



North Country National Scenic Trail Progress Report

2016 OVERVIEW



Report compiled by the North Country Trail Association, a proud partner of the National Park Service in building, maintaining, protecting and promoting the North Country National Scenic Trail. www.northcountrytrail.org

2016 Overview

The North Country National Scenic Trail is an elaborate project taken on by thousands of individuals across thousands of miles, all working in concert to bring the trail to reality. North Country Trail Association Chapters, Affiliates and Partners build, maintain, protect and promote the trail one mile at a time. When considered separately, every project is a triumph in its own right. When combined with the others, it becomes an extraordinary tale of our shared vision coming to life.

Each year we build, maintain and protect more miles of the North Country Trail. Although we may be far from completion, it's the journey not the destination that counts, and we should celebrate each mile, challenge and triumph along the way.

Summary of Accomplishments

- 23 miles of new trail
- 28 miles reconstructed or rerouted
- 16 new bridges together spanning more than 250 ft.
- 3,000 ft. of puncheon and boardwalk
- Four shelters
- Five campsites
- Four Trailhead parking lots
- Observation platforms, scenic vistas and overlooks
- Countless miles refreshing paint blazes

Current Trail Miles

| | Total Estimated Mileage* | Total Off-Road Miles | Total On-Road Miles |
|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| New York | 625 | 462.32 | 248 |
| Pennsylvania | 265 | 234.24 | 43.5 |
| Ohio | 1,050 | 518.64 | 543.9 |
| Michigan | 1,150 | 828.78 | 317.8 |
| Wisconsin | 200 | 131.24 | 81 |
| Minnesota** | 775 | 581.07 | 268 |
| North Dakota | 475 | 253.6 | 183.3 |
| Total | 4,540 | 3,009.89 | 1,685.5 |

* The numbers we present as Total Estimated Mileage are estimates and may change over time as trail is put on the ground or plans finalized.

Mileage changes over time: Hundreds of miles of trail data are improved each year, which can lead to discrepancies in the trail mileage totals and the trail mileage actually built in that year.

**Includes Minnesota Arrowhead Reroute

Highlights



1,343 volunteers (a 23% increase over 2015) worked **69,708 hours** in Fiscal Year 2016, a private sector value of **\$1,642,320**.



NCTA's Field Grant program has funded more than **\$200,000** in trail projects since 1998.



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 hundreds of more miles.



We built **13 bridges**, **800 feet of boardwalk**, **15 new campsites**, **2 shelters** and **4 parking areas**.



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**.

Trail Mileage Since 2002





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PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES



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Project Highlights

2016 was an incredible year on the North Country National Scenic Trail. The projects below are only a sampling of the work by volunteers and agencies across seven states to plan, build, maintain, and protect the North Country Trail. Through innovative and collaborative partnerships and the dedication of thousands of volunteers, the trail is being developed one project at a time, to be enjoyed today and stewarded for generations to come.

NORTH DAKOTA

The Sheyenne River Valley Chapter installed four boardwalks across wet ravines along Lake Ashtabula.

MINNESOTA

The Minnesota Waters & Prairie Chapter completed building and signing most of the new 9.8-mile loop of the NCT in the City of Fergus Falls.

WISCONSIN

The Chequamegon chapter and the Rovers Crew collaborated to replace a 370-foot boardwalk between Copper Falls State Park and the Trail Town of Mellen.

MICHIGAN

The U.S. Forest Service constructed a 100-foot fiberglass bridge over the Big Sable River in the Manistee National Forest.

OHIO

Buckeye Trail Association added several campsites along the trail and built a new Trail Shelter on the Pretty Run Preserve.

PENNSYLVANIA

The Allegheny National Forest Chapter constructed a 24-foot bridge over Root Run.

NEW YORK

The Central New York Chapter began the Optimal Location Review process to find the best location for the trail around the city of Rome.



Looking Forward

We have many more miles and projects in the years ahead. Closing the gaps in the trail remains a high priority. At the same time, we've got to make sure the trail we've already built is maintained, that it's safe and navigable for the public and that it lives up to the title National Scenic Trail. We've got to strive to protect every mile of the trail on private land with permanent easements as well as protect the corridor from the many impacts from infrastructure development plans. In the coming year we'll be working together to make a state by state strategy for the trail and to seek the resources needed to accomplish our goals.

HERE ARE SOME, BUT NOT ALL, OF OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. >>

NORTH DAKOTA

Creating a new iconic Western Terminus
Plans are underway to improve our Western Terminus by designing a space that better celebrates the trail and our hikers and inspires awe in those contemplating their own journey. We hope the concept can also someday be applied to the Eastern Terminus.



Exploring the route between Lake Sakakawea and McClusky Canal

This large gap consists of land owned and managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, North Dakota Fish and Game and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Although it's public land, the route of the trail must be complimentary to the purpose with which these agencies manage their land. Our goal is to work with them to find a suitable route that provides a superb recreation experience.



MINNESOTA

Continuing storm clean up
The storms of 2016 devastated the Superior and Chippewa National Forests. Although we accomplished some of the clean up in the months following the storms, more is yet to be done.

A better trail route in Minnesota and Vermont
NCTA will continue to advocate for the passage of legislation to extend the route from the New York/Vermont border to reach the Long Trail and then the Appalachian Trail. This same legislation also changes the route in Minnesota to take advantage of the picturesque Superior Hiking Trail and remote Border Route and Kekekabic Trails.



WISCONSIN

Securing a route for the Trail on the WI/MI border
We are working with partners to acquire easement and properties in the Saxon Harbor area that will allow us to make a key connection and will provide a stunning setting for the trail in eastern Wisconsin. When these acquisitions are complete, we'll add 30 continuous miles here and on adjacent county land.



OHIO

More new trail Edge of Appalachia Preserve
The Buckeye Trail Association will continue to construct the trail within the Nature Conservancy's Edge of Appalachia Preserve System, one of the most biologically diverse collections of natural systems in the Midwest, encompassing rugged woodland, prairies, waterfalls, and the BT/NCT.

MICHIGAN

Bringing accessibility to O Kun de Kun Falls
This project will rebuild a one-mile section of trail that takes hikers to a stunning waterfall on the Baltimore River. The rebuild will improve accessibility, allowing people of all ages and all abilities to safely experience the beauty.

Rerouting the trail in the Porcupines Mountain State Park

A long awaited project to reroute the trail, taking it into the heart of this beloved Michigan State Park, is finally a reality thanks to funding for a bridge that was required to move it forward.

Finding the route in major gaps Michigan
NCTA is working on Optimal Location Reviews in Baraga, Marquette, Emmet and Barry counties to find the best location for the trail and negotiate with landowners for access.

PENNSYLVANIA

Closing the gaps in Pennsylvania
We'll continue to work with our partners at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy with the hopes of closing the gap between Moraine State Park and McConnells Mill State Park as well as other priority gaps across the state.

NEW YORK

Putting the trail on the ground in the Adirondacks
We're working with the Adirondack Mountain Club to get the resources necessary to get crews in the field to put the trail on the ground in the Park and monitoring the Unit Management Plan revision process to make sure the trail route is included in each local plan as they get revised.



IMPROVING TRAINING TO EMPOWER VOLUNTEERS

It's imperative that we provide the resources and training necessary for our volunteers to do their jobs. Over the next few years, we're focusing on empowering our volunteers by:

- Developing new Crew Leader curriculum;
- Increasing the availability of chainsaw training;
- Revising the Handbook for Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance; and
- Leading more webinars and workshops on important topics.

