



President's Report



*By Chuck Vannette
WMI Chapter President*

'I love it when a plan comes together'

This well-known phrase applies to our chapter as we move through the next exciting year. I want to communicate to you some of the changes that have already taken place.

The Board welcomed two new members, Chuck Hayden and Andy Mytys. Both have done much in terms of volunteer work with our Chapter and have helped us to move forward with our mission.

The Board has renewed its focus on the Trail, and our long-term goal of completing a natural, certified, well-known footpath through Kent and Newaygo counties. While we have been working towards this goal for a several years now, we're finally seeing things fall into place that can make it a reality.

With plat maps in hand, we talked at length about opportunities to move toward our goals, including not only building a high-quality trail, but also developing relationships with the

communities through which our trail passes.

In organizing the work-days for 2011, it was exciting to see much opportunity for advancement.

Plans for both improvements to existing trail and moving trail off-road have been laid out and we are, at the moment, awaiting approval on our most aggressive ambitions. We can definitely feel a wave of opportunity coming our way. In this time of calm we are working at completing the projects that have been approved, as well as assessing the number of volunteers we have, and what sort of work they're interested in being a part of (see "2011 Member Survey" on pgs. 3-7).

Our biggest hurdles at the moment are approval and volunteer resources. We need the NPS, MI-DNR, and/or private landowners to give approval to our plans. Given the size and scope of our plans, we also need many more active volunteers than we have today helping us get the work done.

The plans that we have put forth are realistic. However, for the first time that I can remember, we face the

challenge of having more trail work to do than we have volunteers to do it. We have the chance to put trail on the ground in places that will give us visibility and credibility, and in turn build excitement, add to our membership, and impact the communities we live in.

In order for us to make our plans a reality, we need for you to be a part of this exciting opportunity in any way you can. Feel free to come out for just part of a work day, to bring food or cold drinks to a work day, or to just come out and see the hard work that puts trail on the ground. Of course, if you can give us a full work day, we need you!

As I have said, in order to meet our goals we need volunteers in many areas. In an effort to gauge our membership's interest and availability in various Chapter activities, we've put together a "Member Survey," found in this newsletter. Please complete and return this survey. For your convenience, the survey can also be taken online at survey.followtheblazes.com.

There is a lot of positive work on the schedule for 2011, and we need your help. Please join us in moving forward and making the plan come together.



It's time for a little survey

*By Andy Mytys
Editor*

The new board started out the year reaffirming our mission of building, maintaining, and promoting a high quality recreational trail through Kent and Newaygo counties - a trail that is off roads, uses public green space, and, when necessary, partners with private landowners. We followed with a few simple questions. Where are we in terms of completing the trail? How are we doing managing the trail we've already built? Are our goals attainable? What resources are needed in order to accomplish our mission?

Through the course of our discussion we developed a long-term and practical strategy for completing the trail and realized that our footpath really can be finished.

A breakdown of the resources required to maintain the existing trail,

continued on page 4



Building a new bridge over Cole Creek is just one of the many fun projects planned for the 2011 trail building and maintenance season.

PHOTO BY ANDY MYTYS



Western Michigan Chapter Chapter Mission

The Western Michigan Chapter is responsible for developing and maintaining the North Country National Scenic Trail in Kent and Newaygo counties. Its range spans from the Grand Rapids area through the southern third of the Huron-Manistee National Forest.

Board of Directors

President	Chuck Vannette (616) 456-9725 cvann30643@aol.com
Vice President	Stephanie Black (616) 675-7237
Secretary	Roger Meyer (616) 975-1937 rogmey@aol.com
Treasurer	JoAnne Baron (616) 677-3598 jlbaron@charter.net
Schoolhouse	Len Baron (616) 677-3598 jlbaron@charter.net
Membership	Kathy Holwerda (616) 453-4085 skyeeyes05@aol.com

Board Members at Large

Jack Post (616) 682-1855
rensep@hotmail.com

Kevin Knoll (616) 437-4219
kevinknoll@grar.com

Paul Haan (616) 734-9443
paulhaan1@gmail.com

Chuck Hayden (616) 437-0334
pathfinder@fortunebaycompany.com

Andy Mytys (248) 825-3148
andy@followtheblazes.com

due north is published seasonally.

Materials for the Spring 2011 edition due
March 1, 2011.

All material may be edited for
content or space constraints.

Newsletter Editor
Andy Mytys
andy@followtheblazes.com



Building the Trail: How it Gets Done

Part II – Getting the Planned Route on the Ground

By Paul Haan

WMI Trail Manager

Figuring out the general route for the North Country Trail was discussed in the last edition of “*due north*.” Typically, the first year of work includes pouring over maps and making landowner contacts to decide upon a general, permissible route for the trail. Many readers were surprised to learn about the significant amount of work that needs to be done before even one branch is pruned out of the way.

On-the-ground scouting is step two. Once landowner permissions have been granted, it’s time to spend a serious amount of time figuring out the most scenic and most sustainable route for the trail. Of course, some landowners or land managers will dictate where the trail needs to be built on their lands, and in those cases, little scouting is involved. But in many cases, it is a much more open-ended process.

On public lands or undeveloped private lands, the job of scouting can take quite a bit of time. The best trail is built where the person planning the route has taken the time to get to know the land in various seasons. Hastily planning a route often results in a boring trail that is rife with maintenance problems.

The route of the trail should be scouted with scenic value and sustainability in mind. While it may be easy to follow that old woods road or railroad grade, the person planning the trail must ask “is this the most scenic route?” Often it is much more scenic to leave the straight and narrow—winding through the woods to explore the best of what they have to offer, such as a stand of large trees, a prairie opening, a wetland, or some other interesting feature. A National Scenic Trail, as our name implies, should give priority to the scenic value of the land.

Building sustainable trail is also top priority, and can be accomplished in a number of ways. Those who have volunteered with the Chapter trail crew or who maintain trails are well familiar with what works and what does not. First, the route needs to follow a gentle grade, as steep hills are prone to erosion. Besides, who wants to hike up a steep clip instead of a gentle grade? Lots of planning goes into making sure trails do not just pointlessly charge up and down hills.

Second, the route should be planned to require as few structures as possible. Obviously, this means that trails should avoid the need for bridges and boardwalks. Not only are the expensive, but they require maintenance too. Related to this, the trail route should avoid soft, wet, sandy, or otherwise sensitive soils. And the trail should also avoid the need for excessive directional signage or clever and confusing blazing. The intended route should feel natural.

Lastly, the route should pay attention to what is growing along the way. Building a trail through a mature woods will always be easier to maintain than one built through young growth or a sunny glade. Passing through groves of nuisance trees like witch hazel or autumn olive should be avoided whenever possible, or the trail will quickly disappear if maintenance is neglected for a season. Likewise, traipsing around that stand of pink ladies slippers is preferred to cutting through them.

Scouting usually takes a good six months or more, so that the trail can be observed in all seasons, especially the wet of spring. In addition, the landowner or land manager may want to review the route and may have good suggestions for improvement, so often their needs will have an impact upon both the route and the timeline for building the trail.

Winter is a great time to start scouting, as the lay of the land can be seen through the leafless trees. Fine-tuning then can happen in spring when wet spots and growth can be better observed. With the route scouted and flagged out, construction can begin. We’ll discuss this in the spring edition of “*due north*.”

Calendar of Events

Sign Up If You Go

Occasionally, outings have to be canceled because of unexpected events. Outing leaders strongly urge you to sign up for all events by sending an e-mail to, or calling, the event coordinator so that we know how many people are coming and have a list of contact information should plans change due to unforeseen circumstances.

Remember that the latest information about any event listed here can be found on our Chapter Website at www.northcountrytrail.org/wmi.



February 26

Annual Snowshoe/X-Country Ski

Outing

Meet at the [Birch Grove Schoolhouse](#) at 10 A.M. Coffee and pastries provided in the morning.

Hikers need not have snowshoes to participate – hiking at the back of the pack has worked out well in past years.

The water at the schoolhouse will still be shut off for the winter so be prepared by bringing water. Potluck meal around 2 PM - Please bring your own table service, beverage, and a dish or two to pass.

For further details, contact Stephanie Black at (616) 675-7237.

March 26

Trail Work

Building a new connection between the NCT and the parking area near Croton Dam.

For further details, please contact Paul Haan at paulhaan1@gmail.com or (616) 734-9443.

April 9-10

Introduction to Lightweight Backpacking

This event will be hosted by Andy Mytys, Ken Knight, and John Lawton, some of the Chapter's most seasoned backpackers.

Depending on the weather, the weekend will either be held on the grounds of the Schoolhouse or along the NCT via an overnight hike (6-7 miles one way).

The plan is to have Andy, Ken, and John make due with various modern backpacking gear that represents different

ways of getting things done. This will be a great weekend to view in-field contrasts between items such as chemical water treatment, UV light pens, and filters. See the differences for yourself, ask questions if needed, then decide what's right for you.

Other differences will be found in the packs, shelters, and stoves used. Raingear, medical kits, clothing, sleeping bags and pads... we'll make sure the contrasts in styles permeate into every major category of gear carried.

If you've ever thought about how you can shed weight from your pack, or are just getting into backpacking and are not sure what you should carry, this might be a very enjoyable event for you to attend.

Those who are absolute beginners and lack the essentials for an overnight in the woods are welcome as well - just contact us a few weeks ahead of time so we can talk and figure out what extra loaner gear we need to bring along.

We'll meet Saturday morning at the [Birch Grove Schoolhouse](#) at 10 A.M.

For details or to sign up, please contact Andy Mytys at andy@FollowTheBlazes.com or (248) 825-3148. Fee of \$7.50 for NCTA Members, \$10 for non-members.

April 16

Trail Wide Clean-Up Day

Trail wide clean-up in various areas throughout Kent and Newaygo counties. Free dinner following at Long Lake County Park

For further details, please contact Paul Haan at paulhaan1@gmail.com or (616) 734-9443.

April 16

WMI Volunteer Dinner, Long Lake County Park

Dinner for volunteers and others. Details TBA.

For further details, please contact Paul Haan at paulhaan1@gmail.com or (616) 734-9443.

April 30

Trail Work

Cole Creek Bridge, pending funding approval.

For further details, please contact Paul Haan at paulhaan1@gmail.com or (616) 734-9443

May 7

Orienteering and Hiking at Yankee Springs SRA

Explore the NCT and find your way with a map and compass on Yankee Springs' permanent orienteering course. No prior experience necessary. Training on map and compass use will be provided. Wear long pants, and bring a compass if you have one.

Meet at 9:30am at the [Norris Road \(AKA Yankee Springs Rd.\) NCT trailhead](#), 1/2 mile south of Gun Lake Road on the southeast side of the state park.

Please RSVP Matt Hahnfeld at math@everysoft.com or (616) 363-0368.

May 14

Trail Work

Cole Creek Bridge completion.

For further details, please contact Paul Haan at paulhaan1@gmail.com or (616) 734-9443.

continued on page 11

WMI Volunteer Member Profile:

Chuck Hayden

We thought it would be nice to have an ongoing feature in the newsletter that highlights our volunteer members and their relationship with the Trail. We're starting the series off by profiling one of the newest additions to our Board of Directors, Chuck Hayden.



Chuck Hayden lives in Lowell, MI and has been a member of the Chapter since 2001.

With the trail passing through his backyard, so to speak, Chuck

frequently uses the trail for activities such as hiking, trail running, and mountain biking. He has even been known to pick a put-in and put-out point along the trail, and navigate the waters in between with his Kayak. This past summer, Chuck found himself kayaking 168 miles over lakes Huron and Superior, biking 89 miles of U.P. forest roads, and hiking 40 miles of NCT, all in just 12-days!

Chuck also likes to GeoCache and keep his land navigation skills up to date. Currently, he is working on a multi-year project to map the NCT from the Yankee Springs Recreation Area to the Mackinac Bridge - Chuck's made it as far as Baldwin, MI and is continuing his efforts this winter.

Lest it be said that he just goes out on the trail to have fun, Chuck has maintained a section of trail in the past and was instrumental in last year's building of new trail in Lowell's Fallasburg County Park, including building solid rock culverts, turnpikes and staircases. Thanks to his leadership, the WMI has added a very scenic two miles of trail along the vicinity of the Flat River. Not wanting to make the work too easy on himself, Chuck completed his project during a weekend where the weather delivered rain, sleet, and snow. By marshaling the youth and energy of the local BSA troops and WMI members alike, Chuck was able to "get 'er done!"

Today, Chuck is eyeing partnerships with both public and private landowners, leading the effort in moving the Trail's route in Kent County towards one that is completely off-road. In his own words, he wants the WMI "to become a more organized, focused, effective, and efficient trail building organization."

This is Chuck's first term with the Board of Directors.



Chuck Hayden and his daughter, Charlotte, entertain a roomful of hikers at the Birch Grove Schoolhouse.

PHOTO BY ANDY MYTYS

"Survey" continued from page 1

and what's needed to complete the trail, was created. Then we came up with a list of forward-moving projects that we could realistically accomplish in 2011.

All of this reiterated what we already knew - we need more chapter members to volunteer. In extending our group of volunteers, we also need to work on tasks outside the bounds of shovel and axe. We need to communicate with our members, increase awareness of the trail, build up the size of our active membership, foster support from the communities through which the trail passes, and strengthen our partnerships with like-minded organizations.

Finally, we agreed that enjoying the fruits of our labors was a key value that we didn't want to overlook.

While our meeting was extremely productive, the one question that we couldn't answer was, "how does our membership feel about all of this?"

And so, our "2011 Membership Survey" was born. Where does our membership feel we should be focusing our efforts? Who wants to help out? What roles are people interested in taking? How can we most effectively communicate with our membership? What types of social events interest our members? You get the idea.

You'll find our survey in this newsletter. We wanted to make sure we touched on all our areas of concern, rather than having to come back with another questionnaire in the near future. Trust us when we say it really only takes about ten-minutes to complete.

The survey covers many areas - there's no requirement that you answer all questions. For your convenience, you can mail the paper version back to us or complete the survey online at survey.followtheblazes.com.

BONUS! - 20 random participants will receive an official NCT Nalgene water bottle.

We'd really like to hear your thoughts about the trail, our chapter, where our limited resources should be directed, and in what way you can help us achieve our goals. We thank you, in advance, for all your feedback.

Western Michigan Chapter 2011 Member Survey

The Western Michigan (WMI) Chapter of the NCTA is asking you to take a few minutes and participate in its 2011 Membership Survey.

While our website and newsletter are good tools for getting information out to you, our members, the dialogue needs to be two ways. Won't you take ten minutes to tell us what kinds of activities you'd like to see from the Chapter? Whether you like to hike, want to volunteer, or simply support the idea of a National Scenic Trail through West Michigan, we need to hear from you!

By participating in this survey, you will aid us in defining the directions that we should move in with our volunteer efforts - from the standpoint of building and maintaining the NCT, holding Chapter events, meetings, and effectively communicating our goals, ongoing efforts, and status.

A secondary goal is to get a general feeling for the makeup of our trail's users - in terms of how they use the trail and their relationship to the NCTA - and look for opportunities where we can increase our group of volunteers.

We do not require an answer in any area of our survey, nor do we require you to submit personal information - feel free to only answer those questions that you really have an opinion on.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this short survey. We'll be sure to publish the results and decisions we've made based on survey responses in an upcoming issue of "due north," as well as posting them on our web page.

For your convenience, this survey may be taken online at survey.followtheblazes.com

Sincerely,

Chuck Vannette
President - NCTA Western Michigan Chapter

The Chapter holds hikes/outdoor events catering to various interests throughout the year. For planning purposes, we'd like to know what our members are most interested in.

Which of the following types of events would you attend?

Please select your top 5, with 1 being most preferred.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dayhikes					
Weekend backpacking trips					
Week-long backpacking trips					
Week-long trips (non-backpacking, camping or staying in cabin, lodge)					
Hikes with a naturalist or other informed person					
Events focusing on skills (e.g. intro to backpacking, winter camping, map and compass use, etc.)					
Trail Runs					
Paddling Trips					
Organized mountain bike rides					
Night hikes					
Snowshoe Hikes					
Events as indicated above, for women only, under 30 only, seniors only, or the like					
Other Ideas? Please list:					

Describe the pacing of hikes you like to join: (choose one)

- Leisurely stroll with other club members at a relaxed pace and no hurry to finish
- I like to hike fast and knock off the miles
- Other ideas? Please list: _____

Describe the social nature of the hikes you like to join: (choose one)

- Hikes that involve social aspects like dinner at a restaurant following
- I like to hike with groups, but don't care for additional before or after activities
- I prefer to hike alone or with select friends
- Other ideas? Please list: _____

When you day-hike with a group, how far do you like to hike? (check all that apply)

- 1-3 miles
- 4-6 miles
- 7-10 miles
- 11-15 miles
- More than 15 miles

How important is it to you to have the hikes be very organized? For example, the hike leader has hiked the area previously and scouted out possible problems, the hike leader is firm on start and finish times, the hike leader teaches the group about responsible group dynamics and makes sure everyone gets out of the woods safely, the hike leader is equipped and trained for first aid. (choose one)

- I'm turned off by too many rules and expectations
- I like some basic structure, but don't tell me how fast to hike
- I like to see people sticking together, even if it means slowing down for slower hikers
- I firmly believe group hikes should focus on the enjoyment and safety of all hikers and that we are all responsible to working cooperatively with appointed leadership

What sized group do you prefer to hike in? (choose one)

- Less than five people
- 5-10 people
- 10-15 people
- The more the merrier
- I prefer to hike alone

What types of group trips would you likely attend in the next two years? (check all that apply)

- As defined above, along the NCT in Kent/Newaygo Co
- As defined above, along the NCT in MI
- As defined above, along the NCT
- As defined above, along any scenic areas in MI
- As defined above, along any scenic areas in the US

Would you be interested in leading Chapter events?

- Yes
- No

If so, what types of Chapter events would you be interested in leading? (check all that apply)

- Dayhikes
- Weekend backpacking trips
- Week-long backpacking trips
- Week-long trips (non-backpacking, camping or staying in cabin, lodge)
- Skills based events. Please list skill(s):

- Trail runs
- Paddling trips
- Organized mountain bike rides
- Night hikes
- Snowshoe hikes
- Other ideas? Please list:

The Chapter publishes information about events, the status of the trail, upcoming projects, volunteer opportunities, and others areas of interest to our members. We'd like to know how the current means of communication are working for our members.

What form of Chapter communications do you use? (check all that apply)

- Chapter Newsletter/Mailings to my home
- Chapter Website/Online Newsletter
- E-mail with Chapter/event leaders
- Chapter Facebook Page

What is your favorite method of getting information about the Chapter? (choose one)

- Chapter Newsletter/Mailings to my home
- Chapter Website/Online Newsletter
- E-mail with Chapter/event leaders
- Chapter Facebook Page
- I'd prefer to attend meetings in-person

What sort of information would you like to see included, on a regular basis, in the Chapter Website and/or Newsletter?

Please select your top 4, with 1 being most preferred.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes				
Calendar of Events				
Communication from Chapter Leadership				
Future Goals				
Status of Trail				
Summary of Past Events				
Trail Highlights/Trip Reports				
Knowledge and Skills				
Other Ideas? Please list:				

The Chapter is considering holding general membership meetings on a regular basis. We'd like to hear feedback with respect to interest in such meetings.

If the Chapter were to begin holding regular membership meetings, which of the following would you attend? (choose one)

- Every month
- Every other month
- Every quarter
- Twice a year
- Once a year
- I probably wouldn't come

Would you like to see the Chapter hold regular meetings to do any of the following?

Please select your top 3, with 1 being most preferred.	(1)	(2)	(3)
Inform membership of Chapter activities			
Outdoors clinics with knowledgeable people			
Travelogues			
Informal drinks and/or dinner with other trail supporters			
Other Ideas? Please list:			

One of the most fundamental reasons why the Western Michigan Chapter NCTA exists is to help build and maintain the North Country Trail in Kent and Newaygo Counties. We'd like to also know how our members can help build and maintain the trail.

Would you be interested in adopting a section of the NCT for regular maintenance duties? (note, all sections are currently assigned to adopters and there is a waiting list in place for new adopters.)

- Yes
- No
- I currently maintain a section of the NCT
- I'd like to hear more before I decide, please contact me

Have you ever volunteered to help with trail work?

- Yes
- No

If you were to come out and volunteer to help with a workday, how long would you like to work? (choose one)

- 1-2 hours at a time
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- A full day
- Weekend

Most people are available to volunteer on Saturdays. If you were to join the trail crew for work on a Saturday, what time would you like to get started? (choose one)

- 8:00 am 9:00 am 10:00 am 11:00 am Noon

What would help you volunteer more often with the trail crew? (check all that apply)

- Different time than 9:00 am Saturday morning
- Different day than Saturday
- Better instruction on what I need to do
- More social interaction (breakfast before, refreshments after)
- Status of Trail
- More flexibility to come and go as I please
- Special volunteer day for women only, under 30 only, seniors only, or the like
- Free food and swag
- Other ideas? Please list: _____

How can you help out with building and maintaining the NCT in Kent and Newyago Counties? What would you be willing to do with the support of the WMI Chapter?

Are there other, non-trail building tasks that you are interested in volunteering for? (check all that apply)

- Community Outreach
- Photography
- Mapping
- Graphics
- Office/Clerical
- Other ideas? Please list: _____

We'd like to know some basic information about you, your relationship with the NCTA, and how you use the trail.

What city/state do you live in?

How old are you?

- Under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-65 Over 65

What is your gender?

- Male Female

Where do you think the priorities should be in terms of the Trail?

Please select your top 3, with 1 being most preferred.	(1)	(2)	(3)
Maintaining all 70+ miles of existing trail			
Working with private land owners to gain easements			
Building new trail to get the NCT off of roads and to fill the gaps			
Improving trailheads and signage			
Building campsites, maybe even hiker shelters			
Building loop trails that use part of the NCT			
Other Ideas? Please list:			

Are you currently a member of the NCTA?

- Yes No

Are you currently a member of the Western Michigan Chapter of the NCTA?

- Yes No

How long have you been a member of the NCTA?

- Less than a year 1-5 years 5-10 years More than 10 years

During what seasons do you find yourself using the NCT in? (check all that apply)

- Spring Summer Fall Winter

What activities do you engage in while on the NCT? (check all that apply)

- Hiking
 Backpacking
 Trail Runs
 Mountain Biking
 Hunting
 Other? Please list:

_____ (check all that apply)

- Family
 Friends
 NCTA
 Scouts
 Other? Please list:

Additional comments

Please feel free to comment on anything about the Chapter that's on your mind and wasn't covered in this survey:

Please provide your contact information so that we can get in touch with you regarding any feedback or offer to volunteer given throughout this survey. If you would like to volunteer, some kind of contact information is required so that we can follow-up.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ *Zip:* _____ *Country:* _____

Phone: _____ Cell Home Work

Phone: _____ Cell Home Work

Please return completed surveys to:
Andrew Mytys - 34008 Fairfax
Livonia, MI 48152



State of the Trail

By Paul Haan
WMI Trail Manager

The purpose of the Western Michigan Chapter NCTA, as stated in its bylaws, is “to build, maintain, and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail in the counties of Kent and Newaygo in the State of Michigan.” So it stands to reason that a lot of our energy should and does go into trail building and maintenance. Here’s a recap of what happened in 2010, and what should come to fruition in 2011.

2010 started with the completion of about a mile of new trail in the northern portion of Fallasburg Park and the hardening two stream crossings in the Lowell State Game Area, the latter with the assistance of local scouts.

Then, in mid-April, the work continued with the rebuilding of a ten-year-old bridge in the Rogue River State Game Area that was destroyed by ants—ants that infested a huge neighboring maple tree, causing it to fall upon the bridge. Spring trail work wrapped up with the building of a mile and a half of new trail at the north end of the City of Lowell, taking the trail across “the boy scout cabin” property and into the Lowell State Game Area, eliminating about a mile of road walk.

Summer brought two “Mowing and More” weekends, where miles of bracken fern and young saplings were mowed and large trees that had fallen across the trail were sawed through.

With a number of planned projects not reaching approval stage by the time the fall work season rolled around, most of autumn was consumed by catching up on deferred maintenance on sections of trail where maintainers were not keeping up. A small reroute around a wetland north of Six Mile Road in Newaygo County was also completed, and a 40-foot section of raised turnpike was built in the Lowell State Game Area to keep hikers’ feet dry.

For 2011, there is more in the works than our usual trail crew volunteers will be able to handle. We will certainly need your help in 2011! Here’s a sampling of what we are trying to get into production for 2011:

- Re-alignment of the trail at Croton Dam to utilize the “fisherman’s parking lot.” This project has been approved and will start the last Saturday in March. This will add about 0.75 miles of new trail, some of it along a scenic bluff high above the Muskegon River.
- More than 2.5 miles of trail is in the works for southern Kent County in two different locations. Final approval is needed from two private landowners. We hope to start on one of these sections in the spring.
- The Forest Service has approved replacement of the “bridge” at Cole Creek (just north of M-20), and Chapter volunteers are working on securing the thousands of dollars needed for materials. An application for funding will be submitted this month, and if approved, will allow us to build the bridge in the spring.
- Replacement of the bridge at Rattlesnake Creek in partnership with American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacations is scheduled for the last week of July provided the Forest service finalizes funding.
- The forest service has identified two short relocations of the trail where erosion has been a problem between Five and Six Mile Roads in Newaygo County. This work is scheduled for Fall 2011.

While we are pleased to share these proposed projects with our members and friends, please know that things often change. Sometimes funding does not come through, a landowner changes his or her mind, or the needed volunteer support does not materialize. All this and more can result in projects not reaching fruition. If you’d like to help us improve our odds, consider volunteering some time to help get projects ready so that our trail crew can build the trail. If you can dial a phone or jot an email, you can help. Give me a call and I’ll let you know how.

Financial Balances

Western Michigan Chapter NCTA
January through December 2010

Submitted by JoAnne Baron
Chapter Treasurer

Income

Dues Share from National	\$2,309.20
Fall Fun Day	\$299.00
Donations	\$820.00
Schoolhouse Rental	\$850.00
Interest - Money Market	\$55.70
Interest - CD	\$330.01
Total Income	\$4663.91

Expenses

Communications

Newsletter Postage/Printing ...	\$170.44
Membership Mailings	\$217.99
Publishing Software	\$206.68
Ashley Consulting	\$450.00
Total Communications	\$1045.11

Events and Outings

Snowshoe Day	\$9.29
Maintenance Day	\$89.08
Trails Day	\$20.66
Fall Fun Day	\$50.50
Board Meetings	\$143.25
Member Meetings	\$45.00
Total Events and Outings	\$357.78

Schoolhouse

Electric	\$361.41
Propane	\$153.00
Pump Motor	\$265.63
Supplies/Repairs	\$398.83
Total Schoolhouse	\$1,178.87

Trail Bldg/Maint

Leaf Blower	\$424.96
Equipment Maintenance	\$500.72
Bridge Repair (Rogue River) ..	\$523.60
Trail Supplies	\$180.62
First Aid Training	\$106.00
Total Trail Bldg/Maint	\$1,735.90
Total Expenses	\$4,317.66

Balance as of 12/31/2010 \$16,521.65

“Calendar” continued from page 3

May 27-30

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Trail Hike

Join the Western Michigan Chapter of the North Country Trail Association for a hike along one of the most scenic sections of the North Country Trail in Michigan. Members and non-members are welcome, though the group is limited in size so interested parties should register as soon as possible.

The trip has been planned based on designated group campsite locations, scenery, and a planned exit time that will allow for a nice post-hike pizza party and still ensure that those living anywhere from Grand Rapids to Detroit will be home before midnight on Memorial Day.

Previous attendees have made this trip leaving Grand Rapids/Detroit as late as 4 p.m. on Thursday afternoon, so Friday and Monday might be the only days off of work that need to be taken in order to enjoy this relaxing trip.

The total distance covered will be 43.2 miles, broken down as follows: Friday 8.1, Saturday 11.3, Sunday 12.8, Monday 11.

The weather this time of year can vary. Past trips have witnessed lows around freezing and highs at 93 degrees! The sections of our hike that are along the lakeshore can be cooler than the inland areas, but these same sections can be challenging during times of rain, with strong winds off the lake making for cold and wet conditions. Swarms of mosquitoes should be expected while hiking just a few hundred feet inland from the beach, as well as when in camp at night. Hikers should come prepared for everything that a back-country experience in Michigan can offer.

Deadline for registration is May 14th - we have limited room on the permit so it's better to register earlier if possible.

Those interested in attending this hike should e-mail Andy with their name, phone number, and the number of hikers they wish included on this trip.

Contact Andy Mytys at andy@followtheblazes.com or (248) 825-3148. Or, visit the event's website at <http://www.northcountrytrail.org/wmi/events/piro.html> for further details.



Dick Bolton with Teddy “Cave Dog” Keizer on the Michigan leg of Duofold’s “Hike 50 Challenge”
PHOTO BY ANDY MYTYS

Remembering Dick Bolton

By Paul Haan

WMI Trail Manager

The more fortunate members of the Western Michigan Chapter have had the opportunity to hike with Dick Bolton, or to volunteer on a trail crew where Dick was busy documenting the work with his camera. Dick Bolton passed away this past November after a two-year battle with cancer.

Dick was an avid hiker, breaking in his hiking boots young as he tramped around the Vermont woods of his childhood or, more to his liking, the Adirondacks with his buddies in early years, and then with “wife Sharon” and daughter Kate later in life.

A resident of Shepherd, Dick joined the Western Michigan Chapter more than a dozen years ago and quickly pitched in the best way he knew how. As a professional photojournalist for the Mount Pleasant Morning Sun, Dick plied his trade to the benefit of the Michigan hiking community, snapping countless pictures of hikes on the North Country Trail and Chapter work projects.

Those who hiked with Dick got to know his penchant for debate, but also got to know him as a various generous man who was ever mindful of the wellbeing of his hiking companions. He preferred to sweep, rather than lead, to make sure that the slowest hikers were having just as good of a time as the quickest. He’d offer his fellow hikers some conversation, and often a Fig Newton or two.

Dick was an avid supporter of the vision of the North Country Trail, and would advocate constantly for the NCT as Michigan’s premier footpath for day hikers and backpackers alike. Although Dick preferred to day hike, he was always eager to hear about others’ latest backpacking adventures, and was thrilled when one of his heroes, Teddy “Cave Dog” Kaiser, made west Michigan his stop on his 50K in 50 states in 50 days challenge.

Those of us who got to know Dick will sorely miss his companionship. We will miss his ability to spin a tale or debate the finer points of tramping carelessly in the woods. We will miss his friendship. Simply, we will miss hiking down the trail with Dick Bolton.



North Country Trail Association
Western Michigan Chapter
229 East Main Street
Lowell, MI 49331

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
Permit No. 340



Did you know that 100% of the rental fees paid by groups using the Birch Grove Schoolhouse go directly to the Western Michigan Chapter, and in return fund initiatives such as trail building and maintenance, and promotion of the trail? With a minimum overnight fee of just \$20 and amenities such as a full kitchen and a bathroom complete with a shower*, this is one of the best “cabin” deals in the state. If you’re looking for a quick and convenient family getaway, without the hassle of packing and unpacking camping gear, the Birch Grove Schoolhouse might just be your ideal destination. Reserve your stay today!

* Full-service is limited to late-April through mid-November - water is turned off for the winter.

Located on a spur trail just 1.5 miles from the North Country National Scenic Trail, the Birch Grove Schoolhouse makes an excellent base for groups out to discover this recreational treasure. It makes a great location for family reunions, church outings, or just a weekend get-away for family and friends. We can also offer assistance and advice on planning hikes as a part of your group’s activities.

For rental rates and facility descriptions, visit our web site:

www.northcountyclub.org/wmi

To learn more about the historic Birch Grove Schoolhouse, or to reserve your event, contact:

Len Baron

(616) 677-3598 or (616) 460-2470

jlbaron@charter.net