Purpose of tonight’s presentation

- Provide some background information on the North Country National Scenic Trail
- Introduce the North Country Trail in MN
- Spotlight the recently completed 130-mile stretch of contiguous trail
The North Country National Scenic Trail is a footpath that links scenic, natural, historic, and cultural areas in 7 northern states that will someday...

...stretch over 4,600 miles from eastern New York to western North Dakota!
The NCT is not...

Your typical Minnesota trail.

It is...

• NOT a snowmobile trail
• NOT an OHV trail
• NOT a paved bicycle trail
• NOT a XC ski trail, although you can ski on it
• A simple footpath

So what is this National Scenic Trail title all about?
The North Country Trail’s National Significance

• National Scenic Trail designation means it’s a nationally significant resource and protected under federal law!

• The National Trail System Act was signed into law by President Johnson on October 2, 1968

• The Act designated the Appalachian and the Pacific Crest Trails as the first components of a system of National Trails

• Fourteen other trails were to be studied for potential National Scenic Trail designation, including the North Country Trail

National Trails System Act, cont.

• With an amendment to the Act passed on 3/5/80, the North Country National Scenic Trail was officially designated

• In 1983 the Act was amended to extend protections to volunteers and cooperating landowners – two lynchpins of the NCT and other trails

• In January 2009, the Act was amended to give the NCT and other Trails “willing seller authority” and 3 new NSTs were added.

• The public-private management partnership of the National Trails System is a conservation model embraced around the world.
2008 was the 40th Anniversary of the National Trails System, which includes 1,025 trails containing over 60,000 miles.

For more info on the National Trails System, visit http://www.pnts.org/

The 11 existing National Scenic Trails

- Pacific Crest
- Continental Divide
- Ice Age
- Natchez Trace
- Florida
- Appalachian
- Potomac Heritage
- New England
- Arizona
- Pacific Northwest
- North Country

The 11 existing National Scenic Trails
The Public-Private Partnership behind the NCT in MN

National Park Service

- **Overall Administrative Responsibility, including:**
  - Trail Routing Decisions
  - Trail Planning
  - Environmental compliance
  - Trail Signage
  - Trail Certification / Gold Star Certification
  - Administers Challenge Cost Share funding program
  - *Limited* Trail Protection functions

- **Office located in Madison, WI with a staff of 2.5 employees dedicated to the NCT**
Today approximately 1,800 diverse miles of the NCT are certified.

Only certified trail sections can display the official trail emblem on Carsonite posts, as shown at right.

North Country Trail Association Overview
The North Country Trail Association:

- Is the official non-profit partner organization of the National Park Service and works under a cooperative agreement
- Operates through local Chapters and Affiliate Organizations who handle local maintenance and land management needs
- Is responsible for Trail advocacy and promotion
- Is responsible for volunteer recruitment, support and retention

NCTA’s Mission Statement:

- The North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.
NCTA’s Vision for the Trail

• Our vision for the North Country National Scenic Trail is that of the premier footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience for hikers and backpackers in a permanently protected corridor, traversing and interpreting the richly diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.

• Most of the North Country Trail is built and maintained by the 2,300+ members affiliated with the 30 chapters of the NCTA.

• Including our affiliate organization partners, total membership is over 12,000.

You too can join and support the NCTA!
Other local government partners

- The NCT is also supported locally by:
  - The State of Minnesota: e.g. Itasca State Park & White Earth State Forest
  - Counties: e.g. Clearwater Co. Land Department, Hubbard Co. La, Becker Co. Natural Resources Management Department
  - Other Federal agencies: e.g. Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
  - Local municipalities: e.g. City of Frazee

- This support generally involves hosting the NCT on their lands and in-kind contributions to projects

What’s in it for the local partners?

- The recognition of hosting a National Scenic Trail there’s only 11 after all!
- The NCT is an added feature for their property and/or within their area
- Contributions to the local economy:
  - Univ. of MN Tourism Center research (2009) showed that statewide walkers/hikers spend 4x what ALL motorized trail users spend in MN. The number of jobs created / supported is almost 5x.
- Contributions of NCTA & local volunteers to make it happen

http://www.tourism.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@tourism/documents/asset/cfans_asset_167338.pdf
http://www.tourism.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@tourism/documents/article/cfans_article_132856.pdf
**What does the NCT look like?**

From city streets to Wilderness to old canal towpaths to shores of the Great Lakes to the Adirondack Mountains to the sweeping prairie.

**What uses is the NCT open to?**

Horses and bikes are allowed in some places, typically where we utilize a horse or bike trail or where the trail is specifically built to withstand their impacts (e.g. Sheyenne National Grassland in ND).
Volunteers: Lifeblood of the NCT

This past year (FY2009), 784 NCT volunteers provided 59,958+ work hours assisting in the creation, promotion, and maintenance of the North Country NST. This contribution is worth over $1.2M as volunteer hours are valued by the federal government at over $20/hr.

How is the NCT built locally?

Through the hard work of the NCTA chapter volunteers and with the support of the Conservation Corps of Minnesota using state & federal grants matched with locally-raised private funds.
Let’s explore the 130+ mile continuous segment of the NCT
Where is the 130+ mile stretch in northern MN?

2010-2012 Trail Development Project Area – part of the NCT’s Arrowhead Re-route to Grand Rapids & Ely

Completed NCT
NCT under development
Trailhead parking areas
Backcountry campsites

2010-2015 Trail Development Project Area – part of the NCT’s Arrowhead Re-route to Grand Rapids & Ely

Completed NCT
NCT under development
Trailhead parking areas
Backcountry campsites
Chippewa National Forest

Highlights of the Route

• Old Pine Tree logging RR grade
• Historic Al Dots logging camp site
• Milton Lake esker segment
• Woodtick Fields
• Patches of old-growth red & white pine
• Boy River crossing
• Goose Lake & Shingobee Trail Systems
• Shingobee sliding hill

• Suggested day hikes:
  — Milton Lake esker
  — St. Hwy 34 (Shingobee Rec. Area trailhead) to Co. 50 trailhead
  — St. Hwy 371 trailhead to 2nd Woodtick Trail (FR2107) crossing parking area
Eastern end of 130+ mile section

Chippewa N.F. boundary
Scenes Along the Route

For more info...

- NCTA Hiking Map MN-09

- Guide to the North Country Trail in the Chippewa National Forest by Rod McRae
  - Available online at http://www.northcountrytrail.org/guide/index.php/Minnesota#TheExistingChippewaNationalForestSegment

- Contact the U.S. Forest Service – Chippewa National Forest Walker Ranger District at 218-547-1044
Paul Bunyan State Forest & Hubbard Co. Forest

Highlights of the Route

- The Itasca Moraine glacial landscape (gravely hills with kettle lakes & wetlands)
- Waboose Lake campsite
- Nelson Lake loop trail
- Gulch Lakes non-motorized area
- Old logging RR grades
- Scenic Schoolcraft River valley
- Numerous, remote undeveloped lakes

- Suggested day hikes:
  - Hubbard Co. Hwy 91 to Hubbard Co. Hwy 4
  - Hubbard Co. Hwy 4 to Schoolcraft River and back
  - Nelson Lake loop hike
  - St. Hwy 64 trailhead to Akeley Cutoff Forest Rd. parking area
Scenes Along the Route
For more info…

• NCTA Hiking Map MN-10

• NCTA’s Wiki Trail Guide for the North Country Trail between the Chippewa National Forest and Itasca State Park available online at: http://www.northcountrytrail.org/guide/index.php/Minnesota#The_Itasca_Moraine_Chapter_segment

• Contact the Itasca Moraine Chapter at itm@northcountrytrail.org or visit http://www.northcountrytrail.org/itm/

Itasca State Park
Highlights of the Route

• Old growth red & white pine forest
• Old growth hardwood forest
• Numerous, remote undeveloped lakes
• Backcountry campsites
• Loop hike opportunities from Lake Itasca / Douglas Lodge area

• Suggested day hikes:
  - U.S. Hwy 71 / Itasca Park South Entrance trailhead to Iron Corner Lake campsite & back
  - Gartner Farm parking area to DeSoto Lake campsite and back
  - U.S. Hwy 71 / Itasca Park South Entrance trailhead to Anchor Matson Rd. trailhead
  - Deer Park – Eagle Scout (NCT) - Ozawindib loop hike from Douglas Lodge
Scenes Along the Route

For more info...

- NCTA Hiking Map MN-10

- NCTA’s Wiki Trail Guide for the North Country Trail within Itasca State Park available online at:
  - http://www.northcountrytrail.org/guide/index.php/Minnesota#The_Itasca_Moraine_Chapter_segment (east half)
  - http://www.northcountrytrail.org/guide/index.php/Minnesota#The_Laurentian_Lakes_Chapter_segment (west half)

- Contact the Itasca Moraine Chapter at itm@northcountrytrail.org or visit http://www.northcountrytrail.org/itm/

- Contact the Laurentian Lakes Chapter at highpines@arvig.com or visit http://www.northcountrytrail.org/llc
White Earth State Forest

Highlight of the Route

- Numerous, remote undeveloped lakes
- Backcountry campsites
- Laurentian Divide
- Old logging RR grades
- Historic Nichols-Chisholm Logging Co. “Headquarters” site
- Tim-Don-Del Hill vista

Suggested day hikes:
- Anchor Matson Rd. trailhead to Clearwater Co. Hwy 39 trailhead
- Clearwater Co. Hwy 39 trailhead to St. Hwy 113 trailhead
- St. Hwy 113 trailhead to Elbow Lake Rd.
Itasca State Park
Laurentian Divide
LaFleur Lake campsite
Western end of 130+ mile section

Headquarters Trailhead & campsite

Pine Island Lake campsite

Tim-Don-Del Vista

Gardiner Lake campsite

Elbow Lake Rd. Trailhead

Scenes Along the Route
For more info…

- **NCTA Hiking Map MN-10**

- **NCTA's Wiki Trail Guide for the North Country Trail in Clearwater and Becker Counties online at**
  http://www.northcountrytrail.org/guide/index.php/Minnesota#The_Laurentian_Lakes_Chapter_segment

- **Contact the Laurentian Lakes Chapter at highpines@arvig.com or visit** http://www.northcountrytrail.org/llc

Where else will NCT hikers be able to hike in MN in the next 3 years?

- Extension of the 130+ mile section south to City of Frazee
- Extension of the 130+ mile section northeast to City of Grand Rapids
What can you do to help out?

- Go for a hike on the trail!
- Volunteer on the trail!
- Join the NCTA! You can join by calling 1-866-HIKE-NCT or join online at http://www.northcountrytrail.org/involved-become_a_member.php
- Tell your friends and neighbors about this amazing resource right in our backyard!

Questions?

If so, feel free to contact Matthew Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator at (701) 388-1883 or davis@northcountrytrail.org