



North Country Trail Hikers

Chapter of NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Marquette Michigan ~ Fall Issue 2006

President's Desk

Denise Herron

NCTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE – 2006

This year was a celebration of 25 years since the NCTA was founded. The Pennsylvania chapter that hosted the conference in Clarion is small, but did a superb job of planning and accomplishment. Activities included an assortment of hikes through the Allegheny National Forest and several State Parks, and also a canoe trip on the Clarion River. Workshops were held on trail building, gourmet trail food, building good relations with landowners, wild mushroom identification, and travelogues on Mt. McKinley and Patagonia. In addition to meetings of the Board of Directors, Chapter Presidents, and the regular annual membership meeting, evening programs included award presentations, silent and live auctions, a hilarious game of NCT Jeopardy, and an inspiring presentation by Will Cross highlighting his global hiking and mountain climbing. All-in-all, a most enjoyable experience.

Next year's Conference will be in Bemidji, Minnesota in mid-August. Make plans now to attend and share in the information and inspiration provided by a wonderful group of hikers from New York to North Dakota.

TRAIL UPDATE

It has been a successful year in aiming at 100% maintenance of our 100 miles of developed trail. Adopters and trail workers have been diligent. We are approaching the end of the season with odds and ends of trail work still needing to be completed; such as, chain sawing and painting blazes in the Rock River area, completing a few small reroutes in Forestville, installing carsonite posts on the new bike path, and renewing decals on existing posts in several areas.

New trail development in the Coles Creek area is waiting for landowner approval of the new route. We will still try to do at least some preliminary trail building if time permits. The Committee trying to develop a new route between CR-510 and Silver Lake Basin will seek to cross reluctant owners' property on existing roads in the attempt to connect parcels of willing landowners.

Gene Elzinga has pursued certification of NCT on the new bike path through Founders Landing and the connection with Lake Street, and Joe Mahaney is installing signs in that area.

Trail Maintenance Reports

Where There's a Will(iam), There's a Way

Marge Forslin

Bill Menke, NCT regional trail coordinator for the Wisconsin - Upper Peninsula region, spent a few days in Marquette helping our Chapter design a connector for the big gap between Marquette and Silver Lake Basin. A temporary route had been established using the Noquemenon Ski Trail to CR510, and other roads from CR510 to the Basin, but about a mile of trail needed to be developed to complete this connection. Bill and a three member crew from NCTH went to flag the new trail in the area from Coles Creek to the drill point near the west end of Silver Lake Basin. The day started with an hour drive, followed by a three hour hike in, five hours of trail work and two hours out.

Bill shared a number of techniques with us as he laid out a potential route. He showed us how to determine the slope of the trail and how to rough out a path on the way in and then refine it on the way out. He demonstrated flagging the "best" route, ignoring current obstructions—things that would be addressed later in constructing the actual trail. He also persevered in finding the best inclines to ascend or descend the hills and valleys.

In return, we had a chance to demonstrate to him the utility of a GPS for finding a specific point or trail in rugged, unfamiliar terrain that did not permit direct line of sight or easy travel. It was a good learning experience for all of us and offered a satisfying sense of accomplishment.

Time and energy were running out so we called it a day. We decided to take a short cut across the basin that shaved an hour off the expected three-hour hike back to the vehicles.

Bill Menke also spent some time in Marquette the following day looking at the NCT through the City on the bike path from Harvey to Hawley Street, including the new path through Founders Landing. He is interested in helping to devise signs along the way to not only guide hikers, but to give some truly visible trail information to the public.

BRIDGE SURPRISES

Trail work at the west edge of the Rock River Wilderness revealed a sturdy new bridge, presumably for logging purposes, that crosses the river exactly where our trail crossing had been established. It does not seem to adversely affect the NCT, and provides better access for trail work. Hallelujah!

The biggest surprise was the NO BRIDGE we discovered when we were about to hike in the McCormick Wilderness on September 30. Everything had been intact when we scouted the west entrance just two weeks previously, but we arrived at a fenced in construction zone with the bridge across the Peshekee River already removed. In typical make-do fashion, some of the hikers promptly created a crossing with rocks placed carefully enough to keep our feet dry, believe it or not. Gene has talked to a Forest Service representative who indicated that the bridge would be replaced with a new bridge, hopefully to be completed in thirty days.

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Last, but not least, a bridge on the upper Little Garlic River trail that had washed out in the spring was put back in place, hopefully to stay. Using basic ingenuity with ropes, pulleys, and a come-along, Cliff Stammer, Bruce Schwenke, and Lorana Jinkerson lifted the bridge back into place and slid two new 12 x 12 beams under it. Can you picture Lorana sitting in the mud and pushing those beams into place with her feet? The crew also removed a lot of debris that had been washed downstream to help prevent high-water damage in the future.

### ***Does Anyone Ever Use Our Trail?***

Lorana Jinkerson

Often while working a section of trail this question has crossed my mind. As you know, many of our sections are quite remote and often difficult to get to.

A crew of 7 broke up into teams and worked trail maintenance on the Lake Elinor to the Crooked Lake outlet in mid-July. Two of us took off for the end of the section to then work our way back. Eventually we met up with another team who had taken the middle section. As we worked our way back towards the east, a couple of us voiced the concern, "Does anyone ever use our trail?" and the contingent question, "Are we doing all this work for nothing?" After all, we work so hard to maintain the trail in passable condition.

A very short time later, we heard voices and then saw what we at first thought was our other team. Upon moving closer, we noticed, that lo and behold, it was not our group, but strangers out here in the middle of the wilderness – amazing! We met up with them and learned they were a group of 17 scouts and leaders from Grosse Pointe downstate. They had never heard of our trail or our "blue blazes" and had been wandering around from the McCormick area heading west towards Craig Lake State Park for the past two days, essentially lost. One young man mentioned that of his three day supply of food they advised him to bring, he had eaten two days worth the first day. They had no GPS so Marge took charge of showing them where they were. Since we had just completed the trail work from that point west to Craig Lake, we set them on their way via the NCT. They had camping reservations there and needed food and water supplies waiting for them. It was great to come across such a large group exploring our extreme wilderness sections that we realized all our efforts are worth it.

### ***Laughing Whitefish Trail Work***

Aylen Van Beynen

A crew of six set out to do trail work from Peter White Drive and the Laughing Whitefish Falls spur to the NCT bridge over the Laughing Whitefish River. Three went from Peter White and three started at the spur, with good intentions to meet at the bridge.

Sue and Bob Holtzman are the trail adopters for this section and they had already cleared the trail from Peter White to Rumely Road except for the blow downs. Cliff was "chainsaw man" in this group. Starting at 9:00 we slowly sawed the way to the bridge.

These were not any ordinary size blow downs. Most of the fallen trees were twelve inches or more in diameter. Upon reaching the steps leading down the embankment to the river, we saw a massive cedar, twenty inches in diameter, that had fallen diagonally across the stair railings.

One of its branches, six inches in diameter had plunged through a step and had jammed itself into the embankment about six feet below the step. This branch had saved the stairs and railings from being smashed to smithereens by the huge cedar. Cliff managed to saw off the crown of the cedar by carefully standing on the handrail. The crown of the tree fell down the embankment without any damage to the handrail. The middle of the tree that was still across the stairs had to be sawed into sections and these sections were too large to push off between the step and the railing. And, yes, they were too heavy to carry down a flight of stairs. Next best thing was to roll the logs down the stairs carefully so that they would not get away and wipe out the handrails.

After pulling up and out the 10-foot branch that had gone through the step there was a sizable hole in the step that a hiker could possibly get a shoe stuck and suffer an ankle injury. Sawing a piece off the branch that we had removed, then sawing it lengthwise to fit into the hole solved the problem.

Continuing down the stairs and switchbacks on the trail we reached the canyon floor. Following the trail we stopped suddenly. A huge, and I mean enormous, cedar tree had fallen across the puncheon walk. It was too large for the chain saw. With a creeklet on one side of the trail and an embankment on the other, there was no room to reroute the trail. This tree was thirty-six to forty inches in diameter and it was waist high. Cliff decided to cut a step into each side so that one could step onto the tree, take another step on top and then a step into the other side and then step to the ground.

The next challenge was the approach to the bridge itself. Sue tried to cut the tall grass that had grown over the puncheon with a weed whacker, which proved to be a daunting task. Even trying to pull the grass was impossible. Meanwhile Cliff and I attacked the tag alder that had grown over the walk to the bridge. Maybe we went overboard with trimming, but by next spring these trees will probably be vigorously encroaching on the trail again.

After a brief lunch on the bridge, Cliff had one more tree to cut on the other side. This made the total of 20 trees that he had sawed.

What happened to the other three crewmembers that were supposed to meet us somewhere along the trail if not by the bridge? They were nowhere to be seen. After hiking back and reaching the junction of the spur and the NCT, Cliff and I decided to take the spur to find the crew.

Sawing more windfalls as we worked towards the others we were growing more concerned. Much to our relief we did meet them and they proceeded to tell us that they were not slacking but had a major problem at the beginning, which delayed them an hour. Bruce had gotten his chain saw jammed into an 18-inch diameter tree and it took all three of them, Bruce, Denise, and Lorana, to free the saw.

Chain sawing our way out we came to the infamous tree that tried to keep Bruce's saw. Cliff fired up his saw and proceeded to cut the tree. Wouldn't you know but that tree wasn't done with us yet. His saw soon became wedged and could not be budged. Bruce to the rescue, fired up his saw. Talk about dueling banjos, we had dueling chain saws. As I said the tree was not finished with us. Before long, two saws were wedged in the tree tighter than ever. We all looked at each other, tired and speechless. It had been a long day and it would have been easy to just walk out and leave the saws behind. After a "looong" pause, a pry bar was mentioned. "That had already been tried the first go round with this tree," someone sighed heavily. No other option was suggested or thought about so with two on a make shift lever and one holding each saw and keeping the blade straight much energy was expended. One saw was rescued from the grips of the tree and finally the tree relinquished its hold on the other saw. After much cheering, the task still was not finished, but without further ado the tree was cut and the trail cleared.

Meanwhile, Sue had proceeded on the NCT trail to her vehicle. Right after she left us, a black bear ran across the trail. For a split second she was thinking about turning around and joining us. Then realizing that the bear was probably more frightened of her than she was of it, she continued.

Ah yes, starting at 9:00 am, lugging chain saws, gas cans, oil, loppers, not to mention ourselves, we were happy to tramp out of the woods around 4:30. It was a long day but we took deep satisfaction in that we had accomplished our goal and felt mighty proud of ourselves.

### *Pleasure Hikes*

#### **A FALL HIKE ACROSS THE McCORMICK**

Jan Lindstrom Wester

A pleasure hike for NCTH members and guests through the McCormick Wilderness on Sept. 30 provided challenges at the start and a fun ending. Along the way we enjoyed fall colors at peak, pathfinding challenges, and a few unexpected tests of our cooperative ingenuity.

This non-work trip started at 7:30 AM at the designated meeting place in Marquette, and progressed to the Peshekee Grade, CR 607, just off US 41. But as the vehicles arrived it became apparent -- one was missing! It reappeared half an hour later, having cruised past the turn-off all the way to the Craig Lake access road. With all 16 hikers happily reunited, drivers of four high-clearance vehicles went to the McCormick Wilderness east entrance, where prior arrangements with owners of a private camp permitted parking past an iron gate near the trail crossing. One of the SUV's brought the drivers back to the west entrance, where startling news was announced: The bridge over the Peshekee had been neatly, totally, and unknown to any of us, removed!

Nevertheless, a solution already had been put into place. Our industrious hikers had hauled to the river a series of rocks and wooden blocks and had created a stepping-stone path across the shallow but swiftly flowing river.

Stout balance poles had been found, helping hands were offered, and all 16 of us crossed the wide Peshekee with trepidation, but with dry feet (see photo).

Once on the NCT heading east, hikers initially found the trail easy to follow, despite the absence of blue blazes in this designated Wilderness. Gradually it became more necessary to keep a sharp eye out for small hatchet blazes, shorn-on-one-side evergreens, broken branchlets left hanging, and downed tree limbs placed parallel to a possible trail. In the middle of the 7-mile-long stretch, pauses for scouting became routine. Meanwhile, all enjoyed the bright fall colors, the imposing presence of giant pine and hardwoods, and the deep greens of moss, arbutus and other ground covers. The loudest sound was the screeching of a red-tailed hawk alarmed by our presence. The few sprinkles of rain that fell were mostly intercepted by the tree canopy, and full sunshine broke through after lunch.

Low water levels and relatively dry marshy areas made creeklet and wetland crossings easy. Where logs for crossing were wet and slippery, it was possible to walk on the ground beside them.

Our group went astray only briefly, in what must be a common mistake, when we came upon a sign noting the south border of the Wilderness. We had left the NCT and been drawn onto a trail that runs between the McCormick and Section 13 Lake, which enters the Wilderness about halfway along the NCT. The faint trace of an old logging road confuses the route here, but the trail was easily regained after a short walk north from the sign.

At 4 PM we reached the kiosk at the east entrance. Piling 16 people into 3 SUV's was a test of ingenuity! We had another one when we sat down at the Mt. Shasta restaurant for our post-hike feast. We had planned on 11 hikers at the table, and there were 12 of us -- but an extra chair was squeezed in and all enjoyed a hearty dinner with the lively music of a polka band behind us.

NCTH'ers are on the trail mostly to do maintenance in the summer and early fall. With the popularity and success of the McCormick trip, we recognize that more pleasure hikes are wanted.



Stepping Stones Across The Peshekee River

## HIKING THE HOCKING HILLS

Denise Herron

A recent trip to North Carolina provided an opportunity to hike in some new places in Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Spring was awake in all its glory, progressing from tiny delicate new leaves in a myriad of soft colors to a fully green landscape. The gentle purple redbud and creamy white dogwood provided glorious accents everywhere

I knew the Appalachians would give me many reasons for rave reviews, but the big surprise was a hike in south central Ohio's Hocking Hills. Small streams have eroded the sandstone hills into rugged rocky gorges with steep cliffs, caves, rock bridges, waterfalls, and abundant greenery and wildflowers. Ground cover was similar to the U.P. with some added flowers and ferns that were new to me.

The combined Buckeye and North Country Trail in the Hocking Hills is a gem of many superlatives. It winds through the area, linking some of the natural wonders that are preserved in a series of State Parks; others must be accessed by car. Several recess caves along the trail tower 100 feet above hikers with a ribbon waterfall spilling over the lip in a cooling spray. One cave, called Rock House, is halfway up a 150-foot cliff with a precarious trail access. A long, sturdy-looking natural bridge looms 45 feet above the bottom of a gorge. A flood several years ago was evidenced by a steel footbridge with a distinct bow in it. Since it was structurally sound, it was re-secured and retained as an added unique feature. Trails were in good shape and well-used.

The Appalachians were at peak glory also. Enjoyed some gentle slopes, rugged hills, ascending through a jungle of rhododendrons, alpine meadows, rocky outcrops, broad vistas, with a regression to very early spring at the higher elevations.

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## NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL HIKERS

### Minutes of Meeting September 12, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM and a sign-up sheet was circulated.

Dan Hornbogen, long-time member of the NCTH was introduced to give us an update on the **Kennecott Mining project**. He serves on the Executive Board of the Lake Superior Watershed Partnership and attends the meetings held with Kennecott spokesmen. He spoke neither for nor against the mining project; just offered current information.

The DEQ permit process is currently on hold because of the action initiated by Eagle Alliance in the courts; a hearing will be held later this month.

Dan offered information to discredit the criticism of Kennecott because of the washout at the Salmon Trout bridge. Although Kennecott paid for the bridge, its design and construction were directed by State engineers.

In response to objections raised about transporting ore by truck on CR550 or CR510, new transportation routes are being investigated west of Silver Lake Basin with entry to US-41 in the Humboldt area. Crossing wetlands would require additional permits.

Dan responded to questions about the safety of the proposed mining process: Mining laws have changed; technology has changed; new high-tech chemistry is involved; transportation would be in plastic-lined, covered trucks; Kennecott is confident they can keep contaminants out of the watershed.

Many thanks to Dan for helping to keep us informed.

## REPORTS

**Treasurer** - Lynn Emerick indicated a current balance of almost \$9500.

**Newsletter** - Ayleen VanBeynen asked for articles for the Newsletter, especially from adopters to feature different sections of the trail.

**Econo Receipts** - Caroline Jordan indicated that receipts turned in recently will net the NCTH \$200.

**New Trail Development Committee** - Marge Forslin reported that they will seek a trail route between Silver Lake Basin and CR510 by crossing reluctant owners' property on existing roads.

**Website** - Lorana Jinkerson asked for updated trail information to add to the website.

**Election** - Denise Herron requested help from all members to recruit and encourage members to serve as officers and board members when current terms expire next September.

**NCTA Conference** - Denise gave a brief report on the NCTA Annual Conference that was held in Clarion, PA in August. Next year's Conference will be in Bemidji, Minnesota.

## TRAIL UPDATE

Trail adopters and work crews have completed basic maintenance on most sections of trail. October should provide enough opportunities to reach 100%, and perhaps begin some trail building in the Coles Creek area if permission is obtained. Blazes need renewal in several areas, and we need to document the many spots that should have NCT signs or additional info on existing posts and correct these deficiencies.

A bridge on the Little Garlic River trail that habitually gets displaced by spring run-off was pulled back into position and raised a bit by an ingenious crew with pulleys, ropes and a come-along. Getting muddy was the order of the day.

## **ADOPTERS**

**Wildcat Canyon** - New adopters, Dan Raish and Bill Argall, have agreed to maintain the Wildcat Canyon area and possibly all the way to Coles Creek when that section is better established.

**Rumely Road to Rock River crossing** -Teri Grout will maintain this section. A new road and bridge, presumably for logging trucks, has appeared at the crossing giving us easier access to the area and to cross the river safely.

**McCormick Wilderness** - Needs a new adopter since Paul McKelvey has moved out of the area.

At the suggestion of Shirley LaBonte, the sections of trail across our Chapter's area will be numbered to provide easy reference.

## **ACTIVITIES**

**Mackinac Bridge Walk** – A group of four left Marquette at 5:30 AM on Labor Day to participate in the bridge walk. A beautiful clear day made it most enjoyable with the added bonus of seeing a “tall ship” under full sail cross directly beneath them.

**Softies hikes** – We have completed our trek across the U.P. A committee has been trying to decide whether to repeat the U.P. crossing or move into Lower Michigan or Wisconsin. Discussion at the meeting resulted in making this fall's Softies the scheduled hike through the **McCormick Wilderness** on September 30. The committee will continue to devise a plan for next year.

**Leftover trail work** will be accomplished in October. Please volunteer to help when you can.

**Kiosk at Founders Landing** – A suggestion from Ayleen VanBeynen to erect a kiosk near the trail in Founders Landing met with unanimous approval, and she and Gene Elzinga will pursue this project.

**Potluck Party** – Lorana Jinkerson has planned a get-together at her house, 1830 Altamont Street, on October 21 at 6:00 PM. She will provide hot sandwiches; bring a dish to share (appetizers, salads, desserts, beverages). Contact Lorana, 226-6210, or [ljinkers@nmu.edu](mailto:ljinkers@nmu.edu) by Thursday, 10/19 if you plan to attend.

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- The North Country Trail Hikers Chapter is on the internet. Our web master, Lorana Jinkerson, has developed the site, adds new features, and updates it frequently. Send any information of interest directly to Lorana [ljinkers@nmu.edu](mailto:ljinkers@nmu.edu). To access our site go to [www.northcontrytrail.org/NCT](http://www.northcontrytrail.org/NCT)
- Maps/Handbooks - New waterproof copies of area maps are available from NCTA or Denise Herron.
  - MI-11 - AuTrain Lake to Little Garlic Falls - \$4.50
  - MI-12 - Little Garlic Falls to Alberta - \$4.50
- New Adopter Handbooks were distributed to adopters attending the September 12 meeting. Copies will be delivered or sent to all other adopters. Read them carefully to gain insights and inspiration for keeping your sections in great shape.
- Mail *Econo* receipts to Caroline Jordan, 1011 Pine Street, Marquette, or drop off at the front desk of Peter White Library in an envelope addressed to Caroline.
- When purchasing merchandise at *Downwind Sports* mention that a credit should be given to NCTH.
- Chapter Historian, Bea Anderson would appreciate photos or articles that can be included in the scrapbook. Send to 906 Garfield Street, Marquette.
- Please help to promote the North Country Trail at every opportunity, try to recruit new members, adopt an area to maintain
- Consider serving as an officer or encouraging others to do so when current terms expire next September.

### ***Central Lake Superior Land Conservancy***

Jim Matteson, an active member of the NCTH chapter has been elected to the board of the CLSLC as secretary. He and his wife are trail adopters in the Craig Lake area, participate in the "softies hikes", and are involved in many organizations. Adding this appointment to his responsibilities in this chapter is a natural fit. Environment concerns and hiking go hand in hand.

**Congratulations, Jim**

**NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL HIKERS**  
C/O Ayleen Van Beynen  
309 Jonathon Carter Road  
Marquette MI 49855

### **ACTIVITIES**

- Oct. 18, WED – Trail work – Forestville reroutes  
Contact Denise Herron 225-1030 [dherron906@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dherron906@sbcglobal.net)
- Oct. 21, SAT – POTLUCK PARTY – Lorana Jinkerson’s house, 1830 Altamont, 6:00 PM  
Lorana will do hot sandwiches. Bring a dish to share (appetizers, salads, desserts) and beverages. Contact Lorana, 226-6210 [ljinkers@nmu.edu](mailto:ljinkers@nmu.edu) by Thursday, Oct 19 if you plan to attend.
- Oct. 25, WED – Trail work – Coles Creek area  
Contact Denise Herron 225-1030 [dherron907@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dherron907@sbcglobal.net)
- Oct. 28, SAT – Trail work - Open

#### ***Membership Renewal***

If the date on the address label is earlier than the date you receive this newsletter, your membership in the North Country Trail Association has expired. If there is not a plus sign after your name, you are a local member and can renew by sending \$10.00 per family annual fee to Lynn Emerick, Treasurer, 355 Heidtman Road, Skandia, MI 49855. If there is a plus sign, you will automatically receive a renewal notice from the National Office.

***NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL HIKERS***