

2016 Highlights on the North Country National Scenic Trail Highlights of the (4) Pennsylvania Chapters

By Joyce Appel

It was a great year on the North Country National Scenic Trail. Across our seven states:

- 1,343 volunteers worked 69,708 hours in Fiscal Year 2016, a private sector value of \$1,642,320.
- 28 new miles were put on the ground, 18 miles were rerouted and more than 130 miles were improved along with the general maintenance of the hundred of more miles. And with new mileage of existing trail that was added to the route in the Adirondack Park, we now have a total of 3,009 miles of North Country Trail off the road.
- We built 13 bridges, 800-feet of boardwalk, 15 new campsites, 2 shelters and 4 parking areas. We also installed many new informational panels and kiosks, register boxes, built stairs and stiles and improved the signage along many miles of the trail.
- More than 5,000 individuals joined the Hike 100 Challenge to celebrate the National Park Service's Centennial Anniversary. Across our seven states, participants hit the Trail in hopes of earning the coveted patch. 1,768 hikers succeeded, hailing from 28 States plus Canada. More than 200 finishers were from Pennsylvania.

In Pennsylvania, the four Chapters of the North Country Trail Association did incredible work. Here are some of their accomplishments:

The Allegheny National Forest Chapter

- In June, a 24 foot long bridge was built over Root Run with financial assistance from Shell Appalachia and ANF Chapter funds. Volunteers from the ANF Chapter and Allegheny Outdoor Club (AOC) assisted the USDA – Forest Service and four men from the FCI-McKean Cooperative Inmate Work Program in moving the material to the site and building the bridge. See attached picture labeled "finished". As an aside this was the last project that Gene Cornelius worked on before he passed away suddenly.
- Installation of wire mesh on bridges was done throughout the year. The wire mesh provides a nonslip Treadway to prevent hikers from slipping on the wood surfaces. A total of 1886 feet of wire mesh has been laid down, over 74% of the total bridge footage has been covered. See attached picture IMG_7208.
- Registration for the 2016 A100 was filled in the first 6 days with 110 registrants. Registration was expanded to allow up to 150 participants with a final number of registrants being 135. With dry conditions and moderate temperatures there was a record number, 25, of hikers that completed 100 miles. Some of the 100 mile finishers are shown in the attached picture P1000022a.

The Wampum Chapter

- Hosted and directed the work of two Student Conservation Association weekend crews out of Pittsburgh in the early spring. These high-school age volunteers worked on the North Country Trail in Lawrence county, doing major treadway improvements at McConnell's Mill State Park, and built a half mile of rerouted NCT just west of Wampum, PA.
- Developed and improved three new parking lots for North Country Trail access in Beaver County and installed two new North Country Trail/National Park Service story board signs along the trail.

The Chapter has also designed and produced four new locally focused story board signs for installation in the NCT Trail Towns of Wampum and Darlington and at two of our most-used trailhead parking areas.

- Sponsored the First Annual Wampum Chapter Backpacking Trip in Beaver County, showcasing the off-road miles available for outdoor recreation in the area. We had over thirty hikers doing the walk, with eight hardy souls staying out overnight on a blustery, bitterly cold April weekend.
- Maintained an aggressive outreach program to continue to build awareness of the North Country Trail in Beaver and Lawrence counties of PA. Our volunteers manned information tables at seven formal community events, marched in two community parades, scheduled and led monthly North Country Trail hikes that were open to all, participated in the local Boy Scout District's Backpacking Camporee, and helped with two community charity hikes on the North Country Trail within our range.

The Clarion Chapter

- The Tour de Clarion a series of twelve hikes encompassing the entire ninety three miles of the Clarion section was a great success with a total of 422 hikers participating throughout the year.
- Chapter volunteers completed a 3/4 mile reroute off a high traffic roadway eliminating a dangerous section. The reroute included three foot bridges that were constructed at a members' home and disassembled for rebuilding on site.
- The Chapter coordinated three more Eagle Scout projects, an overnight shelter near Van, a kiosk with trail data and NCT plackard at the Route 322 trail crossing, and a 24' foot bridge on DCNR property near the Clarion River
- Several Clarion Chapter members participated in the week long KTA sponsored work week in June working on several projects in the Butler section.

The Butler Chapter:

- Spent many hours maintaining the trail in State Game Lands 95.
- Hosted a Keystone Trail Care Crew for a week in early June which allowed us to improve the trail tread in SGL95 near our trail town of Parker, Pa.
- Hosted an SCA trail crew worked for a week in the summer improving water bars and repairing eroded trail tread in Moraine State Park. They also repaired the trail and applied tons of limestone gravel to wet, muddy sections of the trail South of Jennings EEC and in Moraine State Park.
- Thanks to the Glacier Ridge Trail Ultra which donated funds for these improvements. Another milestone was the installation of a new 54 ft. Muddy Creek Bridge which allows a safe crossing of Muddy Creek downstream of the Lake Arthur Dam. The wet, muddy areas of that trail section were also improved by adding limestone gravel.
- Hosted the KTA Fall Weekend at Whitehall Camp, near Emlenton, for a weekend full of various activities, besides hiking.
- Partnered with Washington Trail 1753 at the February Cherry Pie Hike and had 400+ participants throughout the day in a variety of hikes and history re-enactments along the NCT at the Jennings Environmental Education.