To become a LNT Master Educator, you're taught the seven LNT principles in the field. The power of this learning style thoroughly took me. Combining content lessons with hands-on teaching techniques proved a powerful catalyst for my enlightenment. While I was a proponent of LNT before my trip, during this class, I became a believer in both what we were learning and how we were learning it. Connecting the principles to our on-the-ground outdoor experience deepened my learning. It super-saturated my brain.

On the last day, our instructor asked us how we would apply what we had learned in our course. The light switch clicked on. Over the next decade, through



JOSHUA HOWARD
Executive Director

the Trail Conference's Conservation Corps, we could amplify LNT principles by almost 500 additional voices. Every Conservation Corps member would become an LNT trainer, from our Invasives Strike Force Crew to our Trail and Summit Stewards. Year after year, they'd promote responsible recreation, wherever their journey took them. We'd be a major force multiplier!

During our first 100 years, the Trail Conference focused on building and maintaining trails for public enjoyment. As we enter our second century, our role has evolved to steward the lands and trails we love. Not only will we provide the public with the best trail network in a major metropolitan area, but we will also prepare thousands of visitors to enjoy them safely and sustainably.

I encourage you to join us by attending a workshop at our newly constructed Learning Pavilion at the Welch Trail Education Center in Harriman State Park. Whether it's an LNT awareness seminar, Trail Maintenance workshop, or one of our ecological classes, each offers a way to deepen trail knowledge. Together, we can all make a difference in keeping these amazing outdoor spaces healthy and welcoming for everyone.

Josh Howard

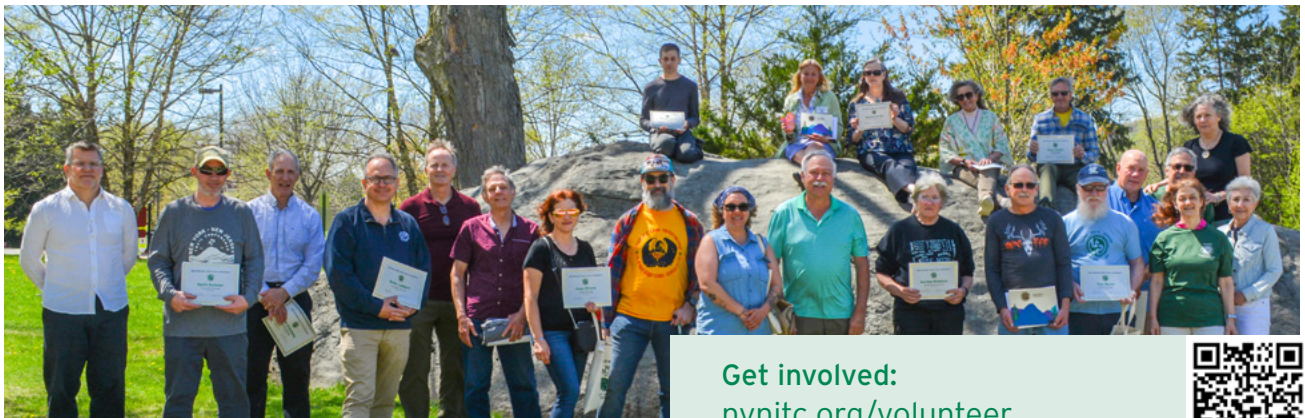
BOARD & STAFF UPDATES



Todd Finger

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Todd Finger is a corporate partner in the New York office of McDermott Will & Schulte, an international law firm. Todd is a Trail Conference volunteer maintainer in Westchester County and is a supervisor in Harriman State Park. He is an avid hiker and kayaker. Todd earned his B.B.A. from Emory University and his J.D. from New York University School of Law. **Welcome, Todd!**



Get involved:
nynjtc.org/volunteer



Congrats to Our 2026 Volunteer Award Winners!

On April 18, 2026, we gathered for our Volunteer Appreciation Event, a cherished tradition that honors our 2,000-strong volunteer community and recognizes those who go above and beyond with well-deserved awards.

Volunteer Engagement Manager Katie Kourakos kicked off the festivities by celebrating the room full of volunteers:

"This year, we welcomed many new volunteers to our extended Trail Conference family, whether working with our Conservation Corps, rerouting a trail, or training new volunteers to maintain trails. We're all so proud to have you as part of the Trail Conference family, and I feel fortunate to call you part of my extended trail family too."

A big-hearted congratulations to all the award winners. And to everyone in our volunteer community, thank you. Your passion for protecting public trail lands inspires us all.



From rail trails to forest climbs, Ulster County boasts an abundance of stunning vistas and diverse terrain. Hike, bike, and explore where the Hudson Valley meets the Catskills.

Visit UlsterCountyNY.com

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

In a year of challenge and triumph, our community rose to meet the moment—restoring trails, safeguarding wild places, and guiding thousands to their next outdoor adventure.

What we accomplish together continues to sustain the landscapes we love.

YOUR PARKS AND TRAILS

We maintained and protected nearly
2,200
 miles of trails across the Northeast, including nearly
1,400
 miles of trails in New York and
800
 miles of trails in New Jersey

260+
parks served

25+
counties served

160+
public and private agency partners

COMMUNITY IMPACT

2,000+
volunteers dedicated
70,000+ hours to preserve
 our parks and trails

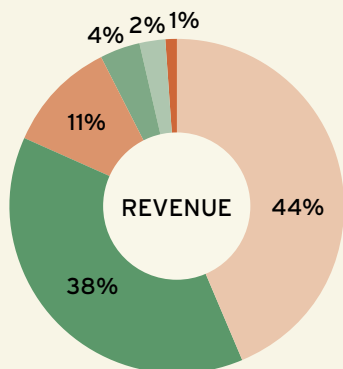
26
Trail Conference Conservation
 Corps members contributed
22,000 hours of service to
 public trails across the region

10,000+
hikers educated
 by our Trail &
 Summit Stewards

795,560
outdoor enthusiasts
 reached across our digital
 and print platforms

FY 2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

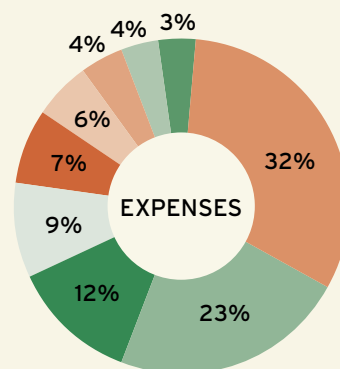
4,451 individual donors, foundations, and corporate partners



REVENUE

- Contributions:**
\$1,894,691 (44%)
- Grants & Contracts:**
\$1,643,354 (38%)
- Net Investment Income:**
\$469,786 (11%)
- Membership:** \$175,712 (4%)
- Sales of Books, Maps & Other Items:** \$100,924 (2%)
- In-Kind Contributions:** \$46,418 (1%)

TOTAL: \$4,330,884



EXPENSES

- Trail Programs:**
\$1,364,225 (32%)
- Stewardship:** \$981,541 (23%)
- Fundraising:** \$519,374 (12%)
- Management & General:** \$392,881 (9%)
- Outreach:** \$310,703 (7%)
- Volunteer:** \$241,202 (6%)
- Publications:** \$158,601 (4%)
- Darlington Headquarters:** \$150,189 (3%)

TOTAL: \$4,291,840



Trail & Summit Stewards: Protecting the Pathways You Love

By Myra Romano, Trail Steward Program Coordinator

The Northeast is home to exceptional hiking, from the riverview trails of the Hudson Highlands and the serene forests of the Shawangunks to rewarding Catskill vistas. But did you know that as you explore these scenic landscapes, our Hudson Valley Trail Stewards and Catskill Summit Stewards are hard at work protecting the pathways that make it all possible?

Every weekend and holiday from May through October, our Trail and Summit Stewards—members of the Trail Conference Conservation Corps—are stationed throughout the Hudson Valley, Shawangunks, and Catskills. They staff busy trailheads, patrol high-use summits, and engage hikers in real conversations about Leave No Trace principles and responsible recreation.

In many ways, our stewards are the friendly face of the outdoors: the folks who greet you at the trailhead, teach you how to observe wildlife, or provide first aid assistance when you sustain an injury. Each season, our stewards log thousands of meaningful interactions—and each conversation is an opportunity to turn a curious hiker into a committed steward of the land, spreading a conservation mindset far beyond the trail.



A Friendly Hello Is Just the Beginning

The work of our Trail and Summit Stewards goes well beyond greeting visitors. They also collect data on trail conditions, visitor use patterns, and wildlife activity. That information flows directly to land managers and helps shape decisions about how our trails are maintained and protected for future generations. When a trail erodes, fragile vegetation gets trampled, or an informal herd path threatens a sensitive habitat, it's often a steward who first sounds the alarm.

Our Summit Stewards take on some of the most challenging terrain in the region, protecting high-elevation areas where the surrounding habitat and wildlife are especially vulnerable. In the Catskill Forest Preserve, delicate summit ecosystems depend on hikers making informed choices. Our stewards are there to make sure they do.

Trained to Protect, Ready for Anything

Becoming a Trail or Summit Steward requires a rigorous, multi-faceted training process. Before ever setting foot on an assignment, our stewards complete Wilderness First Aid certification, equipping them to respond confidently to real-world medical emergencies far from quick access to emergency care. They also earn Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor certification, giving them the tools and credibility to educate fellow hikers in meaningful, lasting ways.

Each steward attends site-specific orientations for their assigned locations, because the ecology, visitor dynamics, and land management priorities of the Shawangunk Ridge differ greatly from those

of Catskill summits or a popular trail in the Hudson Highlands. Stewards also participate in collaborative training with our agency and nonprofit partners, building relationships and shared expertise across the broader conservation community.

Rounding out their preparation, stewards receive hands-on instruction in trail maintenance, invasive species identification and management, and visitor engagement best practices, learning not just what to say to a hiker, but how to say it in a way that resonates and inspires. The result is a highly skilled team of knowledgeable conservation ambassadors, ready for whatever the trail brings.

The Ripple Effect of Stewardship

The impact of a single interaction with a Trail or Summit Steward is hard to overstate. A hiker who learns how to extinguish a campfire properly may share that knowledge with a dozen friends. A family guided back to a trail after getting lost may return the following year as volunteers. This ripple effect, multiplied across hundreds of interactions each weekend, is how our Trail and Summit Stewards elevate outdoor culture across the region and ensure our cherished landscapes remain safe, vibrant, and welcoming for generations to come.

You can be part of this effort. Whether you're drawn to a particular summit, a favorite trail corridor, or simply a passion for sharing these wild places responsibly, our Trail Steward Program welcomes new members every season. No advanced scientific training is required, just a love of the outdoors and a commitment to protecting it.

The Trail Steward program is funded in part by the Recreational Trails Program, an assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. It's also supported through a partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, with funding provided from the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Scan the QR code to learn more!
bit.ly/TC-Stewards



A day on the path with our Trail & Summit Stewards

A dawn-to-dusk journey into the extraordinary work they do!



8:00 AM – Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve

WELCOMING HIKERS & REROUTING AROUND CLOSURES

As the sun rises over the **Hudson Highlands**, Trail Stewards begin their day by greeting the first hikers on the trail. Two visitors pause to ask about the best way to reach **Breakneck Ridge**. With a closure in place, the stewards explain the update, offer an alternative route, and help the hikers start their day with confidence.

9:30 AM – Neversink River Unique Area

TRAILHEAD SUPPORT & MAINTENANCE

At the **Neversink River Unique Area**, one steward remains at the trailhead to help orient first-time visitors. Another steward heads out to collect litter and clear small blowdowns left behind by a recent storm, quietly improving the outdoor experience for everyone on the trail.



11:45 AM – Giant Ledge – Catskill Forest Preserve

PREVENTING FOREST FIRES

At **Giant Ledge**, a routine campsite check reveals an unauthorized fire ring, still holding heat. With care, the steward gathers water from a nearby spring, fully extinguishes the embers, and dismantles the ring. It's a small but critical action, one that reduces the risk of wildfire and helps preserve the landscape.



1:15 PM – Sam's Point Area of Minnewaska State Park Preserve

RESPONDING TO A HEAT EMERGENCY

At **Sam's Point**, a steward encounters a hiker showing signs of heat exhaustion along the **Verkeerder Kill Falls Footpath**. They provide water and electrolytes and coordinate with park staff to ensure the hiker can make it back safely. Moments like these highlight how stewards are often the first line of support in the field.





2:15 PM – Blackhead Range – Catskill Forest Preserve

HELPING HIKERS NAVIGATE SAFELY

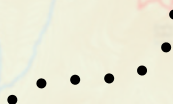
Not every interaction is urgent, but each one matters. On the approach to **Blackhead Mountain**, a hiker hesitates at a trail junction. A Summit Steward stops to help, using a map to orient them and guide them towards the correct route. A simple conversation prevents confusion and keeps the hike on track.



3:30 PM – Minnewaska State Park Preserve

TEACHING LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

At **Gertrude's Nose**, a Trail Steward connects with a family taking photos of the dramatic cliffs. Through a friendly conversation, they share **Leave No Trace principles** and offer practical ways to protect the cliffs, vegetation, and trails beneath their feet. These small lessons leave a lasting impression, shaping how people recreate long after the hike is over.



5:15 PM – Slide Mountain – Catskill Forest Preserve

ENDING THE DAY WITH SAFETY IN MIND

As evening approaches, a Summit Steward meets two hikers preparing to climb **Slide Mountain** without proper gear. The steward shares sunset timing, explains the risks of relying on phone lights, and recommends a shorter nearby hike. This simple intervention helps prevent a risky situation before it begins.



In 2025, our Trail & Summit Stewards...

Educated over **10,000 hikers** across the Hudson Valley and Catskill regions.
Removed **75 unauthorized fire rings** and carried out over **170 bags of trash**.
Provided first aid assistance to **16 injured hikers**.

Stewardship Matters—Every Single Day.

Stewards assist thousands of hikers each season and protect the pathways that make our region special. A steward's single day includes countless moments of connection and care, each one **protecting the future of the trail lands we cherish**.

Voices from the Trail

Returning stewards share the connections that inspired them and the experiences that brought them back

Em Brown and Eric Wien know what it means to show up for the trail. As stewards during the 2025 Trail Conference Conservation Corps season—Em with the Catskill Summit Stewards and Eric with the Hudson Valley Trail Stewards—they spent their days caring for the land and connecting with hikers who journeyed along the path.

Now, returning for the 2026 season as Steward Crew Leaders, they bring not just experience but a deepened sense of purpose. In their own words, here's what keeps them coming back.

Em Brown

**2026 Catskill Summit
Steward Crew Leader,
2025 Catskill Summit
Steward**

As I make my way towards each summit, I repeat to myself, "onwards and upwards."

To be succinct, my experience last season with the Trail Conference Conservation Corps profoundly changed my life, both personally and professionally.

I joined the Corps after a period of social isolation and burnout. Every rock scrambled, branch pruned, trash picked up, fire ring cleaned, conversation held, and view taken in guided me to a deeper connection with my mind, body, and the natural world around me. And with each human connection made, a deeper understanding of a greater purpose.

Professionally, I have been challenged in new ways and am grateful to work alongside others who share the same goal of making the world a better place. I look forward to reconnecting with familiar faces on the trail and witnessing the Catskills change throughout each season. Returning as a Steward Crew Leader is continuing the journey of aiding, guiding, learning, educating, advocating, and protecting.



Eric Wien

**2026 Hudson Valley Trail
Steward Crew Leader,
2025 Hudson Valley
Trail Steward**

I am so excited to be back with the Trail Conference Conservation Corps and to resume stewarding in the Hudson Valley this season. I had such a positive experience in 2025, and I look forward to creating more wonderful memories and connecting with others out on the trails.

One of my favorite parts of the position is engaging with the public. Whether it's discussing local fauna and flora, how to interpret trail blazes and maps, favorite trails in the area, or going over Leave No Trace principles—it's always a pleasure building a connection with other outdoor enthusiasts. It's such a rewarding experience when you're able to help a hiker who's lost or injured or maybe just has a couple of questions.

The Steward program has helped foster my ability to build relationships with others and deepen my relationship with the outdoors, for which I'm truly grateful.





SUMMER 2026

New York Trail Updates

Photo by Krysti Sabins

West Hudson South Trail Crew

The West Hudson South Trail Crew will focus on improving some of the most persistently wet and impacted trail segments in Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks. Planned work includes targeted improvements along the Tuxedo-Mount Ivy, Ramapo-Dunderberg, Victory, Red Cross, Arden-Surebridge, Nurian, White Bar, Twin Forts, and 1777W Trails. Many of these areas experience chronic standing water, muddy tread, and trail widening as hikers move off-trail to avoid wet conditions. Work will address drainage, stabilize the tread, and better define the trail corridor.

Hudson Nor'Westers Trail Crew

The Hudson North'Westers Trail Crew is ready for a busy 2026 season at Minnewaska State Park Preserve, focusing on trail durability, safety, and visitor experience along popular routes including Gertrude's Nose, the Scenic Trail, Rainbow Falls, Mossy Glen, High Peter's Kill, and the Red Loop. Efforts will target erosion, unclear tread, and social trails through stonework, drainage improvements, and tread hardening. Projects include repairing eroded sections, installing stone steps, improving stream crossings, adding crushed stone to turnpikes, and brushing in unofficial paths.

Westchester East Trail Crew

The Westchester East Trail Crew will focus on infrastructure upgrades, improved wayfinding, and long-term sustainability at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation and Mountain Lakes Park. At Ward Pound Ridge, they'll build a 16-foot bridge, refresh blazes, and

improve the Deer Hollow Trail near the Brown Trail junction by addressing erosion and wet conditions, while restoring the old trail corridor. At Mountain Lakes Park, they'll construct a 20-foot bridge, reblaze the trail system, and formalize a connector from Hunt Lane to the Old Sib Trail.

Catskills Trail Crew

Along with routine maintenance, the Catskills Trail Crew will prioritize areas needing additional attention, particularly in the southwestern Catskills. Focus areas include the Millbrook Ridge and Pine Hill-West Branch Trails, with additional work on the Warner Creek, Phoenicia East Branch, and Escarpment Trails.

Bash Bish Builders Trail Crew

The Bash Bish Builders will continue rerouting the South Taconic Trail near Alander Mountain and improve its junction with the Alander Brook Trail. Due to steep, rocky terrain with minimal soil, they'll generate significant crushed stone to stabilize and elevate the trail surface.

Long Distance Trails Crew

The Long Distance Trails Crew kicked off the 2026 season by returning to Agony Grind along the Appalachian Trail to complete the restoration project they started in 2025. This section of the A.T. on the westernmost boundary of Harriman State Park is notoriously steep, and over the years, the trail has succumbed to erosion. The Crew will continue rebuilding steps, defining the trail, and adding features to improve hiker safety.



SUMMER 2026

New Jersey Trail Updates

Photo by The Nature Conservancy

MEVO Trail Crew

The Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO), has long been a partner of the Trail Conference. This season, they'll kick off an array of projects in parks across Bergen, Passaic, and Morris Counties. Volunteer leaders working with the MEVO Trail Crew will move rocks and create more sustainable trail surfaces, while making trails safer and more enjoyable for visitors.

RAD Trail Crew

Meanwhile, the Ring-a-Ding RAD Trail Crew will focus on Mahlon Dickerson Reservation, in collaboration with the Jersey Off-Road Bicycling Association (JORBA) and Morris County Parks Commission. The crew, led by Karl Weiss and his dedicated team of volunteers, will continue improving multi-use trails in the Reservation, benefiting both hikers and mountain bikers.

West Jersey Trail Crew

The venerable West Jersey Trail Crew will continue working with local partners this season to make major improvements across northwestern New Jersey, from Stokes State Forest to Wawayanda State Park.

Exciting Trail News for High Mountain Park Preserve

High Mountain Park Preserve, managed by The Nature Conservancy and jointly maintained by the Trail Conference, will undergo a trail network upgrade. The project will involve volunteers from the Trail Conference and The Nature Conservancy re-blazing the trail system and introducing new official pathways.

The improved network will feature multi-use trails and an intuitively blazed trail system to preserve protected habitats and create a more sustainable, user-friendly outdoor experience. Stay up to date on the progress in High Mountain Park Preserve via our Trail Alerts page: nynjtc.org/trail-alerts

Get Involved

We're hosting a series of Trail University workshops across New Jersey this summer and you're welcome to join us! Many of these workshops will be led by experienced volunteers and cover topics such as Intro to Trail Maintenance, Graffiti Neutralization, and more.

In addition to workshop opportunities, we're always looking to grow our Roving Trail Crew. We have several projects throughout New Jersey that will call upon our Roving Trail Crew, including exciting multi-use trail creation in the northern section of Norvin Green State Forest, graffiti cleanup, trail clearing, and more.

Want to learn more about how to get involved with the Trail Conference?

Visit nynjtc.org/trail-u for information on **Trail University**, or bit.ly/RovingCrew for information on the **Roving Trail Crew**.



Wanaque and Monksville Reservoirs

Exploring the deep history hidden beneath the water

By Eileen West

Looking out over Monksville Reservoir from Horse Pond Mountain along the Highlands Trail. Photo by Myra Romano

The Highlands Trail is a 180-mile route maintained by the Trail Conference, running from the Riegelsville Bridge on the Delaware River at the Pennsylvania-New Jersey border to Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York. The epic pathway guides you through forests, rolling ridges, and deep valleys. One of its most impressive segments is in New Jersey, on Map 151 of the Trail Conference's Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails Map Set: a rugged, scenic 10.4-mile stretch that runs north from Townsend Road to Greenwood Lake Turnpike.

This trail segment climbs several summits, including Little Windbeam, Windbeam, Bear, Board, Harrison, and Horse Pond Mountains. Hearty hikers who traverse it will enjoy sweeping views of the Wanaque and Monksville Reservoirs below—two expanses of water renowned for their beauty and deep regional history.

Rich Reservoirs of the Past

By the late 1880s, the water supplied to Newark, Paterson, and other populous communities had become contaminated. Public officials sought safe new sources of drinking water and turned to the Wanaque River, known for its exceptionally pure water quality.

Construction of a vast reservoir commenced in 1920. By the time the Wanaque Reservoir began

delivering water to customers in 1930, New Jersey was also facing the first of several severe droughts.

The reservoir brought desperately needed relief on both fronts. But such a large project required massive changes to the land and the community. Dozens of buildings and homes were razed to make way for the reservoir. According to a July 5, 1928, article in *Asbury Park Press*, the remains of more than 200 people from four cemeteries were exhumed and moved to other resting places, while workers had to relocate 10 miles of highway and six miles of railroad track. The loss of the Wanaque River Paper Mill, a major employer, to reservoir construction left many locals without work just as the country entered the Great Depression.

Water, Water, Everywhere

While the Wanaque project successfully delivered pure drinking water to recipients, it could not meet their needs during subsequent droughts. By the 1980s, it became clear that a standby reservoir was required. The small settlement of Monksville was chosen. It, too, was demolished and flooded. Preservationists managed to preserve a few historic homes, but all other buildings were torn down, and the Monks family cemetery was relocated.



Railroad tracks were laid to carry materials during the construction of the reservoir. Photo courtesy of the DeBenedetto Collection, Wanaque Public Library



The Ryerson House on Hook Road, with the Drew family in front. The site is now entirely beneath the Wanaque Reservoir. Photo courtesy of the DeBenedetto Collection, Wanaque Public Library

Sadly, northern New Jersey endured two severe water shortages after the Monksville Reservoir was built, including one that lasted four years, from 1998 to 2002. During these periods, the reservoirs' water levels dropped so low that vestiges of the valley's past emerged, revealing foundations of houses, streets, and remnants of old mines.

Glenn Oleksak, Highlands Trail Supervisor for the Trail Conference, tells of walking the streets of the old Boardville settlement, normally underwater, and finding artifacts in what was the basement of a former house.

But the story of the Wanaque Reservoir and its history would not be complete without mention of another, more mysterious series of events.

"The Roswell of the Ramapos"

According to an in-depth investigation from *Weird N.J.*, it seems that on two consecutive nights in January 1966, many people in Wanaque and adjacent towns reported seeing an object hovering over the reservoir. It was consistently described as disc- or oval-shaped, with a bright white light that shifted to red, sometimes to green, then back to white. Those who saw it said it glided silently through the air, side to side and up and down, and, at one point, released a bolt of light that melted a hole in the ice before disappearing over the mountains. Witnesses included people whose accounts were considered reliable: the town's mayor, three council members, two Wanaque Civil Defense Agency employees, two patrolmen, and a sergeant from the Wanaque Police.

The object reappeared briefly one October night. As people slowed their cars near the dam to get a look, a Wanaque policeman turned on his patrol car's

lights to warn oncoming motorists. In that instant, he said, the object "sped away over the reservoir and disappeared." It was never seen again.

Numerous attempts were made to explain the sightings. The nonprofit research group Vestigia concluded that the lights were caused by seismic pressure from the nearby Ramapo fault. The United States Army said the sightings were due to swamp gas or possibly a helicopter. The Pentagon assured people that what they saw was nothing more than the planets Venus and Jupiter in a rare celestial alignment. But many of the residents of Wanaque believe otherwise, and they call the area "The Roswell of the Ramapos."

An Out-of-This-World Hiking Adventure

Returning to terra firma of the present day, intrepid hikers on the Highlands Trail can extend their adventure southward from Townsend Road into Norvin Green State Forest, where passionate Trail Conference volunteers recently completed an extensive reblazing project. Several trail blaze colors have been updated for consistency, and new loops have been added to make the trail system easier to navigate.

Whether you explore this section of the Highlands Trail all at once or in segments, be sure to climb one of its many high points. You'll be rewarded with outstanding reservoir views, a glimpse into the region's storied past, and, who knows, perhaps something extraordinary in the sky!

A special thank you to Mary Martin, Library Director of the Wanaque Public Library, whose expertise and guidance were invaluable to this article.

Tread Thoughtfully

Helpful tips to Leave No Trace on your next hiking adventure

By Myra Romano, Trail Steward Program Coordinator and Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor



Spending time outdoors offers a powerful connection to nature, but with that connection comes a responsibility to protect the land that surrounds you.

The Leave No Trace principles provide a simple, science-based framework to help minimize our impact while still enjoying the outdoors. Whether you're heading out for a short hike or a multi-day backpacking adventure, these practices help protect our natural spaces so they remain healthy, resilient, and accessible for future visitors.

As a Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor, I often hear people ask what these principles actually look like on the trail. In reality, it comes down to small, thoughtful decisions. Here are six tips to put Leave No Trace into action on your next hike!

Tip #1: Start Smart, Hike Happy

A little research before you leave the house can make the difference between a smooth day on the trail and a frustrating one. Before heading out, check trail conditions and access points, identify backup parking options, and download offline maps for your journey home. Having a plan B (or even a plan C) means you spend less time problem-solving and more time doing what you came for.

Tip #2: Mud Is the Trail, Not an Obstacle

It's tempting to walk around muddy sections, especially in spring or after a soaking summer rain. But every time someone sidesteps the mud, the trail gets a little wider, and the vegetation on the edges gets trampled, making it harder for plants to recover and easier for erosion to spread. Instead of avoiding the mud, step right through it—your boots were made for it, and doing so helps keep trails defined and sustainable!

Tip #3: Capture, Don't Collect

That perfect pinecone or interesting rock is best left where it is. Even small removals from nature add up, stripping the landscape of seeds, shelter, and nutrients other plants and animals depend on. Take a photo or sketch what you find instead. It's a small act that doubles as a mindful moment, helping you slow down and take in exactly where you are.

Tip #4: Think Before You Burn

Before building a campfire, consider current conditions, such as drought or limited water sources. A fire that isn't fully extinguished can smolder and spread, threatening the very landscape you came to enjoy. In places like the Catskills, water can be scarce, meaning you may need to use precious drinking water to put out the blaze.

Tip #5: Observe, Don't Disturb

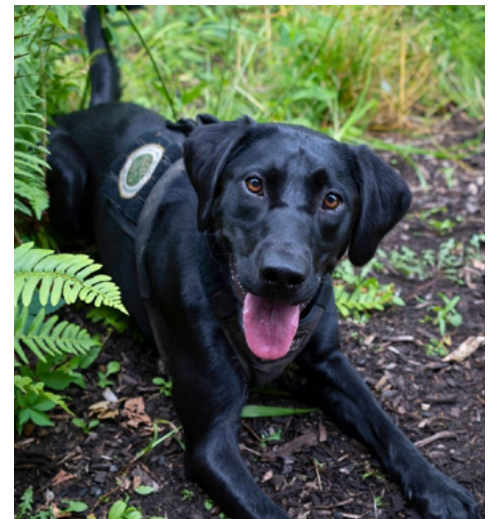
Wildlife encounters are one of the best parts of hitting the trail. But getting too close or handling animals, even with the best intentions, can stress them out, disrupt feeding and nesting, and in some cases cause real physical harm. Encourage observation from a distance and let your encounter be on the animal's terms.

Tip #6: The Trail Belongs to Everyone

The outdoors is a shared space, and simple courtesies go a long way. Share viewpoints, step aside to let others pass, and keep voices low to help ensure that everyone, from solo hikers to families on their first hiking adventure, can enjoy the outdoors.

Leave No Trace isn't about following rules or perfection. It's about intention. Every time you hit the trail, you have the power to make small choices that help keep our landscapes wild, healthy, and worth revisiting.

STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



This 2026 field season, the Stewardship Department is focused yet again on the protection of our natural lands, from trails to tails!

The Invasives Strike Force is primed for a productive season and is excited to welcome returning Corps member Griffin Rynne as its Crew Leader. Early detection and rapid response efforts continue to show strong progress, with ongoing work targeting sticky sage, giant hogweed, Scotch broom, and kudzu. The team will also address a report of Hamilton's spindletree (*Euonymus hamiltonianus*), a newly identified invasive plant and the only known occurrence in the lower Hudson Valley. Early action is critical to prevent its spread. Together, these efforts will help protect the region's ecosystems from emerging threats.

The Trail Steward Program had a strong start to the 2026 season, with returning Crew Leaders Em Brown and Eric Wien providing interpretive education at two vernal pools in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve during April. The full Conservation Corps Trail Steward team joined in mid-May. From Memorial Day through October, Stewards will be stationed at high-elevation summits in the Catskill Forest Preserve, as well as at Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Sam's Point Area of Minnewaska, and the Neversink River Unique Area. Flip to page 6 to learn more about our Trail and Summit Stewards and the extraordinary work they do!

From our four-legged stewards, the Trail Conference's Conservation Dogs Program recently received a \$157,820 grant through New York State's Invasive Species Grant Program, administered by the New York

State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Thanks to this generous grant, the Conservation Dogs Program will deploy its trained detection dog team across the lower Hudson Valley in 2027 and 2028 to target six high-priority invasive plant species that threaten the region's biodiversity. Our efforts will not only boost ecosystem health and resilience but also enhance invasive species management and data collection through community engagement, education, and outreach across the lower Hudson Valley.

The Trail Conference extends its sincere gratitude to the DEC, New York State, and our regional partners for their support as we continue protecting more than 2,100 miles of public trails throughout the Northeast, nurturing ecosystems and ensuring safe, sustainable outdoor recreation for all.

As for our vaunted Trail Ecology Surveyor Volunteers, this season the search continues for native species rarities; healthy ash and beech trees that seem to be thriving despite intense forest pest pressure. In addition, our volunteers are monitoring the health of northern spicebush populations, a key native shrub threatened by laurel wilt, a newly arrived forest pathogen. Lastly, invasive wisteria vines and nonnative privet shrubs are on this year's plant survey list because both species pose a growing threat to ecosystem health in our region's park systems.

All in all, the Stewardship Department is thrilled to see our diverse programs work together toward a singular goal: safeguarding the land we love.

Trails of the Revolution

Hiking America's War for Independence in the Hudson Valley

By Seanegan Sculley, Associate Professor of History, United States Military Academy

We're in the midst of a beautiful hiking season and a historic moment for our nation. This year, we celebrate the semiquincentennial of the founding of the United States, marking 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Northern New Jersey and southern New York, particularly the Hudson Valley, played a central role in the American War for Independence. Hiking the trails that wind through this region leads you to many of the sites where our independence from the British Empire was won.

A Strategic Waterway That Moved the War

The Hudson River formed a vital transportation and communication route for those fighting the War for Independence. From New York City, an invading army could travel, mostly by water, to Montreal and Quebec, with a short portage off the Hudson at Fort Edward to Lake Champlain at Whitehall or Lake George at Fort William Henry. From Lake George, another portage was necessary at Ticonderoga, but Lake Champlain continues to the Richelieu River, then to the St. Lawrence.

This water highway linked British forces in Canada and New York, compelling the Continental Army to defend key points along the Hudson and at Fort Ticonderoga to prevent the British from isolating New England from the other American colonies.

Iron, Highlands, and Fortified Terrain

While the Hudson River was central to wartime strategy, it was part of a broader, resource-rich landscape. Iron mines, iron forges, and military encampments dotted Bergen, Passaic, and Morris counties in northern New Jersey, providing vital resources for the Continental Army and necessary intelligence on British activities in New York City.



Atlas of Battles of the American Revolution: Plan of Attack of Forts Clinton & Montgomery. William Faden (1749-1836). Library of Congress. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



The Hudson River from Fort Montgomery. David Johnson (1827-1908). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Stony Point State Park.
Photo by Brian - stock.adobe.com

A large encampment of Continental soldiers known as Continental Village existed outside Peekskill, New York. As part of Fortress West Point, three small fortifications called redoubts were built in the rugged hills near Garrison on the east side of the Hudson River. Meanwhile, Forts Clinton and Montgomery stood on the west bank of the Hudson beneath Bear Mountain, facing Anthony's Nose across the river and guarding the "gate" into the Hudson Highlands.

Hiking the Revolution

Today, hikers in the Hudson Valley can experience this history firsthand, following trails through places once central to the Revolutionary War. Here are just a few favorites.

On the West Side of the Hudson River

- **At Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site (Stony Point, NY)** Visit the location of the Battle of Stony Point, one of the final Revolutionary War battles in the Hudson Valley. Today, this family-friendly destination features a self-guided walking trail and a museum with historical artifacts.
- **At Fort Montgomery State Historic Site (Stony Point, NY)** Explore the setting of a fierce Revolutionary War battle for command of the Hudson, with walking pathways, a museum, and connection to the historic 1777 Trail*.

On the East Side of the Hudson

- **In Hudson Highlands State Park (Beacon, NY)** Climb North Mount Beacon via the Casino Trail and unmarked woods roads, where you'll find

a monument marking the northernmost signal tower in a wartime communications network used by Continental forces. This is a strenuous, 4-mile out-and-back hike.

- **In Hudson Highlands State Park (Garrison, NY)** Explore the North and South Redoubts via the red-blazed trail from Snake Hill Road. These strategic sites once served as important fortifications and offer commanding views of Constitution Island and West Point. This is a moderate, 3-mile out-and-back hike.
- **In Hudson Highlands State Park (Garrison, NY)** Follow the blue-blazed Arden Point and red-blazed Glenclyffe Loop Trails from Lower Station Road to retrace Benedict Arnold's escape to British forces after his plot to surrender West Point and betray Washington had been exposed. This is an easy, 4-mile lollipop loop hike.

As you lace up your boots and hit the trails this summer, look for signs of the events that led to the creation of the United States. Perhaps you'll pause to appreciate how hard 18th-century soldiers worked to haul artillery and transport supplies over the rocky slopes and rugged terrain of the Hudson Valley. Or maybe you'll stop to savor the natural beauty of this region, remembering the sacrifices made centuries ago by those who fought for America's independence.

**As of summer 2026, a significant portion of the 1777 Trail is closed for repairs. Stay tuned for updates and bookmark this trail for future adventures!*

Introducing Our Professional Trail Services

Expert design shaped by decades of outdoor leadership

The Trail Conference is a recognized authority in trail layout, design, construction, and maintenance. Most local partners are familiar with the extraordinary work of our volunteers, who dedicate their time, energy, and skill to caring for public lands.

As the world of trail management evolves, however, partners are increasingly seeking a more comprehensive level of support. With many new projects requiring advanced planning and review, there's ample work to do long before a single blaze can be painted. Public comment, stakeholder engagement, detailed GPS datasets, and thorough permitting materials are not only expected but often mandated for new trail and park design projects. And as the region's trail experts, partners look to us to help shepherd these complicated "pre-trail" processes.

Rather than turning these requests away, the Trail Conference responded by creating a Senior Trail Planner position to ensure these projects receive dedicated, full-time support. Beginning last July, Peter Dolan, who joined the Trail Conference in 2013 and most recently served as Trail Program Manager, now leads responses to partner requests for planning assistance. In that short time, the Trail Conference has been involved in a variety of exciting projects: scouting routes on land newly-preserved by the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, laying the foundation for urban trail connectivity to the Hackensack River alongside the Northern New Jersey Communities Foundation, tackling regulatory reform to make accessible trails easier to build in partnership with the Pinelands Alliance, blazing a user-friendly trail for residents of Peekskill on behalf of New City Parks, and much more.

While these projects fall outside our traditional model of volunteer maintenance, all are deeply aligned with the Trail Conference's mission to

connect more people with nature. Each serves the public, and many of the trails that we help plan today will be adopted by our volunteers in the future.

2026 brings an array of exciting new projects with partners including Passaic County, the Township of West Milford, New Jersey Audubon, and other key organizations advancing conservation and outdoor recreation across the region. We look forward to working together with these partners, supporting each project from the earliest stages of trail planning all the way through to implementation, adoption, and, eventually, on-the-ground care by future volunteers.

Discover what our professional services can do for you—let's talk!

Learn more + contact us:
nynjtc.org/professional-services



Trail Conference volunteers, partner organizations, and land managers collaborate at a stakeholder meeting facilitated by Senior Trail Planner Peter Dolan. Photo by New City Parks

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Monica & David Day

Meet Monica and David Day, volunteer leaders revitalizing the pathways of northwest Jersey and beyond!

Monica and David Day are co-chiefs of the West Jersey Trail Crew. Together, they've led high-profile technical trail and bridge construction projects for the Trail Conference in the lower Hudson Valley and northwest New Jersey.

A lifetime hiker, backpacker, and backcountry skier, Monica got her start doing trail work after graduating from the Student Conservation Association Leadership training program. David is also an avid hiker, backpacker, and photographer, and has been involved in trail building with the Trail Conference since the 1990s, developing a particular interest in building with rock and rigging systems.

Both were members of the Trail Conference's West Hudson Trail Crew before establishing the West Jersey Trail Crew in 2000. Monica and David are very generous with their time, sharing their trail construction skills by leading insightful Trail Conference workshops.

Their many accomplishments include:

- Building the Pochuck Boardwalk for the Appalachian Trail in Vernon, New Jersey, in 2004, one of the most visited sections of the A.T. in the region.
- Repairing a bridge in Wawayanda State Park in 2011-2012 that had been displaced by Hurricane Irene. The project required special rigging to lift the bridge and reset it onto its abutments.
- Installing the innovative floating crossing over the Terrace Pond outlet in Wawayanda State Park in 2020. This unique 120-foot-long floating walkway provided a practical solution over the waterway, demonstrating a creative approach to trail construction.

Monica, David, and the West Jersey Trail Crew have received numerous awards for their extraordinary impact on public trail lands, including the Trail Conference William Hoeflerlin Award in 2001; the American Hiking Society Volunteer of the Year Award (New Jersey) in 2004; the American Trails Trail Worker

Award in 2013; and the Russell Berrie Foundation 25th Anniversary Making a Difference Award in 2021.

Over their years of service to the trails, particularly the Appalachian Trail in New Jersey, Monica and David developed close relationships with the NJDEP and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, earning their trust to carry out complex projects. Those who have volunteered alongside Monica and David know of their enthusiasm for the work and their willingness to share new skills.

When not leading trail projects and volunteering in other capacities for the Trail Conference, Monica and David are out hiking and, by their own admission, likely planning future projects to improve trail networks throughout the region.





**Save the Date for Our
2026 Gala!**
Thursday, October 8, 2026
Indian Trail Club
Franklin Lakes, NJ

Our 2025 Gala Was a Dazzling Success

Thank you for an unforgettable evening!

On Friday, October 3, 2025, we hosted our Annual Gala at The Garrison in Garrison, New York. Trail advocates and community leaders joined us to toast over a century of trail stewardship, champion the future of sustainable outdoor recreation, and celebrate the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail.

Set against the stunning Hudson Valley and graced with idyllic autumn weather, our 2025 Gala was a night to remember—suffused with friendship, cheer, and a shared commitment to protecting the wild landscapes we cherish.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this evening a success, and a very special thank you to our Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze sponsors! Your dedication and joy keep our mission moving forward.

We'll see you in the fall!



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Platinum



Gold



Silver

PETERSON RICH OFFICE



Bronze



GRATITUDE FOR OUR DONORS

Our efforts at the Trail Conference rely heavily on the remarkable generosity and backing of our community of donors. Listed below are supporters who recently contributed \$1,000 or more, or who made a gift in honor or memory of someone special. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supports us and our mission.

TRIBUTES

OCT. 1, 2025 – MAY 31, 2026

In honor of Raymond Begin, 20 years
Moe Liu

In honor of Donald R. Don Fairbairn
Doug and Maggie Williams

In honor of Sara & Andy
Amanda Borden

In honor of Joel Kazin
Gary Kazin

In honor of Charlie Gadol
Jennifer Kolarsick

In honor of David M Coonrad
Pamela Frank

In honor of Norman J. Reicher
Jody-Lynn Reicher

In honor of Alfred & Eleanor Drasheff
Judy Paris

In honor of Ted Power
Bradford Power

In honor of Alicia MacArthur
Michael Heller and Maria MacArthur

In honor of Homer Grampy Shen
Andrew Shen

In honor of Sue Meier
Jamie Aspenson

In honor of Eric Immermann
Frederick Immermann and
Ann Herriott

In honor of Robert Bonkowski
Ryan Mruczek

In honor of Benjamin Ganon
Sydney Ganon

In honor of Timothy Keane
Logan Keane

In honor of Dr. David M. Coonrad
JUNE STAHL

In honor of Jane and Walt Daniels
Leonard Diamond and Kathy Hecht

In honor of John and Marianne Gunzler
Michael Karpas

In honor of The memory Margaret
Freifeld who enjoyed hiking.
Stephen Klepner

In honor of Jack Hourihan
James Hourihan

In honor of NYNJTC Trail Maintainers
Tammy McCrory

In honor of Donald Stern
Howard and Colin Stern

In honor of Ian Williams
Jacqueline Hanley

In honor of Brian Buchbinder
Murray Schechter

In honor of Liam Gillespie
Elizabeth Gillespie

In honor of Susan Johnson
Arthur Almeida

In honor of Pat Bisset
Janet Donat

In honor of In Honor of Pat Bisset
Rose Bonanno

In honor of Donald MacQueen
David Quinlan

In honor of Donald Edward MacQueen, Jr
Ginny Macaluso

In honor of Don MacQueen
Debra Bechtel Charnov

In honor of Don Weise
Dennis Percher

In honor of Donald MacQueen, Jr.
Eric Scholl

In honor of Donald Edward MacQueen, Jr.
Pat & Gregg Schwinn

In honor of Donald MacQueen Jr
Clare and Bill Bohnett

In honor of Drew Hartevelde
Linda Hartevelde McHale

In honor of Jane & Walt Daniels
Judyth Stavans

In honor of Henry Wojtyla
Joe & Leslie Levy

In honor of Henry Wojtyla from
Jill, Nelly and Irene (Michas)
Jill Helmer

In honor of Donald E. MacQueen Jr.
David Pikus

In memory of
Alfred Arnold Seymour-Jones
Carol and Alfred Seymour-Jones

In memory of David Woolf
Naola Gersten-Woolf

In memory of Jim Murray
Warwick Valley Gardeners

In memory of Robert A. Duffy
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

In memory of Henry Wojtyla
Melissa & Michael Giancarlo

GIFTS OF \$1,000+

Samantha and Joshua Abolt, Arthur Almeida, Kevin Alward, Daniel Anderson, Ralph and Robin Arditi, Felicity Arengo, William and Christine Balcerski, Stanley and Rela Banks, Sue and Dr. Joseph Barbuto, Henry and Karin Barkhorn, Christopher Bastedo, Eric Bauer, Rich Baumert and Erin Dodd, Yana Beranek, Berner Family Fund, Charles Binder, Paul and Patricia Bisset, Robert Boysen, David Boyum, Jim and Beth Branigan, Jean Brennan, Elizabeth Brody, Dan and Jennifer Broom, Pamela Brown, Glen Brydon and Barbara Heider, Katy Elwyn and Georg Budenbender, Dorothy Calvani and Dava Weinstein, Robyne and Herbert Camp, Lisa Caplan, Jean Margaret and Loyd Card, Tara Carroll, Sonja Clark, Jonathan and Cynthia Cohen, Nancy and Robert Cole, Evan and Laura Colgan, Thomas and Tara Conway, Melissa and Jay Curwin, Walt and Jane Daniels, Robert Davoli and Eileen McDonagh, George Reskakis, Rick DeSilva, Leonard Diamond and Kathy Hecht, Christina Dieckmann, Michael DiRuggiero, Paul and JoAnn Dolan, Gavin Duffy, Sarah Dunn, Ken Posner, Edward Gurka III, John Ellingboe, David Togut and Tracy Elstein, David Epstein, Barbara and Harvey Erdsneker, Frederic Rich, Steven Estremera, Barbara Evans, David Felsenthal and Margaret Schwartz, Barbara Felton and William

Brown, Richard and Tammy Feuer, Todd Finger, James and Roseline Flynn, Ronald Fontana, Katrina Forman, Jean Claude Fouere and Georgette Weir, Susan and Thomas Gallo, Gladys & Roland Harriman Foundation, Laura Gold, Ian Golden, Maksim Goncharov, Jack Gordon, Glenn Gray, Berton and Evelyn Greenberg, Glenn Gross, Elliot and Sue Grover, Ann Guarino, David and Glenda Haas, Josh Hadden, Tina and Jim Haggett, Amy and Clark Hale, Lucy Waletzky and Jim Hamilton, Pamela Hassan, Gary Haugland, Peter Heckler, Jacqueline and Matthew Heid, Philip and Ellen Heidelberger, Jill Helmer, Thomas Hendrickson, Jan Hesbon, Maria Himber, Heidi Wendel and Joe Hirsch, Peter Hofmann and William Burbach, Steven Holley, Marilyn Van Houten, Martha Howell and Edward Whitney, Samuel Huber, John Jurasek, Henry Jonas, Janet Junge, Kathryn Kaminsky and Eric Wakin, Richard and Marion Katzive, Marshall Katzman and Sarah Lewis, Gary Kazin, Ron Keefe and Deborah Smith, Melinda and Philip Kirstein, Sara Kleinberg, Jennifer Kolarsick, Dulce and Jeffrey Kontak, Matt & Alyssa and Matt Kretlow, Erik Kulleseid and Mark Eisenhardt, Kathie F and Ernest Laug, Lynda Leavitt, Robert LeHane, Jim LeMaire, Kim Levinsky, Lostand Foundation, Jane and Michael MacDonald, Gay MacQueen, John and

Karen Magerlein, Kieran Mahoney, Mary W. Harriman Foundation, Carlene and Anders Maxwell, Doris and David May, Mary and Gay Mayer, Robert Mazzola, Charlotte and Stanley Fahn, Meadowlark Foundation, William Meier, James Meigs and Jennifer Stern, Marc and Nancy Melamed, Juan Melli, Susie Melnick and Seth Reichlin, Patricia Merritt and Jeffrey Scott, Brian Minahan and Kim Dolan, Elizabeth Mindlin, Karen Mintzer, Judith Mogul and Daniel Kramer, John and Sabine Moran, Richard and Catherine More, Linda Moreng, Ken and Lindsay Morgan, Cheryl Mosiello and Robert Lehmann, Chuck and Carol Newman, Beth and Horatio Nichols, Mary Jo Nutt, Ohnell Family Foundation, Orentreich Family Foundation, Deborah Padula-Genna and Frank Genna, Lisa and Dean Parmiter, Chip and Rachel Parsons, Paul and Candis Pasternak, Lynn Peebles and Douglas Land, Karen and Mark Perreault, Winston Perry, James and Barbara Piombino, Marguerite Pitts, David and Anita Polesky, Red Elm Tree Foundation, Kumi Redpath, Alison and Alexander Reese, Jody-Lynn Reicher, Angela Rein, Helen and Bryan Respass, Jane Restani, Nathan Rich, Douglas Robins, Laurance Rockefeller, Roger Roloff and Barbara Petersen, Jonathan Rose, Roger Rosenstein, Robert Ross, Durdane and R. Daniel Rouse, Run Wild

Inc, Barbara Santoro, Michael Sasse, Annette and Andy Schmidt, Marion and Fred Shaw, Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund, Inc., Donna Sherman and Charles Gadol, Stephen Shyne, Barbara Silman, Malcolm Spector, Dr. Harold Starkman and Christine Donnelly, Fred and Connie Stern, John Stoffel, Michael and Mary Suleski, Joseph Sultan, Marianne Sutton, Bela Szigethy, Ernest Tornincasa and Elizabeth Talmo, Jason Taormina, Steven Tartaglia, Rosy Thakur, The Bolger Foundation, The Easter Foundation, The George Becker Jr MD Family Charitable Fund, Jonathan Beard and Rachel Theilheimer, Michael and Tina Thomas, J. and Beverly Thomson, Peter Tilgner and Suzan Gordon, Stephen Tilly, Henry and Claire Tintle, Topfield Foundation, Michael and Rosemary Trietsch, Brian Collins and Michelle Tuorto-Collins, Cynthia Uber and John Gaut, Lisa Valderrama and Hannah Ammann, The Ranch Hudson Valley, Roger and Jessie Vellekamp, Mary Ann Villari, Robert Segal and Joan Warnock, Loren Wasserman, Enid Weishaus and Robert Stien, Kenneth Zadeck and Lisa Weiss, Lisa Weiss, Steven Weissman, William Welker, George Whipple, Rachel Willard-Chang, Evan and Maria Williams, Bruce Winant and Kristin Reeves, Allison Wisniewski, Gail and Ed Wojciechowski, Hanson Wong, Amy Wysocki, Lydia and Jack Zakim

IN MEMORIAM



William Brattle Gannett

William Brattle Gannett died in New York City on December 26, 2025. He was 73.

Prior to his passing, Bill enjoyed a characteristically active July in Vermont, where he grew up. He hiked with cousins and worked on the stone walls and fields of “Pounce,” the farm his grandparents bought as a summer home in 1939.

After earning a PhD in History from Cornell, Bill left academia for the legal profession. He became a partner at Cahill Gordon & Reindel, and retired in 2014. Bill met Anna Carlson at their fifteenth college reunion, and they wed at Pounce in 1991. Their children, Ted and Sarah, followed. Bill marveled at raising his children as New Yorkers. Together, they spent many weekends in Hastings-on-Hudson, where Anna grew up, or in Vermont.

Bill was a voracious reader, an inveterate crossword puzzler, and an adventurous home cook. He also loved being outside and giving back to the trails he cherished. Bill provided trail maintenance along the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park and served on the board of the Trail Conference, offering leadership, fresh ideas, and friendship for decades and helping to preserve and purchase the Trail Conference's historic Darlington Schoolhouse headquarters in Mahwah, New Jersey.

Ted, Bill's son, shared this moving memory of time spent on the trail with his father: “On every hike, he'd have a bag with him to pick up cans or other random debris along the trail. I always admired that, and interpreted it as a combination of responsibility to the land we were passing through and to the other people who wanted to enjoy the trail as we were. It felt like a really clear example of why he so enjoyed his work with the Trail Conference, and why it mattered so much to him.”



Donald MacQueen, Jr.

Donald Edward MacQueen, Jr., died on February 19, 2026, at the age of 71.

Born in Summit, New Jersey, to Donald and Betty MacQueen, Don spent his early years in North Plainfield and, from the age of 10, in Bridgewater. As a child, he loved family vacations in northwest New Jersey on Culver Lake and in Vermont at a cluster of rustic cabins on Lake Champlain.

In 1981, Don married Gay. Theirs was a love story of 45 years, for always each of them was amazed at the good fortune to have found the other. Together, they raised four sons in West Windsor, New Jersey, and by the end of Don's life, they were delighted to have 18 grandchildren.

In 2011, Don inherited his mother's Culver Lake house, built by his grandparents and expanded with his mother's artistic flair. He and Gay spent a good part of Don's later years at the lake, making many friends there. They hiked throughout the Kittatinny Mountains, and Don loved his work as a trail maintainer in Stokes State Forest, where he volunteered for seven years.

Don never wanted to be the center of attention, and he never needed to let other people know how accomplished he was—although he did occasionally tell people about the “gold star” streak he and Gay maintained for successfully completing *The New York Times* crossword puzzle, reaching 2,594 consecutive days on the day he died. But people noticed Don, and not just because he was a big man. His quiet confidence and intelligence were clear to those around him, and naturally drew people to him. He was a good man.

Protect the Trails You Love

Your support sustains 2,100+ miles of public trails, safeguards wild places, and connects more people with nature.

SCAN TO
GIVE BACK
TODAY!



NYNJTC.ORG

VOLUME LIV, NO. 1 | ISSN 0749-1352

FEATURED HIKE

Horse Pond Mountain

Location: Long Pond Ironworks State Park, 41.1410, -74.3089

Distance: 4.9 miles, out and back

Difficulty: Moderate to strenuous

This invigorating out-and-back hike climbs to the summit of Horse Pond Mountain, offering panoramic views of the Monksville Reservoir below.

From the parking area at Long Pond Ironworks Visitor Center, proceed west along the south side of Greenwood Lake Turnpike. Just before crossing the highway bridge over Hewitt Brook, turn left onto the teal-blazed Highlands Trail, which heads south into the woods.

After crossing a small stream, the trail reaches the abandoned railroad bed of the New York and Greenwood Lake Railroad and begins to follow it. Continue for 0.15 miles, then turn right to continue along the teal-blazed Highlands Trail, leaving behind the railroad bed to re-enter the woods and begin your ascent.

In 0.7 miles, the green-blazed Burnt Meadow Loop joins the Highlands Trail from the right. Continue to your left, following the now green-blazed and teal-

—Original hike description by Daniel Chazin



The view from Horse Pond Mountain. Photo by Brian Shultis



blazed trail as it climbs, sometimes steeply, up the ridge. In 0.65 miles, you'll reach a rock outcrop with spectacular views of the Monksville Reservoir. This is a prime point from which you can see the distinct horseshoe shape of the reservoir, so take a moment to soak in the view!

The trail continues to the summit of Horse Pond Mountain (955 feet), then descends briefly to an intersection where the green and teal trails diverge.

Use this junction as your turnaround point for a rewarding 4.9-mile out-and-back hike—or, open up Map 151 of the Trail Conference's four-map Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails Map Set to extend your journey for a full day of NJ Highlands adventure.

Explore this map online:
bit.ly/NJHighlandsMaps

