


North Country Trail Association Central New York Chapter News



Issue # 48

January 31, 2010

Editor's Note: Our goal is to keep all CNY Chapter members and others supporting our efforts informed as to our progress, opportunities, and needs as we strive to build and maintain the North Country National Scenic Trail/Link Trail. Your suggestions, queries, and, of course, your support for this work are both needed and valued. The telephone and e-mail lines are "open" for your comments!
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Status Report—NY Parks Year End 2009 Actions And Impacts To Date—Monitoring To Continue!

Background: NY Parks has title to the right-of-way lands of the former Lehigh Valley RR between Bingley Road near Chittenango Falls State Park and a point south of Canastota, except for former RR property in the greater Perryville area owned privately. Following significant planning and related work by us, development of part of their lands as a foot trail was permitted to us in 2001, with the remaining lands permitted to us in 2006. Establishing the North Country/Link Trail was a challenge—both in terms of the value of labor contributed, donations from a number of sources, a RTP grant, and funding from both the National Park Service and NCTA HQ. The total for the 2001-2007 span approximated \$296,700, with work ongoing since then for maintenance purposes.

Developments: A composite of political pressures we deemed to be without merit and an initiative within NY Parks resulted in their imposing upon us a one year "horse use pilot evaluation" on the trail section between Nelson Road and the trailhead access at Oxbow Road in August 2008. The "horse use" advocates subsequently stated in a wide distribution broadcast letter that weather conditions had limited their use of the authorized trail segment; in addition, they requested access to additional segments of the trail that are demonstratively unsuited for any purpose other than foot-travel—evidence to support this concern was supplied to NY Parks.

In mid December, per a request from Regional Director Rob Hiltbrand, Chapter President Kathy Woodruff and your editor met with him—County Planner Jim Petreszyn was also present at Rob's invitation. The results:

- The "horse use pilot plan" evaluation by NY Parks resulted in a no significant impact judgment. Since horse use had been restricted by its supporters by choice, we term the results to be inconclusive and will continue our monitoring accordingly. Available data show that a basic incompatibility exists between significant horse traffic and foot-travel use on single path trails, particularly when drainage is an issue.

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- Snowmobile use—Kathy Woodruff spoke directly to this issue—noting that several hikers had been told by local sources that snowmobile use was a "done deal". These reports were reinforced by several other indications. Rob Hiltbrand stated that a use permit had been requested by a local snowmobile club and that a decision would be made shortly. A few days later, we were notified that a permit had been issued to the Tri-Valley Snowmobile Club with an effective date of January 1. We were not at all surprised .
- NY Parks set forth stringent conditions for snowmobile usage for the trail segment between Nelson Road and the trailhead at Oxbow Road, including an addendum to the standard snowmobile regulations intended to minimize impact to the trail surface and adjoining properties privately owned. *One stipulation, (#12), stated that "a minimum of 6 inches of packed base must be present for trail to be open for snowmobile use. Signage specifying this requirement will be incorporated at the accesses to the OPRHP lands, and placement will be the responsibility of the permittee at the approved location".....*

For information purposes, the section of trail authorized for snowmobile use was inspected on foot on two dates—January 10 and 17. The 10th was a cold day, a modest amount of snow was present—snow depth on the trail surfaces traveled by the snowmobile was only an inch or so in most areas. The 17th was warmer, with air temperatures above 32F. Many areas of the trail had no snow cover at all. Snowmobiles were using the trail. Also, damage to the gates at Nelson Road was extensive. Photographs documenting these conditions were taken and supplied to Tom Goetzmann, our designated NY Parks contact, for his appraisal. Trail use was improper!

We accept that NY Parks owns the lands involved and can dictate its permitted uses. We also acknowledge that snowmobile based recreation is a major factor. In fact, if snowmobile usage is established on a trail—for example, the Old Erie Canal Towpath—and we need to use that trail segment as a "connector", we do not ask that the use

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of snowmobile, or other pre-existing uses, be removed.

NY Parks and others often cite the benefits of multiple use trails. We concur that compatible uses on trails that are properly sized, constructed accordingly, and used properly offer benefits. However, some uses are not compatible. Examples of this exist within the Chittenango Falls State Park and the Verona Beach State Park—signage clearly delineates the allowed and prohibited uses.

Our intent is to continue to perform per the terms of the permit issued to us to provide a foot trail that brings to its users a sense of solitude, escape from the pressures of a noise-laden society, and healthful exercise as a bonus. We request that the task of overseeing trail management of those segments with basically conflicting uses and sharply different personal philosophies held by the user groups be pursued on a pro-active basis by NY Parks on an open basis.

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Thank You to Our Volunteers

By Kathy Eisele, Steward Coordinator

Even though winter is upon us, it is not too early to “think spring,” the beginning of our main trail work season. You will notice some organizational changes this year. **Steve Kinne, Mike Lynch and I** will share the trail maintenance leadership role. All three of us will lead Work Hikes; Steve and Mike will also tackle some of our list of trail projects; and I will continue coordinating trail stewards. **Nancy McCain** will plan our April to October 2010 Hike/Event Schedule to be posted on our website (cnyncta.org) and published in the April Newsletter. And all four of us will be seeking your help to accomplish our various tasks because our trail effort depends on the work of volunteers.

Do come out for a Work Hike or a recreational event or a special trail project; volunteer to be a steward or to lead a hike. To attend Work Hikes and recreational events, just check the 2010 Schedule, which will include time and meeting place; to volunteer for special trail projects, contact Steve Kinne (315-822-3684) or Mike Lynch (315-687-6113); to volunteer as a trail steward, contact Kathy Eisele (315-672-5645); to volunteer to help with a recreational event, contact Nancy McCain (315-637-6426).

At our Annual Meeting in Perryville, October 2009, we said **Thank You** to our trail stewards: **Don Feola, Bruce Revette, George Schmit and Cazenovia Boy Scout Troop 18, Scott Sellers, Chanda Vincent, Mike Salter, Fred Rose, Tom Sigle, Vic Nelson, David Harper, Jack Miller, John Scott, Kathy Eisele, Mike Miller, Dean and Sharon Bartholomew, Michael and Deborah Irwin, Nancy McCain, Bettina Frisse, Randy F. Davies, Mike and Donna Lynch, Pat Hudelson, Jack Tietsch, Mark Studer, Sue Braun, Doug Bower, Suzanne Snyder, Peter Cann, Sandra Parker, Eileen Fairbrother,**

Nate and Carol LeBlanc, Bill Zimmerman, Kathy Woodruff, Kara Dillow, Kathy Disque, Adam Tiel and Al Larmann.

In addition, I want to welcome four new stewards who have recently adopted trail sections: Mary Kunzler-Larmann, Richard Pullen, Hugh Yeman, and Tim Wimmer, leader for Canastota Boy Scout Troop 43. Even with these new stewards, in the spring I am likely to need two or three others. Being a steward means maintaining a section of trail, usually 0.5 to 1.5 miles, by clearing downed branches, cutting back side growth, and checking/replacing trail markers. Stewards also report to me major problems, such as a large tree down, so that our certified chain sawyers can remove it. (Our two new certified sawyers are Don Feola and Scott Sellers.) Generally, stewards check their sections every 5 to 6 weeks, April through September. Most stewards will agree that they develop a sense of pride and ownership of that one section of trail that they know really well, so please consider joining this dedicated group now maintaining approximately 33 miles of the Link Trail/North Country National Scenic Trail.

At the Annual Meeting, we also acknowledged volunteers (trail work, administrative work, trail promotion) in the following categories: **10 Hours--Deborah Irwin, Michael Irwin, Randy Davies; 11 to 15 Hours--Ray Bell, Doug Bower, Vic Nelson, Fred Rose, Jordan Sellers, Adam Tiel, Hugh Yeman; 16 to 20 Hours--Bettina Frisse, Margaret Maloney, Nancy McCain, Mike Miller, Sieglinde Schwinge, Tom Sigle, Chanda Vincent, Linda Wallace, Ron Wallace; 20+ Hours--Peter Cann, Cazenovia Boy Scout Troop 18, Bob Covey, Mary Dineen, Kathy Disque, Kathy Eisele, Eileen Fairbrother, Don Feola, David Harper, Pat Hudelson, Dawn Kindel, Steve Kinne, Mary Kunzler-Larmann, Al Larmann, Donna Lynch, Mike Lynch, John Scott, Scott Sellers, Mark Studer, Kathy Woodruff, George Zacharek, Bill Zimmerman.**

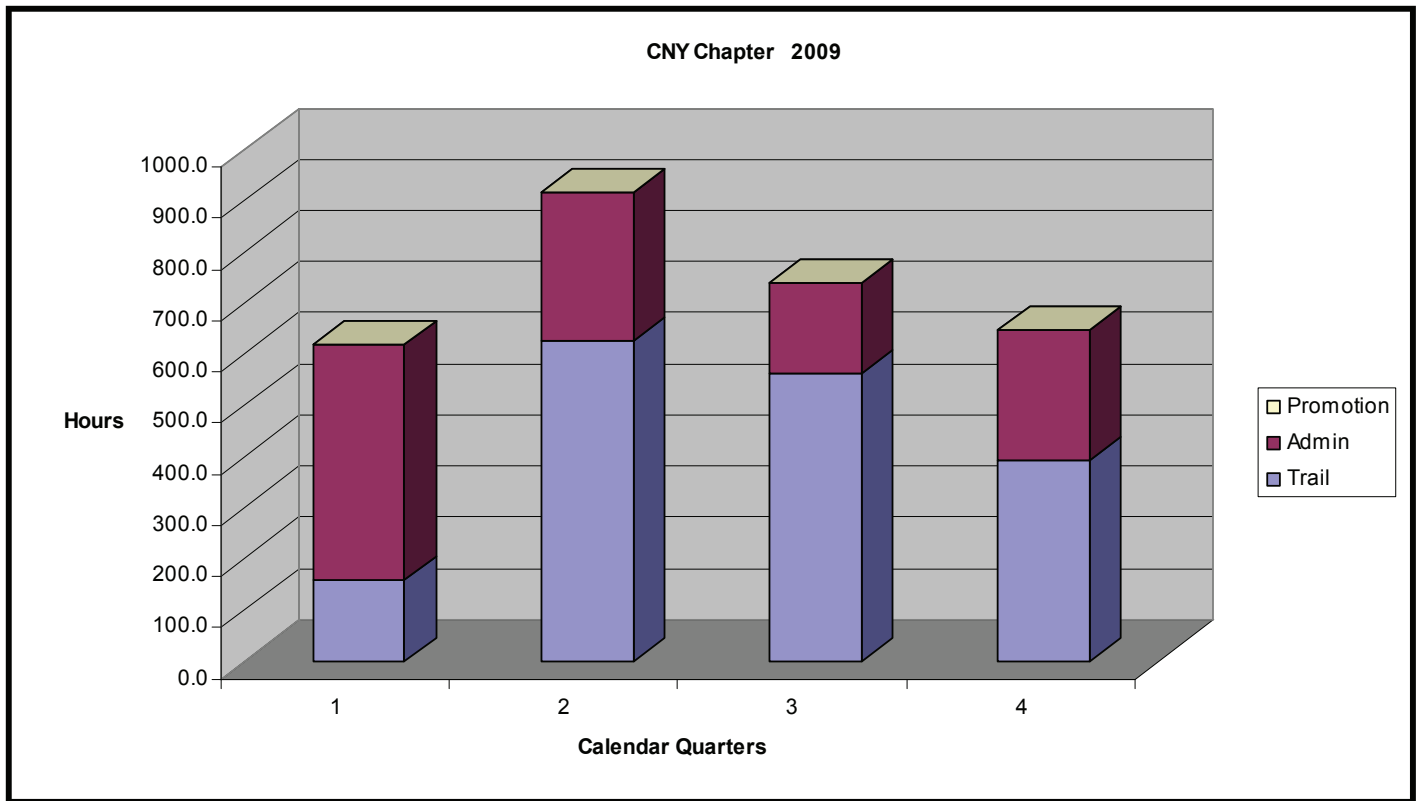
Thank You to everyone who contributes to the success of our Central New York NCTA Chapter!

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Muller Hill Unit Management Plan Draft—Public Meeting February 25—7:00 PM..

In November 2006, DEC held its first meeting seeking inputs from the public. This meeting in the Otselic Valley Elementary School in the hamlet of Georgetown provides an opportunity to assess the plan. It proposes a 20 year span of management activities for the Unit—includes goals/objectives for biodiversity conservation, timber and natural gas production, public recreation, and forest management. The Link Trail passes through this Unit. You can also view the plan on line at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/61585.html>. (Your editor will be in Washington, DC—we need to be represented—volunteers?)

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Reported Labor Hours For The Chapter Were 3022.2 in 2009—Equates to \$58,963.

Why do we report these data?—Good Query—Answers:

- The National Park Service (NPS) uses the data to vie for supplemental funding used to support our needs. Also, the data enables NPS to quantify the favorable financial leverage their funding generates.
- Congressional level impact—the value of contributed volunteer labor is a major factor in our seeking both legislation and funding—the data are used to show the NCTA totals alone, as well as being included in the total contribution of the trails community. The Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) has an active, valued partnership with NCTA and many like trails organizations.
- At the State level, the data are used to underscore the value of mutually advantageous programs such as the NYS DEC Adopt-A-Natural-Resource (AANR)--the insurance protection we receive is just one benefit. At the local government levels, the data are often useful .
- Lastly, these data enable you to see the collective value of our efforts in total and to underscore that your contribution “counts”.

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Fred Szarka Enters A Well Earned Retirement!

Fred served well as the NPS Trail Manager for the North Country Trail from 2002 to yearend 2009. He came to us after long and impressive service in many locations. His knowledge and empathetic skills rank highly. We wish him and his family well as they enter a new life phase.

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Valued Insurance Coverage—A Bit Complex To Navigate But Well Worth The Efforts.

There are three separate coverage agreements applicable to our authorized trail construction/maintenance work. Two of these are NY State Agencies, namely the NYS DEC and NY Parks (a.k.a. OPRHP). These apply only for work on properties owned by the respective agency and specified in the agreements that are in force.

For the DEC, the Adopt-A-Natural Resource Program (AANR), the volunteer is provided with liability and workman’s compensation coverage equivalent to those provided to a salaried NY State employee. Volunteers must submit a sign-up card prior to performing any work. The Chapter maintains this listing and submits the data periodically to our DEC designated contact. A requirement of the AANR program (also true for the others) is prompt notification of any accident, injury, or illness associable with authorized trail activities to the Chapter Administrator and the DEC designated contact. Sign-up is required only once, but volunteers can be removed from the coverage listing if they desire, move, are disabled, etc. Special requirements apply to minors. Our agreement covers the Link Trail on DEC owned lands from its southern terminus through the Nelson Swamp Unique Area. **(Note: Your Editor is the Chapter Administrator)**

The NY Parks Volunteer Service Agreement provides similar coverage for volunteers performing authorized work on NY Parks properties permitted to the Chapter. Prompt notification of any injury or liability occurrence. Annual submission of the VSA form is required.

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Submission of the VSA forms is required prior to doing authorized trail work of any description—submit them to the Chapter Administrator for tabulation and forwarding to our designated contact at NY Parks. Note that the restrictions applying to minors (under age 18) are quite restrictive. (Copies of the form are enclosed for those known to perform work on permitted NY Parks lands—if you need a VSA form, alert your Editor—information is in the page 1 header block).

The word authorized is a key one. In the simplest sense, it requires that the volunteer performing any work is fully qualified to do so in terms of skills, strength level required, and safety awareness. One example is the use of chain saws! Only those volunteers who successfully complete the required training from qualified instructors, have attended the sawyer refresher training as specified, and are current in terms of the supplemental medical training may use chain saws. Further, the necessary protective equipment must be used. If you do not meet these requirements, you forfeit your coverage. In the broader sense, each volunteer should assess the risk factor associable with any activity—be it using loppers, shovels, hand saws, DR mowers, or rakes. Before starting any work, make a personal assessment of the risks involved for you as an individual and act accordingly.

In addition to the coverage we receive from the DEC and NY Parks, the National Park Service administered Volunteer-In-Parks (VIP) program is being enhanced. Since this is a national level program, not surprisingly, it has more detailed stipulations. The registration form is OF-301A—it also carries an OMB control number. The implementation of this program requires the generation of generic descriptions of work done by volunteers—both NCTA and NPS are addressing this task, seeking solutions that will not be overly burdensome. Provisions to facilitate the securing of and payment for any needed medical services incurred while performing authorized work are to be included. These will include kits supplied to chapters and affiliates to be on hand at work sites. Since some volunteers work alone as stewards, there will be details to clarify. The current NPS plans are to have Dan Watson, newly appointed Volunteer Coordinator for the NCNST, visit individual chapters and affiliates to speak to all the details and procedures involved. More information to follow soon.

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CNY Chapter Web Site—Enhancements Loom!

Eileen Fairbrother, our website guru, has plans to add features and more timeliness to the <http://cnyncta.org> site. These may include updated photo images, KUDOs listing, work and recreation hike information, trail updates, and more. Monitor the website for some forthcoming information—give her a few weeks to do it!

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Trail Status Updates-

- Certifications—Carey Hill Road to Freber Road and Ingalls Corner Road/Quarry Road to Nelson Road—all field work is done and data compiled—map details are almost complete. Final submissions to NPS are pending. The on-road connection between Freber Rd. and the Quarry Road/Ingalls Corner trail head will be blazed when weather cooperates. Most of the on-road segment will be relatively attractive, including views of the wind turbine generators atop the hills of the Town of Fenner. Projected miles: 6.0 certified and 3.2 on road—final values to be determined shortly.
- Decertification—the NY Parks trail segment from Nelson Road east to the former Scheid property will be decertified to connector status because it has been opened to snowmobile use. The ramifications of this will be delineated as we continue our liaison with NY Parks. NPS and NCTA will receive map data shortly.
- Boonville area—The BREIA Black River Canal trail between Pixley Falls State Park and its northern end were certified in 2009, adding 6.2 miles to the NCNST. In November, a meeting with the Village Board and Mayor Kramer resulted in approval of our having the Village owned trail along the Black River Canal and an extension via Erwin Park be added to the NCNST as a certified segment. This route will provide easy access to the Boonville Black River Canal Museum and more, plus a connection to the already marked Black River Feeder Canal Connector Trail. The added trail approximates one mile, subject to further checks. Heavy snowfall forced a deferral of blazing until weather is more cooperative.
- Steve Kinne reports a number of trail enhancements were completed, efforts aided by good weather almost through November. These include drainage improvements, some minor trail optimizations, and removal of some fallen and junk trees that posed hazards for the trail. Overall, he states, “the Link Trail and its NCNST segments are in excellent shape”.

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Update—Lake Champlain Bridge Replacement—Crown Point, NY —Chimney Point, Vt.

As widely reported the old bridge was demolished using a number of explosive charges—the channel has been cleared of debris to an extent permitting water



traffic. A massive effort will permit 24/7 ferry operation starting early on February 1st between Crown Point and Chimney Point. Photo is new design. Planned construction start is this Spring, with completion in mid 2011. Initial design plans specified pedestrian walkways. We will seek reaffirmation via advocacy efforts. The NCNST will cross this bridge ultimately.