



FALL 2024

TRAILWALKER

BUILDING, MAINTAINING, AND PROTECTING MORE THAN
2,000 MILES OF PUBLIC TRAILS & LANDS

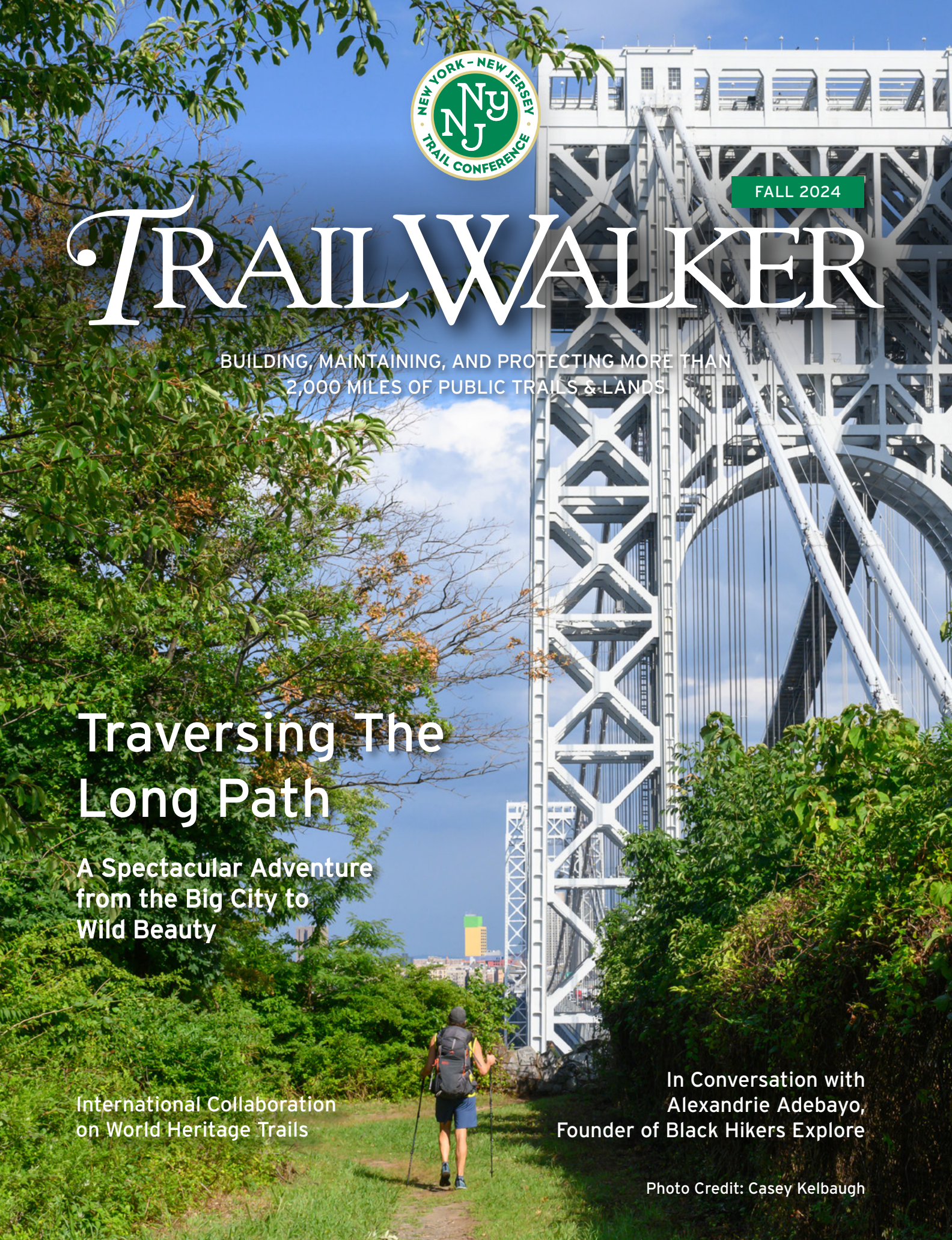
Traversing The Long Path

A Spectacular Adventure
from the Big City to
Wild Beauty

International Collaboration
on World Heritage Trails

In Conversation with
Alexandrie Adebayo,
Founder of Black Hikers Explore

Photo Credit: Casey Kelbaugh



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TRAIL WALKER

VOLUME LII, No. 2 FALL 2024

PREVIOUS TRAIL WALKER: SPRING 2024 EDITION

MISSION STATEMENT

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer-powered organization that builds, maintains, and protects public trails. Together with our partners, we strive to ensure that the trails and natural areas we share are sustainable and accessible for all to enjoy for generations to come.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer powered, non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization.

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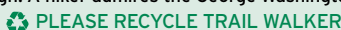
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Cover photo by Casey Kelbaugh: A hiker admires the George Washington Bridge from the Long Path.



Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Trail Walker is a biannual magazine published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430. The editor and managing editor is Matthew Thompson, at the same address. The annual subscription price is \$15; contact person is Matthew Thompson; telephone number is 201-512-9348. The tax status of the organization has not changed during the preceding 12 months. As of the filing date of March 9, 2023, the average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months was 7,500; the actual number of copies of the single issue published nearest to the filing date was 7,500. The paper has a total paid and/or requested circulation of 4,454 (average) and 4,454 (actual, most recent issue). The free distribution for the 12 months preceding the filing date was 1,549 (average) and 1,549 (actual, most recent issue). The total average distribution was 7,036; the actual distribution of the single issue published nearest to the filing date was 7,036. This information is reported on U. S. Postal Service Form 3526 and here as required by 39 USC 3685.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

You may have noticed; the Trail Conference's website has undergone a facelift. From the outside, it may appear to be a cosmetic improvement, but under the hood we have made significant upgrades.

Technology is an essential tool that enables the Trail Conference to raise awareness of our work with the public, allow trail users to buy books and maps, donors and members to support our mission, and our volunteers to report their accomplishments on the trails we love. That is why our strategic plan prioritized making investments in technology. Earlier this year we completed a successful migration to a new member database and now we are investing in a multi-phase website upgrade.

In the first phase our goal was to improve the user experience. Our new website makes it easier for users to find what they are looking for. Next, we looked at enhancing the security features on our site, removing outdated features that posed security risks and protecting our data from being vulnerable. We have also chosen a new web hosting platform and content management system that will be more cost efficient and easier to maintain. Finally, a redesigned online store makes it simple and enjoyable for trail users to purchase our incredible books, maps, and unique Trail Conference clothing.



JOSHUA HOWARD
Executive Director

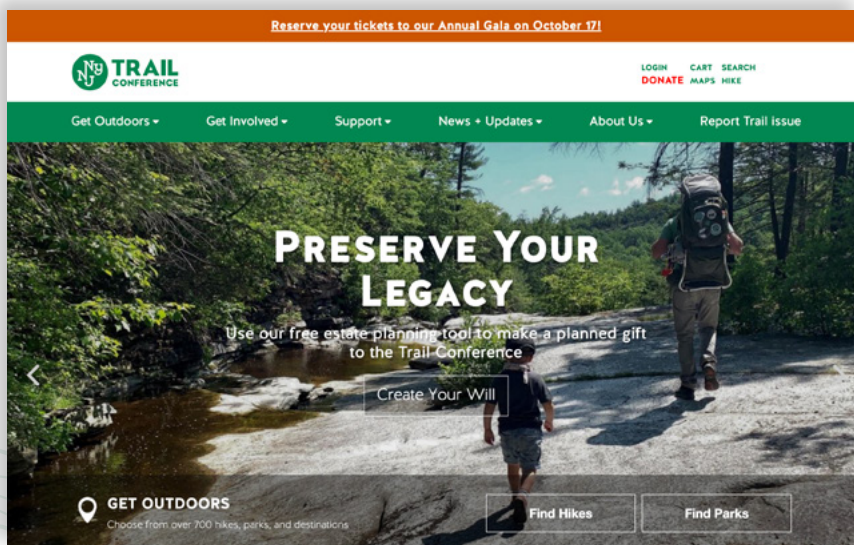
These improvements are just the beginning. New features and functions will be added over time. In the second phase of the website project, we will implement an improved volunteer management system, which will greatly expand functionality. These upgrades will include new online reporting tools, an

improved interface for volunteer leaders to review their maintainers and trail section data, and greater report functionality so we can share our volunteers' accomplishments with agency partners.

Just as we continually adopt new tools and techniques to build and maintain our trails, we are doing the same with our online interface to support our goal of providing the New York metropolitan region with amazing trail experiences through lands and natural areas that are cared for by our amazing volunteers and staff.

Stay tuned for more exciting technology upgrades!

Josh Howard



Jim Bixler

WEB & SALESFORCE MANAGER

With nearly two decades of calling the Hudson Valley home, Jim brings a wealth of experience and love of the outdoors to our organization. He holds a BA from Ithaca College. His background in sales, project management, and team leadership make him a valuable asset to the Trail Conference. When he's not working, Jim enjoys hiking, trail running, live music, and time with his wife and rescue pups.



Melissa Cascini

PROMOTED TO SENIOR NEW YORK PROGRAM COORDINATOR

We're proud to announce that Melissa has been promoted to Senior New York Program Coordinator. Melissa's promotion serves as a well-earned recognition of her exceptional performance and achievements during her four years with the Trail Conference. While Melissa will continue to fulfill her New York Program Coordinator duties, the Senior title will greatly expand her role and confer fresh responsibilities to advance our mission. Congratulations, Melissa!



Sarah Jackson

CONSERVATION DOGS PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

We're thrilled to expand our Conservation Dogs Program with the addition of Sarah Jackson and conservation dogs Ptero and Lady! Sarah, Ptero, and Lady bring a wealth of experience in conservation detection, including work on bog turtle detection, bird and bat mortality surveys, and scent detection efforts on endangered plants and invasive mussels. Sarah's background as a pilot and business professional, combined with her passion for conservation, make her a perfect fit for our Conservation Dog Program. Ptero and Lady bring energy and expertise to every search, and we're excited to have them on board!



Mike Morris

PROMOTED TO VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

We're proud to announce that Mike has been promoted to Volunteer Engagement Coordinator. Mike will now oversee our volunteer data, perform grant analysis and identify volunteer data trends, and liaise with team members on content creation and website development to promote volunteer opportunities and accomplishments. Mike's dedication makes him a vital asset to the Trail Conference and his promotion is more than well deserved!



Matthew Thompson

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST & CONTENT STRATEGIST

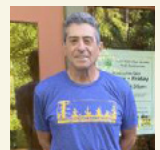
Matthew joins the Trail Conference as its Communications Specialist & Content Strategist with a passion for the outdoors, a keen eye for storytelling, and more than a decade of experience in digital marketing and the literary publishing world. An avid traveler, he's explored the mountains of Slovenia, the fjords of Norway, and the islands of Greece while proudly calling the Catskills home. He's thrilled to bring his talents to the organization to help tell its story and champion its role in sustaining our region's natural spaces.



Tony Vindeed

BUILDING & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE ASSOCIATE

Tony joined us as a part-time Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Associate in March. He grew up in the area, went to local schools, and joined the Paterson Fire Department after high school where he was promoted to Captain. He retired after thirty years of service. Due to his flexible hours in fire fighting, Tony had time to work in construction trades where he learned carpentry, cabinet making, and masonry. He raised his family in nearby Wyckoff Township. He's an avid biker and has toured Europe on bike, and enjoys exploring the outdoors with his three adult children and two grandchildren.





The Long Path: An Extraordinary Journey from the Heart of the City to Wild Beauty

The Long Path is the Trail Conference's premier long-distance trail. It stretches 358 miles from the West 175th Street Subway Station at the George Washington Bridge in New York City to John Boyd Thacher State Park near Albany and offers a breathtaking journey through some of the most diverse and scenic landscapes in New York State. Over the better part of a century, the Trail Conference has created, maintained, and continuously improved the Long Path, resulting in a vital corridor connecting urban and wilderness environments.

Feature photo by: Casey Kelbaugh

continued on page 6 >>



1930: The George Washington Bridge rises in the background, still under construction, as members of the Wanderbirds hiking club, led by William Hoeflerlin (far left), take in the breathtaking views from the Palisades cliffs. This snapshot captures a moment of adventure that inspired the future Long Path, highlighting the allure of escaping busy NYC for the wild beauty of upstate New York.

The Vision: Origins and Growth of the Long Path

The vision for the Long Path dates back to 1931 when Vincent Joseph Schaefer envisioned a long-distance hiking route from New York City to the Adirondacks. In 1934, Trail Conference founding member Raymond Torrey promoted the idea in his popular newspaper column in the NY Post. Starting in the 1960s, Trail Conference volunteers began in earnest to plan and build the trail, collaborating with local communities to establish key sections of the Long Path in areas like Harriman State Park and the Palisades Interstate Park. Progress was methodically and painstakingly achieved over the following decades. In 1989 the Trail Conference began the endeavor to build 70 more miles of trail to reach Thacher State Park, just outside of Albany. Completed in 1995 this was the biggest addition to the Long Path in the last 30 years and would not have been successful without the hard work and support of the Long Path North Hiking Club.



Senior volunteer leader Andy Garrison updates trail signage with a new Long Path blaze.

Expansion and Modern Stewardship

As the trail expanded, so did the challenges of maintaining and improving it. Today, Trail Conference senior volunteer leader and former Board Member Andy Garrison plays a crucial role in overseeing the care of the Long Path. Garrison's efforts have been focused on rerouting certain remaining road-walks back onto forest paths, which he has accomplished by negotiating land parcel acquisitions and building new sections of trail. His leadership has not only preserved the integrity of the trail but has also ensured that hikers can experience the natural settings along the vast majority of the Long Path's 358-mile distance.

Garrison describes the joy of working on the Long Path: "When I first discovered the Long Path I quickly realized it was a diamond in the rough! Now, after twenty years of working on the Long Path I feel rewarded as more people use the trail. I can't describe the joy I feel, that the Long Path is currently getting extended north of Thacher Park."



Photo by: Casey Kelbaugh



Photo by: Casey Kelbaugh



The towering white cliffs of Sam's Point in the Shawangunk Mountains. Photo by: Steve Aaron

Scenic Highlights: From the Hudson to the Catskills

Beginning by traversing the George Washington Bridge, the Long Path offers a stunning juxtaposition between urban and natural environments. Hikers are greeted with views of the Hudson River and the towering cliffs of the Palisades. From here, the trail winds northward, quickly immersing adventurers in wilderness settings that feel worlds away from the bustling city.



The serene skies of the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area await hikers on the Long Path. Photo by: Steve Aaron

with stunning vistas of the Hudson River and the surrounding valley. The mountain's unique pink and purple conglomerate rock, paired with sweeping views of the Shawangunks and Catskills, is an unforgettable experience.

Further north, the Shawangunk Mountains offer a different kind of beauty, with white cliffs, waterfalls, and rare pitch pine barrens. Hikers are treated to stunning sights such as 187-foot-tall Verkeerder Kill Falls and mountain-top "sky lakes". This section is a favorite among nature lovers, showcasing the rugged, untamed beauty of the region.

The Catskill Park: Wilderness at its Highest

From the Shawangunks, the Long Path continues through the heart of the Catskills, a region known for its rugged beauty and challenging climbs. The Long Path passes through forests, over mountain summits, and alongside waterfalls, offering hikers

Josh Howard, Trail Conference Executive Director, reflects: "One of the most beautiful aspects of the Long Path is how it transitions from the urban energy of New York City to the serenity of the Hudson Highlands, creating an extraordinary escape for hikers."

Beyond the Hudson, the trail offers a diverse range of natural landscapes. Hikers pass through dense forests, traverse open ridges, and encounter scenic lookouts with panoramic views. The climb up Schunemunk Mountain rewards trekkers

Photo by: Casey Kelbaugh





Photo by: Casey Kelbaugh



Photo by: Casey Kelbaugh

a true sense of wilderness. In the Catskills, the trail passes over Slide Mountain, which is the highest peak in the region, and traverses the Devil's Path, notorious for its rocky scrambles.

Ken Posner, Board Chair of the Trail Conference and an accomplished long-distance hiker and runner, often speaks to the historical significance of the Long Path: "The name is short for 'Long Brown Path,' a reference to Walt Whitman's Song of the Open Road, and is meant to convey the sense of freedom and joy we experience when headed out in the wilderness."

The path through the Catskills offers other glimpses of the region's rich history. Hikers pass historic sites and landmarks, such as a plaque for John Burroughs, a famous nature writer of the early 20th century. These places remind hikers of the deep connection between the trail's history and the land it traverses.

End-to-End Hikes: A Growing Tradition

There are many ways to experience the Long Path. Some hike the trail one section at a time, over a period of months or years. Completing an "end-to-end" hike of the Long Path in a single trip has increasingly become a badge of honor for long-distance hikers, with the 358-mile distance making the trail more widely accessible. Each year, more adventurers complete this remarkable feat, sharing their stories and celebrating their achievements.

In recent years, the Long Path has attracted attention from the trail-running community, some of whose members seek to thru-run the entire trail in a single trip. Recently, Kim Levinsky, the founder of Sassquad Trail Running, completed her thru-

run in a time of 9 days, 10 hours, and 44 minutes, setting a new woman's record for fastest known time (FKT). Levinsky's achievement is a testament to her strength, endurance, and love for ultra-running and highlights the growing achievements of women tackling long-distance trails.



Kim Levinsky (pictured) admires the view from High Point in Minnewaska State Park. Photo by: Robin Chase

Levinsky shared: "One of the most moving moments from my thru-run was when I reached High Point at Minnewaska. Surrounded by the pitch pines and ivory cliffs, I looked back towards the Catskills to see how far we had come and then I looked ahead to the Hudson Highlands to see all that was still ahead. The Long Path leaves a lasting impact on your life; after traversing 358 miles, I arrived at the 175th Street Subway Station with a deeper understanding of the power of community and my own inner strength."



The falls of Thatcher State Park along the Long Path.
Photo by: Steve Aaron

The Future of the Long Path

Looking ahead, the Trail Conference and our volunteers are endeavoring to further develop the Long Path. One major goal is to extend the trail further, 65 miles to the Adirondacks. We are also continuously working to identify areas in which road walks can be eliminated by rerouting the trail into natural areas.

Sustainability is also a priority as the Trail Conference is working to ensure that increased foot traffic does not damage sensitive ecosystems. Efforts are underway to improve infrastructure, such as bridges and campsites, while addressing erosion and environmental preservation.

Josh Howard highlights the importance of this work, saying, “The Long Path symbolizes the rich legacy of the Trail Conference. We’re not just



maintaining it but nurturing it as it grows to connect unique communities and incredible open spaces, ensuring it remains a vibrant resource for decades to come.”

The Long Path is more than a trail; it’s a journey through New York’s rich natural and cultural history. From its urban beginnings to the remote wilderness of the Catskills, the trail provides hikers with unforgettable experiences and breathtaking vistas. Thanks to generations of leadership, the Long Path continues to thrive, offering both challenge and beauty for those who walk, hike, or run it. All of us at the Trail Conference encourage all outdoor lovers to create their own epic memories on the one-of-a-kind Long Path.

Building a Path to Adventure

Long distance trails, from the National Scenic Trails like the Appalachian Trail to regional gems like the Long Path and Highlands Trail, are designed to connect communities and green spaces. Study after study documents the positive economic impact these trails provide from recreational tourism dollars and the environmental benefits of preserving open spaces and native habitats for wildlife.

More importantly, these trails serve as an artery to adventure. They not only provide opportunities for physical activity, which improves our well-being; they feed our need to be connected to something grandiose and iconic, something bigger than us.

Trails like the Long Path serve as a respite after a long day at work. They invite you to get outside and walk off a hard day. You also can escape for a long weekend to chip away at the 180 miles of the Highlands Trail and create magical moments that only happen while outdoors on a trail, or visiting a trail town. Or you can dedicate yourself to an end-to-end hike of the Long Path, where you can make a plethora of memories that will be with you for the rest of your life. There is no right or wrong way to enjoy a long-distance trail. They have been built to serve all your needs.

Since the 1930s, the Trail Conference has been designing, building, and protecting the Highlands Trail and Long Path because we understand the value and need for these great trails in our region. While so many of us have all come to appreciate having these trails in our backyards, down the road, or in the park a short bus ride away, there are so many who have yet to begin their unique relationship with these trails.

Since our inception, the Trail Conference has believed that we need to explore the outdoors through great trail experiences. We are now refocusing our efforts to improve the Long Path and Highlands Trail. We are researching how to make



them more accessible by public transportation. We are designing safer and more sustainable trail routes while working hard to protect trail corridors by means of land acquisition. We are identifying new towns and villages to develop the same sense of community we have nurtured along the Appalachian Trail.

The Trail Conference's goal is to create destination long-distance trail experiences—for *everyone*. As an alumnus of thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail, I have been the firsthand beneficiary of what a long-distance trail can provide.

In the coming years, we will be sharing our successes in building and improving the Long Path and Highlands Trail. I invite you to join us in our efforts as a trail user, a trail builder, or through your continued support of the Trail Conference.

– **Josh Howard, Executive Director**

Highlands Trail Town Initiative Announcement



Norvin Green State Forest, New Jersey

Photo By Karl Weiss

This summer, the Trail Conference and the New Jersey Highlands Council rekindled our partnership on a new opportunity to develop a model for Highlands Trail Towns. This project is intended to enable the communities along one of the Trail Conference's premier long-distance trails, the Highlands Trail, to better leverage local economic opportunities associated with outdoor recreation, to improve hiker amenities on the trail, and to foster better protection of the corridor.

In 2022, the Trail Conference successfully implemented a campaign to grow the Highlands Trail's identity by adding signs at key locations along the Highlands Trail for the length of the trail in New Jersey. This next phase builds on that work, extending the opportunity to promote and capitalize on the Highlands Trail to the towns it travels through. New materials for towns to use to champion their affiliation with the trail will be developed, and a robust stakeholder process

realized to ensure the program meets local needs.

The concept of trail towns supporting sustainable economic development is well-established, with many successful examples from both local and long-distance trails. The Highlands region in New Jersey is particularly special for the incredible recreational potential it offers, its rich history and unique culture. The Highlands Trail provides a thread along which people can experience its natural beauty and learn the region's history. Bringing the local communities into the project is integral to the project's success.

In this next phase, the Trail Conference will design the program, establish criteria for eligibility, and create materials supporting the program. A pilot program will be rolled out over the next year, followed by a broader campaign for the whole trail in New Jersey in future years.

NEW YORK TRAIL UPDATES

Fall 2024

Over the past year, there has been a whirlwind of activity by our dedicated volunteers, culminating in two major accomplishments that have significantly improved the hiking experience across the western area of the Catskill Forest Preserve and Harriman-Bear Mountain State Parks.



Catskills Trail Crew Clears the Trails

In early August, the Catskills Trail Crew led by volunteer leader Matt Smith achieved a milestone that was nearly four months in the making: the completion of the rehabilitation of more than 10 miles of trail on the Mongaup-Hardenburg and Long Pond-Beaverkill Trails in the western Catskills. The project required meticulous planning and hard work, with more than 20 volunteers returning week after week to tackle the dense brush and fallen trees that had made the trail impassable after years of limited maintenance.

The final push in early August was a moment of triumph, as the last section of the trail was cleared after nearly 500 hours of work, opening up new opportunities for hikers to explore this beautiful region of the Catskills.



Reblazing Trails in Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks

Over the past few years, the deteriorating conditions of trail blazes in Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks caught the eye of the local volunteers. Seeing the need for action, they began the ambitious project of completely reblazing the local trails that the Trail Conference is responsible for. The goal was to move away from the previous philosophy of occasional touch-ups and instead undertake a complete trail blaze overhaul, ensuring that trails and intersections are clearly marked, thereby enhancing the experience of trail users.

A key part of this effort was to replace all the existing tag blazes with reflective material, which is more easily visible at night to increase trail user safety and assist search and rescue efforts when they're called out to help a hiker in distress. Each blaze is hung with attention to details like visibility from the last blaze, nail placement to allow the tree to grow, and height depending on the location on the trail. Volunteers led by Rene Ruel and John Swanson have reblazed nearly 50% and 97.3 miles of the almost 200 miles of local trails in the park. While the volunteers have made impressive progress with the reblazing work, there is still a lot to be done!

These two projects highlight the dedication, skill, and teamwork of our volunteers. Whether you joined us on the trail clipping back brush in the Catskills or assisted with hanging blazes in Harriman and Bear Mountain, your contributions have made a lasting impact on the hiking community.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Preserving the Legacy: The Ongoing Archive Work of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference



The Trail Conference has been a leader in trail development and conservation for over a century. Spearheading the effort to document this rich history is Jane Daniels, who has led a small and dedicated team of volunteers since January, 2022. Their work ensures that the Trail Conference's legacy is preserved, acknowledging that archival work is a continuous process evolving with new projects and discoveries.

For the Trail Conference, archiving is more than preserving documents – it's about maintaining a comprehensive record of its history. This includes board meeting minutes, historical records of trail construction, photos of trail work, and biographical details of key leaders. The archives document how trails were built, who built them, and how the Trail Conference has addressed challenges like ATV damage and conservation issues.

The archives also serve as a resource for understanding environmental changes. For example, plant surveys from the 1970s in Harriman State Park provide valuable data for current

Jane Daniels (center) and her younger daughter, Ellen, join fellow Trail Conference volunteers to help clean up our trails on "Litter Day" in 1979.



conservation efforts. By examining past projects, the Trail Conference can learn from both successes and setbacks, guiding future initiatives.

Jane, with a background as a librarian, took on the challenge of organizing the Trail Conference's archives. The work entailed preserving original documents, which requires meticulous organization and preservation.

Daniels oversees a small team of dedicated volunteers, each assigned specific tasks such as sorting files, scanning documents, and uploading them to an online platform for accessibility. This is a dynamic and ongoing project. Daniels notes that new challenges continually arise, such as discovering missing historical records or integrating data from different sources.

One notable example is the challenge of managing and integrating historical trail maps with current data. As trails evolve and new sections are added, accurately updating and correlating old maps with modern trail layouts has been a complex, but essential task. This effort helps ensure that historical data is accurately represented and useful for current trail management and planning.

Jane and her team's work on the Trail Conference archives is crucial for preserving the organization's rich history. Their ongoing efforts provide valuable insights into past trail projects and conservation strategies, helping to guide future endeavors and ensuring the Trail Conference's legacy continues to inspire and inform for years to come.

IN CONVERSATION

Alexandrie Adebayo: Inspiring Black and Brown Communities to Explore the Outdoors

The Trail Conference is proud to celebrate those who are helping to make a difference in our community in making the outdoors accessible to all. In 2023, Alexandrie Adebayo founded Black Hikers Explore, a social media community dedicated to connecting people with outdoor adventures. What began as a small group quickly evolved into a movement aimed at breaking down access barriers and showing up in outdoor spaces. Alexandrie's inspiration stems from her own childhood, growing up in Haiti where hiking with family was a cherished routine.

"I noticed a gap between my community and an activity I deeply enjoy – hiking," Alexandrie said. "On numerous occasions, I was asked how and why I climb mountains. I knew there was a need to educate people and show them that they too can experience the outdoors."

This passion for outdoor exploration and her Caribbean youth have created a community of adventurers who might not have felt welcome in outdoor spaces before. For her, it's about more than just hiking; it's about reconnecting with nature and showing others that they belong in these spaces too.

The primary mission of Black Hikers Explore is to encourage people to explore activities that may be traditionally dominated by others. "Whether it be hiking, swimming, biking, birding, camping, or boating, I want to be a guide to a population that has been told they don't belong," she said.

As a self-described "teacher and connector," Alexandrie enjoys coordinating events that bring adventure seekers together. Her leadership style, honed through years of organizing community events, makes her the perfect person to spearhead such a mission. "I love getting people together,



especially when they are passionate about exploring the outdoors," she said.

When asked why it's vital for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference to continue to find ways to support diversity and inclusivity, Alexandrie stresses the importance of getting everyone access to what some of us take for granted. "The tri-state area is one of the most diverse regions in the country. That diversity should be reflected in all aspects of society, including outdoor exploration," she said.

When asked how individuals and organizations can contribute to the increase in everyone taking part in outdoor recreation, Alexandrie emphasizes the needs for access. "I can always use help accessing gear, transportation, and meals for those who may see cost as a barrier. I need the community's help to grow access to my target audience, such as educators, troop leaders, and community leaders."

To connect with Alexandrie, reach out via the Black Hikers Explore Facebook and Instagram accounts.



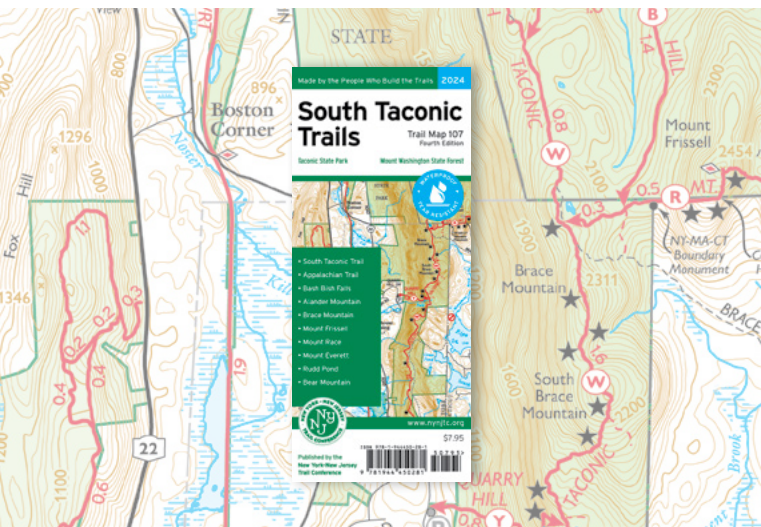
PUBLICATIONS UPDATE

Revised South Taconic Trails Map

The Trail Conference's Publications Committee is happy to announce that our updated 4th edition of **South Taconic Trails** is now available! This map covers 100+ miles of marked trails in the South Taconic Mountains at the junction of New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, covering areas such as Taconic State Park, Bash Bish Falls State Park, Mount Washington State Forest, and Mount Everett State Reservation.

The maps include trail mileage numbers, 20-foot elevation contour lines, viewpoints and other points of interest, an enlarged map of the Bash Bish/Copake Falls area, and much more. They are available in print format, in vibrant color on water-proof, tear-resistant Tyvek, by shopping online at www.nynjtc.org/shop or visiting our headquarters in Mahwah, NJ. They are also available in digital format on Apple and Android devices through the Avenza Maps app. Built on 90 years of mapping experience, Trail Conference maps are Made by the People Who Build the Trails and are regularly updated with changes to the trails.

Special thanks to volunteer project manager Dean Parmiter and all the volunteers and park partners who helped produce this map! This map was also produced with support from Harney & Sons, a proud supporter of our volunteers.



The South Taconics are one of the “hidden gems” in our region, offering impressive trails, outstanding views, and a mix of easy and challenging trail options, and the region is approximately the same distance away from the New York City area as the Catskills.

There have been several significant changes since the last update in 2015, and the revised map includes the southern extension of the South Taconic Trail, nearly 10 miles of recently-completed sections of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, significant trail updates at Overmountain Conservation Area, several newer preserves and trails in the Connecticut section of the map, and many other adjustments.

Did You Know?

Red trail lines on the maps have been our standard for nearly 50 years, and there are several reasons why we show marked trails on our maps as solid red lines with blaze color symbols.

The primary reason is to ensure users with some form of color blindness or vision impairment can still use the map. Up to 8% of men may have some form of color blindness, and over 90% of people aged 65+ have a cataract that can produce faded colors. For maps that instead use the blaze color for the line color, a popular style for trail maps, it can be more difficult or even impossible for individuals with vision issues to use.

The Ranch Hudson Valley: Promoting Wellness and Supporting the Trail Conference

Located in Sloatsburg, NY, The Ranch Hudson Valley is more than just a wellness retreat—it's a place where nature and personal well-being are deeply intertwined. Founded by Alex Glasscock and his wife, Sue, The Ranch was created as an "adult wellness camp" where guests can escape, reconnect with nature, and learn to live healthier, longer lives.

"We wanted to do something that felt good, to help people and communities," Alex explains. "There's a need for adults to retreat, mentally unplug, and connect with nature. We chose the Hudson Valley for its proximity to beautiful parks like Harriman, Sterling Forest, and the Ramapo Reservation, which fit perfectly with our vision."

A significant part of The Ranch's philosophy centers on outdoor wellness, with guests participating in hiking programs through the region's extensive trail systems. For Alex, this connection with nature is not just good for the body but essential for mental health. "Being in nature is relaxing, reduces heart rate, and helps people reset mentally," he says.

This passion for nature led The Ranch to align with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. The Glasscocks first learned about the organization through colleagues in the hospitality industry, and through the Trail Conference's Director of Donor Advising, Don Weise, and his book *Circuit Hikes in Harriman*. As Alex puts it, "We wanted to give back to the Trail Conference



Alex and Sue Glasscock, owners of The Ranch Hudson Valley, have been married for 33 years and have one dog, eight goats, five horses, two feral cats, two pigs, and three dozen chickens.

and the natural resources we enjoy."

Today, The Ranch supports the Trail Conference through generous company and guest donations. Guests, many of whom have little exposure to nature, are educated about Leave No Trace principles and the importance of trail maintenance. "Our guests are in awe of the area's natural beauty," says Alex, "and supporting the Trail Conference makes sense to them."

The Ranch's educational efforts extend beyond the trails. Their program encourages guests to integrate outdoor activities into their everyday lives, helping them discover the lasting benefits of nature. With its focus on mindfulness, environmental stewardship, and outdoor activity, The Ranch Hudson Valley and the Trail Conference are naturally aligned in their missions of promoting wellness and protecting the region's natural resources.

Trail Conference Abroad: International Collaboration on World Heritage Trails

In 2019, the Trail Conference received an unusual request: Might someone be able to lend trail building expertise in the rugged, mountainous jungles of Jamaica?

In the UNESCO World Heritage-recognized Blue Mountains National Park, trails were created by the Maroon people to escape slavery under Spanish and British colonial rule. Despite that immense historic significance of those trails, as well as the park's natural beauty, many disappeared after years of overgrowth.

The Jamaica Trail Project (JamaicaTrailProject.org) is a collaboration between Jamaican and American organizations to refurbish these trails and develop a new historic hiking trail connecting them. Its purpose is to promote volunteerism in Jamaica while expanding and deepening an appreciation of local history and natural resources. An American supporter of the Jamaican Trail Project encountered a trail improvement project by a Trail Conference Conservation Corps Crew, and introduced the two groups with the aim of fostering a connection with American trail building best practices.

The Trail Conference's Trail Program Manager invested a combination of personal volunteer and professional development time to connect leaders of the Jamaica Trail project with information and resources to preserve their historic trails. This collaboration culminated in a visit to Jamaica,



Peter Dolan (second from left) with staff from the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust. The JCDT and the Trail Conference worked together on trail scouting and planning efforts in the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park.

yielding a 91-slide PowerPoint presentation of observations, recommendations, and resources to support local efforts.

In 2023, leaders of the Project were chosen to present at the International Trails Summit as a model of international cooperation in trail planning. This was an incredible opportunity for the Trail Conference to be recognized as a trail authority not just in the local New York-New Jersey area, but on the international stage as well.

The successful collaboration on this project, and recognition at the International Trails Summit, have reinforced the reputation of the Trail Conference as a leader in the growing field of trail design and construction. While our focus will always remain firmly on our trails here in New York and New Jersey, we look forward to seeing where our volunteers and staff carry their Trail Conference knowledge next.

Peter Dolan, Trail Program Manager, has a love of jungles. Despite hiking in Australia, Indonesia, Costa Rica, and other parts of Central America and the Caribbean, he also remains incredibly fond of the local trails around his home in New Jersey.

IN RECOGNITION

Ron Rosen

Ronald (Ron) Rosen, a distinguished member of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, has been honored with induction into the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Hall of Fame, recognizing his nearly five decades of service to trail conservation and management. Ron's journey began in 1976, when he first volunteered with the Appalachian Mountain Club. His initial involvement, which focused on road maintenance and trail upkeep, quickly evolved into a leadership role within the Trail Conference, where he made lasting contributions that have shaped the A.T. in New York and beyond.

One of his most significant achievements was the development of one of the first Local Management Plans for the A.T., which became a model for trail clubs along the entire length of the trail. He played a pivotal role in moving the trail off-road, transforming a stretch that was once 90% road walking in Dutchess County, NY, into a scenic, protected pathway. By the mid-1980s, nearly 27 miles of the trail in Dutchess and Putnam Counties were relocated to safer, more natural settings thanks to his efforts.

Ron's impact extended beyond physical trail work. From 1980 to 2004, he chaired the Dutchess-Putnam County A.T. Committee, where he oversaw everything from fire suppression and neighbor relations to the construction of new trails. His leadership also involved managing overnight shelters and addressing complex challenges like dealing with landowners and environmental hazards. In addition to his local efforts, Ron has represented the Trail Conference on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Mid-Atlantic Regional Partnership Committee since 2005, where he advocates for funding and policy support.

Despite the increasing challenges posed by climate change, development, and heavier trail use, Ron remains committed to preserving the A.T. for future generations. His work on various committees, including the A.T. Landscape Partnership, focuses on protecting scenic viewpoints and natural



habitats from encroaching development. For Ron, volunteering on the A.T. is more than just work; it's a way to connect with nature and contribute to a community dedicated to outdoor recreation and conservation. His induction into the Hall of Fame is a well-deserved recognition of his lifelong dedication to maintaining the trail's integrity and beauty.



MEET THE 2024 GALA HONOREE

Bob Ross

We were thrilled to honor Robert (Bob) Ross at our 2024 Annual Gala in October for his extraordinary contributions to the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. Bob's steadfast dedication to preserving open spaces and advancing our regional trails has profoundly impacted our mission and the communities we serve.

Bob Ross has had four careers: farmer, New York City lawyer, caregiver for 34 years for his wife, and his current passion, philanthropist. Bob's involvement with the Trail Conference began in the 1960s when he discovered the Conference at their office in New York City and was inspired to get involved by the legendary Bill Hoeflerlin. As he always says, Bob "came for the trails and the land, but he stayed for the people."

Bob learned early on that it was possible to share in great successes by working with others, and his commitment has only grown stronger over the decades. A lifelong supporter-volunteer, Bob has been an active trail maintainer in New Jersey and has been a participant in numerous committees and advisory groups within the Trail Conference.

During the capital campaign to restore the schoolhouse that now serves as the Trail Conference Headquarters, Bob remarked on what drew him to the organization, "I have always cherished the work of the Trail Conference because they create the trails I love. It has been a miracle to live in various locations across this vast metropolis and still be able to enjoy the solitude of open space where I can appreciate the beauty and diversity that nature has to offer."

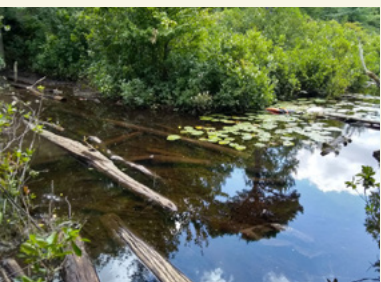
His work on the capital campaign led to his fourth career, fulfilling a promise made to his late wife, Janet Ross, to donate a large proportion of their estate to worthy charities. Today, he participates in fundraising initiatives for over 85 different charities around the country. He says: "I'm very grateful to the Trail Conference; it was really my training wheels in philanthropy. Janet would be so proud."

Bob has been the recipient of several Trail Conference awards, recognizing him for his tremendous efforts. In 2019 he received The Leo Rothschild Conservation Award which is presented to a person or organization that has made a

significant contribution to the protection of our trails and/or the natural lands that surround them. Then, in 2021, Bob received The Jakob Franke Award for Conservation which honors volunteers who have advocated for and dedicated significant time and effort to land preservation and trail protection in the face of encroaching development.

Bob's legal expertise has been a cornerstone in the Trail Conference's land protection efforts. His contributions include pivotal work in the acquisition and protection of critical trail lands, including lands surrounding the Long Path, Shawangunk Ridge, and Highlands Trail. His support also facilitated the addition of significant acreage to Wawayanda State Park, ensuring the preservation of vital trail corridors and natural habitats.

Bob has a tenacious appetite for innovative projects. A noteworthy venture was his support in funding the creation of a floating walkway along Terrace Pond in Wawayanda State Park. The establishment of this state-of-the-art structure will protect the sensitive ecosystem surrounding the trail. He is grateful for all who made that project come to fruition.



He is also grateful for his ten years spent working on the strong partnership between The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC) and the Trail Conference. Especially important to him was the work between TLC, the Trail Conference, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation in preserving Split Rock Mountain. Recently the property (known as the Tahetaweew) was transferred back to the Ramapo people. This landmark moment returned stewardship of sacred land to the nation for the first time since 1737, before the American Revolution. This is also the first time such a transfer has taken place in the Northeast.



Empowering people to safeguard their most valuable assets – people and organizations they love – is very important to Bob. After being a caregiver for 34 years to Janet, Bob has encouraged people to protect themselves and their loved ones through estate planning. This drive has been instrumental in the creation of the Trail Conference's Trail Angel Society, which provides reliable long-term income to the organization through planned gifts such as supporter bequests or other estate provisions.

Those who have had the pleasure of working with Bob describe his passion, optimism, and can-do attitude as truly infectious. Bob's own words capture his spirit: "It's easy to take for granted that access to open space will always be available, but without the Trail Conference, I know the trail system would crumble into disrepair. Across the region, the Trail Conference provides a quality of life that millions have enjoyed decade after decade." An impact that spans across the organization – which can be seen in a variety of places, projects, and within the individuals who work alongside him.

We are proud to recognize Bob Ross and his exceptional dedication and important contributions. His tireless efforts have ensured that future generations will continue to experience and cherish the beauty of our open spaces.

A Perfect Day for a Picnic with the West Hudson Regional Trail Council

Every year, volunteers with each of our Regional Trail Councils get together for a day of fun, food, adventure, and information sharing about recent triumphs in the region.

This year, the West Hudson Regional Trail Council's picnic was held on Sunday, September 15, at Black Rock Forest, where attendees enjoyed a delectable lunch catered by volunteers Rich and Rochelle Jobsky and Ed Spirko, followed by a hike led by volunteer Jon Liba.

The annual event serves as a heartfelt display of gratitude for everyone's hard work and a chance to catch up and reconnect. Thank you, WH RTC volunteers. We look forward to seeing you at next year's picnic!



Celebrating Our Conservation Corps Alumni

On Saturday, September 21, more than 40 former Trail Conference Conservation Corps members gathered at Hubbard Lodge in Cold Spring, New York, for our first-ever alumni reunion.

Alumni from 2012 to 2024 were in attendance, including Trail Crew, Trail Stewards, and members of the Invasives Strike Force and Aquatic Invasives Strike Force. The day began with the first official meeting of the TCCC Alumni Committee, a new initiative launched by Conservation Corps Manager Tori Finn. Afterward, attendees hiked to the lower viewpoint on Round Hill, played a round of Trail Conference trivia, won some fun prizes, and enjoyed delicious food.







A first of its kind, the reunion hopes to nurture lasting relationships among the Trail Conference community, ensuring our alumni stay connected with current members, one another, and the Trail Conference organization. Here's to all our incredible corps members—past, present, and future!

GRATITUDE FOR OUR TRIBUTE SUPPORTERS

The Trail Conference staff would like to express our sincere appreciation for those of you who made meaningful gifts in honor or memory of someone special over the past year. Each contribution, no matter the size, has played an integral role in advancing our mission.

TRIBUTES: SEPT. 2, 2023 - SEPT. 1, 2024

<i>In honor of Aaron Straus</i> Garcia Selma Attride	<i>In honor of Dad/Papa</i> Valerie Ogull	<i>In honor of Jack Hourihan</i> James Hourihan	<i>In memory of</i> <i>Bruce and Kay Poynter</i> Sara Gallmann
<i>In honor of Steve Aaron</i> Ken Oakes	<i>In honor of David Applegate</i> <i>and Barb Chubb</i> Samuel Del Propost	<i>In memory of Howard Givner</i> Howard and Laura Givner	<i>In memory of</i> <i>Dr. Satya Prakash</i> Devina Prakash
<i>In honor of Aki Kaneda</i> Charles Cohen	<i>In memory of Peter Delano</i> Melany Banks	<i>In memory of my cat Mowgli</i> Jennifer and Kevin Zack	<i>In honor of</i> <i>Kim Raimann Weise</i> Lucas Scott
<i>In honor of Anna Welsh</i> Alec Palmer	<i>In memory of Peter Delano</i> Ann Plaisted	<i>In honor of Jane Daniels</i> John Gray	<i>In honor of Robert C. Ross</i> The Land Conservancy of New Jersey
<i>In honor of Gus Bae</i> Janine Shissler	<i>In memory of Irene and</i> <i>Arthur DiMinno</i> Marc Anthony Diminno	<i>In memory of Gervacio and</i> <i>Natividad Javier</i> Maria Javier	<i>In memory of</i> <i>Donna Rodriguez</i> Debra Thomas
<i>In honor of Susan Barbuto</i> Samuel Bell	<i>In memory of Dick Warner</i> Frederick Smith	<i>In honor of Joint with</i> <i>Henry H Westmoreland</i> Charles Milligan	<i>In memory of</i> <i>Donna Rodriguez</i> Nikki Katt
<i>In memory of Elizabeth</i> <i>Bellamy</i> Ashton Hargrave	<i>In memory of Donal F.</i> <i>McCarthy</i> Maureen McCarthy	<i>In honor of Jonathan Cohen</i> Daniel Cohen	<i>In memory of</i> <i>Donna Rodriguez</i> Regina Warren
<i>In honor of Robert Bonkowski</i> Ryan Mruzcek	<i>In honor of Dr. Rebecca Levin</i> <i>and Sam Goldfinger</i> Jon Pliskin	<i>In honor of</i> <i>Jonathan Frankfort</i> Carol Watson-Mucciolo	<i>In memory of</i> <i>Arnie Seymour-Jones</i> Carol Seymour-Jones
<i>In memory of Sol Braun</i> David Braun	<i>In honor of Edison Hiking</i> <i>Community</i> Priya Shankar	<i>In honor of</i> <i>Julie Faller and Rob Schub</i> Susie Schub	<i>In honor of Sharon Seitz and</i> <i>Alan Fayerman</i> Susan Jenner
<i>In honor of Roland Breault</i> Susan Breault Brudnak	<i>In honor of Edward Brooks</i> Sigrid Brooks	<i>In honor of Steven Kashishian</i> Steven Kashishian	<i>In honor of James Sheerin</i> William Sheerin
<i>In memory of</i> <i>Christina Hamilton</i> Elisabeth Wright	<i>In honor of David Felsenthal</i> Priscilla Lundin	<i>In honor of Ken Posner</i> Michael Embler	<i>In memory of Stella Silberberg</i> Manuel Silberberg
<i>In honor of Brian Collins</i> Patricia Mazzone	<i>In memory of Jakob Franke</i> Christopher Reyling	<i>In memory of John Mack</i> Anonymous	<i>In memory of Eddie Surowitz</i> Joel Kantrowitz
<i>In honor of Conservation</i> <i>Corps Program</i> Annette and Andy Schmidt	<i>In honor of Fred Osborn III and</i> <i>Anne Todd Osborn</i> Gale Epstein	<i>In honor of Bob Meyer</i> Jody Meyer	<i>In memory of Victor A. Scelzo</i> Maria Cataneo
<i>In honor of The Conservation</i> <i>Dogs Program</i> Stacy Ferraro	<i>In honor of Eric Friedman</i> Susan Sofranko	<i>In honor of Thendara</i> <i>Mountain Club</i> Kirk Barrett	<i>In memory of Ken Weissman</i> Weissman Family Foundation
<i>In memory of Constantine</i> <i>'Gus' Vasiliadis</i> Margaret Mullen	<i>In honor of</i> <i>Paul Douglas Fisher</i> Deb, Diana, and Ingrid	<i>In honor of Glenn Oleksak</i> Marian Macdonald	<i>In memory of</i> <i>H. Neil Zimmerman</i> Eddie and Eudrora Walsh
<i>In memory of Constantine</i> <i>'Gus' Vasiliadis</i> Lisa Lutter	<i>In memory of Liam Gillespie</i> Elizabeth Gillespie	<i>In honor of Fred Osborn III and</i> <i>Anne Todd Osborn</i> Erik Kulleseid	
<i>In memory of Constantine</i> <i>'Gus' Vasiliadis</i> Michaelene Loughlin	<i>In memory of John and</i> <i>Marianne Gunzler</i> James Gregoire	<i>In memory of Edgar Parker</i> Christopher Parker	
<i>In memory of Constantine</i> <i>'Gus' Vasiliadis</i> Brenda Mills	<i>In memory of John and</i> <i>Marianne Gunzler</i> Michael Karpas	<i>In memory of Patrick Killery</i> Orentreich Family Foundation	
		<i>In honor of Kenneth Posner</i> Constance Eby	

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FEATURED HIKE

Gertrude's Nose

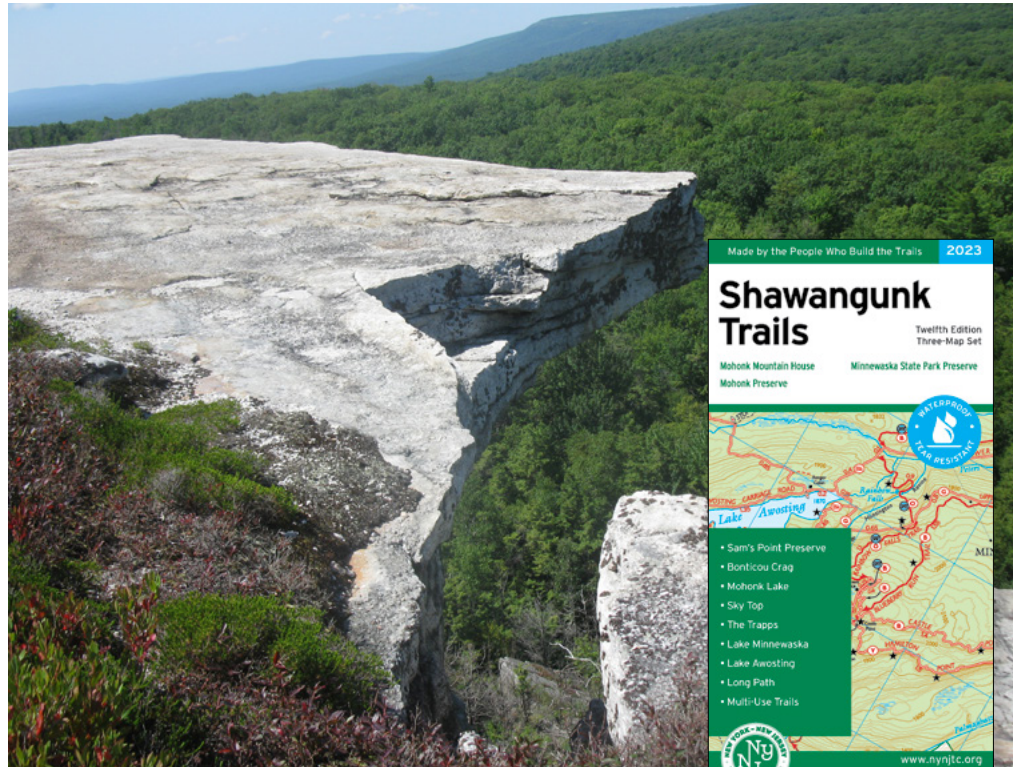
Location: Minnewaska State Park Preserve

Time: About 5 hours

Difficulty: Moderate-strenuous

This hike traverses the ridge of Gertrude's Nose - one of the most spectacular rock formations in the Shawangunks - and climbs to the summit of Millbrook Mountain, with many panoramic views along the way. The hike begins by following the Lake Minnewaska and the Millbrook Mountain Carriage Roads, passing a huge glacial erratic known as Patterson's Pellet, with views over the Palmaghatt Ravine - a pristine wilderness valley. It continues along the Gertrude's Nose Trail, which climbs along bare rock ledges, with sheer drops of several hundred feet just to the right of the trail. Glacial erratics perched near the cliff edges, deep crevices in the rock, and pitch pines growing out these crevices make the hike particularly interesting.

You'll eventually come out at Gertrude's Nose, the southern tip of the ridge, which features broad views to the east and south. After heading northeast along the ridge, the trail emerges onto an area where pitch pines grow out of long expanses of bedrock, with several panoramic east-facing viewpoints. You'll



climb a little more and finally reach the summit of Millbrook Mountain, with more views. Next, you'll descend steadily into the valley of the Coxing Kill, following the Millbrook Mountain Trail. After crossing the Coxing Kill, you'll begin a steady climb to Lake Minnewaska. To complete the hike, you'll follow the Lake Minnewaska Carriage Road along the eastern side of the lake, passing the site of the former Cliff House and crossing a picturesque wooden bridge known as the Dry Bridge.

For a complete description of the hike, go to nynjtc.org/gertrudes-nose-loopmillbrook-mountain.

Explore this trail and all our hiking and map resources at nynjtc.org/trail-head