

Spirit of the Woods

Local Chapter of the North Country Trail Association

Lake, Manistee, Mason and Oceana Counties in Michigan

Winter 2010

Congratulations! Our Own Ed Chappel Was Awarded National Trail Maintainer of the Year

Ed has been the trail work coordinator for our chapter since we were formed 11 years ago. He and his wife Nancy have been stalwart supporters since day one. Our chapter would not have grown and succeeded at our many endeavors without them.

Ed (for a while working with another man as co-coordinators) divided our 80 miles into segments and assigned them to volunteers for routine maintenance. He took the chain saw certification and was one of the people who would head out to the trail to clear large trees that had fallen anywhere in our section. Each year he has selected a major work project for the chapter to take on. Since our trail is some of the oldest anywhere along the NCT, it was in need of much maintenance when we adopted it.

I realize that this award is supposed to be about the past year, and I will get to that, but Ed is not a meteorite whose bright trail is seen only briefly. He has been a steady light of leadership. Over the years our chapter has built a 600-foot raised accessible boardwalk (not puncheon) through Dead Horse Marsh, added a turnaround deck and seating at the end of that boardwalk, repaired several bridges, built several new log bridges, built turnpiked trail in Sterling Marsh, rebenched several miles of trail, created several short reroutes in place of badly damaged sections or to correct erroneous surveying that placed the trail on private land, blazed our entire 80 miles with paint instead of blue diamonds, put up a number of 9" emblems at road crossings and carsonite posts with correct stickers at each crossing, and brought our aging trail section up to a high standard. All of this has happened under Ed Chappel's supervision. Of course, in this role he's usually the one who figures the materials, costs and time required to complete the projects. He organized a group of "seniors" who have worked on some segment of trail nearly every Thursday throughout the work season. Of course you know this means he's used many of his own tools and resources as well as the things that belong to the chapter. However, even for Ed, this past year seems to stand out. Two major problems appeared on the trail. Our area was hit with severe flooding (losing 46 road bridges, and being given federal disaster relief.) You might imagine that this would not be good for trail bridges either! Eddington Creek Bridge, a raised wooden structure— not just a log bridge, was not swept away, but it was severely damaged. Ed took his small work group out and worked for 14 hours one day. They had to return the bridge to the proper position and build several new supports for the bridging that sat in the stream bed.

The very next week the crew, again under Ed's supervision, went out and did another 14-hour work day. It's difficult to describe the challenge they faced on that day. A section of trail that traversed a hillside so steep that you can only climb it on hands and knees, slumped away. The section that disappeared was about 20 feet long. The result was that a 5-mile section of trail had to be closed in the popular Manistee National Forest. Of course, all our projects have to meet the stringent Forest standards. So with Forest approval of the plan the guys went out and build a bridge that now carries the trail along that section of hillside. They had to lower the lumber down on ropes from the top of the bluff above to the work site! They had to devise a way to anchor the structure into the steep hill. They stayed there until the job was done and ready for hikers, a monumental effort. Keep in mind that most of the fellows in the regular work force are around 70 years old!

Ed is currently battling Parkinson's Disease. He admits that he just doesn't have the strength he used to. His doctor is amazed at how well he is doing at fighting the progressive effects of Parkinsons. Ed attributes much of that to the fact that he refuses to give up walking the trail and working on it regularly. We always knew that being on the NCT was therapeutic! *By Joan Young*



Ed Chappel was presented with an engraved ax as National Trail Mantainer of the Year



Continuing Plans for the Sterling Marsh Boardwalk

This is a shortened version of the request for more Challenge Cost Share grant money that was submitted by Ed Chappel to the National Park Service.

There is 1,584 Ft of boardwalk remaining to be constructed in Sterling Marsh south of Baldwin. This, along with the 634.5 Ft already constructed, will make a total of 2,218.5 feet. When completed this should greatly increase the use of the trail in Sterling Marsh, as it is a birders paradise, and wild flower heaven during April, May and early June. It should draw hikers and nature lovers alike, including those that might not normally come into this area.

Our chapter is requesting Challenge Cost Share Grant money from the National Park Service to continue the construction of the boardwalk. The project would progress at about 500 feet per year and take until 2012.

It will be a multiyear project, unless we were able to get full funding and make it a work project for a group from NCT and American Hiking Society. This would require intensive planning, but with several forest campgrounds nearby would be feasible.

We have tried many things to keep the trail open year around in Sterling Marsh. This included building a Turnpike with 6 and 8 inch drains underneath. The water flowing through the marsh in the spring was so strong that it literally washed sections of the turnpike away. We replaced these sections with log bridges; however this still created a problem in the spring and after heavy rains as the turnpike was impeding the water flow. In 2007 we reviewed the marsh and determined that we needed to replace the turnpike with either puncheon or boardwalk. After much discussion it was determined that the puncheon, although better than what existed, would not be high enough as the water flow in the spring and after heavy rains was knee deep at times. Thus the puncheon would meet the same fate as the turnpike so we are requesting funds for boardwalk.



Nov. 14 hike in Sterling Marsh before deer season

MOONLIGHT SKI (AND OTHER OUTDOOR EVENTS) *GET OUTSIDE THIS WINTER!*



Ski by the light of the full moon on Saturday January 30 and Saturday February 27 at Big M Cross Country Ski area. Have treats in the warming shelter. The gathering starts at 7 PM. See www.skibigm.org for location and more info.

Also *Oceana Cross Country Ski Association* is hosting Moonlight Skiing, January 30 is the 2nd annual campfire cookout with food and fire at 6 PM and moonlight skiing to follow at 8 PM at Crystal Valley. Pentwater Pathways has a Moonlight Ski on February 27 at 8 PM.

Crystal Valley has a Moonlight Ski on March 27 at 9 PM. See www.oceanaski.org/events.htm

Winterfest is February 13, noon to 4 PM at Pentwater Pathways with Kid's Day activities. See above website.

(This activity does compete with our NCT activity that day at Big M).

Crystal Mountain in Thompsonville 231-378-2000 and 231-378-2000, ext. 4000) will host its Winter Trails Day event from 1-7 p.m. Saturday, Jan 5. see <http://getoffthecouchnews.blogspot.com/2008/01/winter-trails-day-events-january-5-12.html>

New Shuttle Service in the U.P.

Thomas Funke, director of conservation at the Audubon Society has a business offering shuttles for those who want to do the North Country Trail in the Upper Peninsula of MI. Contact Tom at: Michigan Audubon www.michiganaudubon.org 6011 West St. Joseph Highway, Suite 403 Lansing, MI 48917 O: 517-886-9144 C: 269-275-0004 F: 517-886-9466



Right photo: Dave Martus, Vicky Kelly and John Cooley estimate the diameter of this ancient hemlock to be 11 feet.

See <http://northcountrytrail-news.blogspot.com> for more photos and story by Joan Young.

Short Bits 2 Surprises

A surprise on our last work day. We had beavers building a dam on the stream just before the last bridge in Lietch Bayou. They undermined the trail and about 20 feet of it disappeared just before the bridge. Brian Belt, our Forest Service contact, wants to wait until next year to repair it and see what the beaver will do or what they will try to do with the beaver. It will take about a 20 foot extension of the bridge. Ed Chappel

Joan Young presented at our chapter meeting on November 10. Her presentation is entitled **The 500-Mile Summer- An NCT Sampler**. If you get a chance to hear her speak, go! She has wonderful pictures of the areas she travelled which ranged from very isolated wilderness to farm fields (and don't think those were easy!) Jerry Gault made a surprise visit and came to the Spirit of the Woods chapter to hear Joan Young speak about her travels this summer on several segments of the North Country Trail. Joan Young introduced him. She had just put his picture and story on her blog about the North Country Trail. Jerry hiked part of the NCT as a "forager", not bringing food with him... [H]e decided to find his own food on his 36-day, 517-mile adventure. Traveling with his Chesapeake Bay Retriever, Molly, and carrying a .410 shotgun, Gault hunted grouse and woodcock, which Molly flushed. He also made use of a portable fishing rod, and gathered wild cranberries, apples, watercress and mushrooms. Cattail and burdock tubers provided starch for his diet. The backup plan was a pocket full of granola and jerky. From Joan Young via <http://northcountrytrailnews.blogspot.com/> (Nov. 9)

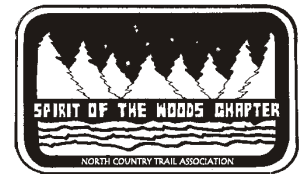
Please submit other stories about your NCT Hikes and share!



EVENTS CALENDAR

Everyone is welcome to attend our activities.

For up-to-date information and maps to events, visit our website at www.northcountrytrail.org/spw or contact Joan Young at 231 757-2205 jhy@t-one.net



Hikes (and/or ski or snowshoe)

Put these dates on your calendar for outings.

Saturday, January 9, 2009, 10 AM-Ski with Ellen Lightle at Crystal Valley. Contact Ellen Lightle at 231 869-4075 lighe@shelby.k12.mi.us See <http://www.getoffthecouch.info/oceana/crystal.htm> for a map to get to Crystal Valley. **DO NOT BRING DOGS**, as they wreak havoc on the groomed trails.

Saturday, January 30 See page 2 for moonlight ski at Big M (run by the Big M ski council) and moonlight ski at Crystal Valley (run by the Oceana Ski Council)

Saturday, February 13, 2009-Chili Feed at Big M-Ski or snowshoe. Meet at Big M at 10 am. Chili, hot chocolate and accompaniments will be on the stove for you so you can eat lunch after skiing or snowshoeing. **NO DOGS**, see above.

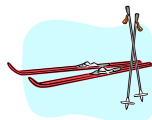
Saturday February 27, 2009 See page 2 for moonlight ski at Big M (run by the Big M ski council) and Pentwater Pathways 8 pm.

Saturday, March 13, 2009, 10 AM-Hike or snowshoe. Call Dave Martus or Loren Bach at 231 266-8584 or email at lobach@hughes.net (Dogs ok).

Moonlight Ski at Crystal Valley, see pg. 2

Saturday, April 10, 2009, 10 AM-Hike-Escape the tax season blues with a hike on the NCT. More info in the April edition of the newsletter or call Loren Bach at 231 266-8584 or email lobach@hughes.net

Contact Ed Chappel at 231 266-8008 or email chappels2ndwind@earthlink.net for more info or to be added to the emailed activity list.



Note meeting changes!

Meetings will now be held on the second **Tuesday** evenings of each month. They will start at **6:00 PM**. The location of chapter meetings is The Manor at the Lake Bluff Audubon Center 2890 Lakeshore Road, Manistee Meetings will also be listed in the Manistee News Advocate community section.



Executive Board Meetings **(Open to All)**

February 9, 2010 6PM Meetings are at the Audubon Center, see above for directions.

April 13, 2010 6PM See above.

Chapter Meetings With Speakers

Lake Bluff Audubon House, Manistee, short meeting, and programs. Contact Ed Chappel for more info. 231 231 266-8008 chappels2ndwind@earthlink.net

January 12, 2010 6 PM SEEDS staff will present a session about their program. SEEDS is a non-profit that provides after school programming and many more educational services to lessen our ecological footprint See pg 4 & www.ecoseeds.org/

March 9, 2010 6PM Come hear a librarian from the Manistee Public Library System give an overview of books and magazines available in the library that have hiking and silent sports as a theme. After all, many of us pack books on hikes!!

SEEDS Presentation at our January 9th Chapter Meeting

SEEDS is a non-profit research, design and educational institution whose mission is to seek the development of socially and ecologically sustainable environments. We foster projects that are participatory in nature and holistic in perspective. To this end, we act as an educational and networking resource. SEEDS focuses on incubating projects that lessen our ecological footprint and designing spaces conducive to this.

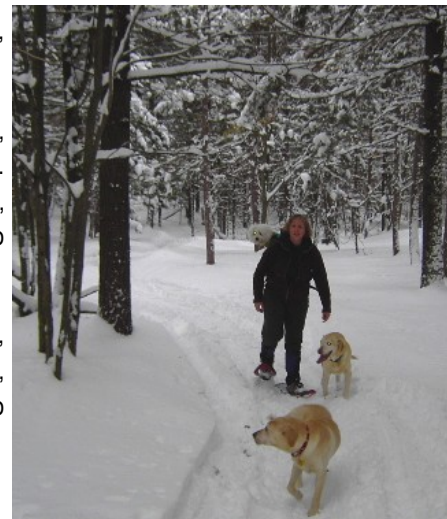
SEEDS also has a newly funded Youth Core program that works in local school districts to provide experiential after-school programming for middle school and high school youth and their families.

High quality after school programming occurs each school day through a combination of Site Coordinator instruction and guest instructors. The position is supported by several staff and the Coordinator will be responsible for convening a site Advisory Team to provide further support and guidance.

It is possible that the SEEDs philosophy and our Spirit of the Woods hiking membership could help each other in our endeavors. Please attend and join the discussion.

Other interesting classes: The Department of Natural Resources has three snowshoe-making classes at Ludington State Park, located at 8800 W. M-116 in Ludington,

- Sunday, Jan. 10, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Friday, Jan. 22, 6:30 to 10 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 23, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 25, and Tuesday, Jan. 26, 6:30 to 10 p.m.



Spirit of the Woods Chapter Officers

President and Trail Coordinator

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Treasurer

Brian Buchanan (Manistee)

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Loren Bach (Irons)

231 266-8584 lobach@hughes.net

Past President

Joan Young (Scottville)

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Manistee National Forest Liaisons

Baldwin District (south of Freesoil TH)

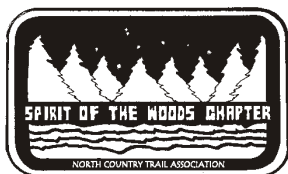
Chris Loudenslager

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Manistee District (north of Freesoil TH)

Brian Belt

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NCT/SPW

c/o Joan Young

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