

2023 Trail Steward Report

ANTHONY'S NOSE MAY - OCTOBER 2023

A PROGRAM OF THE
New York-New Jersey
Trail Conference



Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve - Anthony's Nose

2023 Trail Steward Report

Prepared by

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Trail Steward Program Coordinator
Trail Steward Crew Leader



The above map represents key locations covered by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference Conservation Corps Anthony's Nose Trail Stewards.



Introduction

The Trail Conference is taking a leadership role in coordinating stewardship efforts to keep up with growing threats to natural spaces and outdoor recreation areas. To educate users and help mitigate the negative impacts from increased use, the Trail Conference has partnered with land managers to begin a multi-phased approach in the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve. We believe the most effective way to advance change is through user education, public participation, and sustainable, on-the-ground solutions. Our Trail Steward program is an integral part of our response to these threats. When used responsibly, trails protect both the people who use them and the environment that surrounds them. But without education, trail lands are subject to mistreatment and misuse. Trail Stewards provide outreach and information about park regulations, hiker safety, preparedness, and other best practices. In addition to readying hikers, Trail Stewards help discourage and mitigate the misuse of trails and the surrounding lands through education and public relations work.



Meet the Trail Stewards



Ryan McClean
Crew Leader



Phoenix Pliskin
Crew Member



Declan Urffer
Crew Member



Christina Ufland
Crew Member



Eleanor Dunlevy
Crew Member



Sydney Veitinger
Crew Member



**Sarah Spencer-
Piszczek**
Crew Member



**Benjamin
Straebler**
Crew Member



**Kathrine
Ledermann**
Crew Member



TRAINING

During the beginning of the 2023 Conservation Corps season, the stewards received onsite training at Anthony's Nose from Trail Steward Program Coordinator Myra Romano, Long Distance Trails Program Coordinator Zachary Cole, and Trail Steward Leader Ryan McClean. This training focused on the history and ecological features of the area, key intersections of the Appalachian Trail and other points within the park, trail maintenance techniques, and removal and renaturalization methods for illegal fire rings.

Wilderness First Aid / CPR / AED

In the beginning of June, all stewards earned Wilderness First Aid, CPR, and AED certifications from Mid-Atlantic Outdoor Recreation Education. With these skills, our stewards are better prepared to respond to emergencies in both frontcountry and remote areas.

Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics

On June 15-16, the stewards came to Welch Education Center to complete their Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor training. With this certification, they can teach others about Leave No Trace principles and help preserve the beauty of our outdoor spaces.



Anthony's Nose

Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve



STATISTICS

TOTAL STEWARDING DAYS

19

TOTAL HIKERS COUNTED

3,843

HIKERS EDUCATED/ASSISTED

1,596

BUSIEST DAY

May 27: 516 hikers

BUSIEST HOUR

12-1pm

38 hikers on average

APPALACHIAN TRAIL
THRU-HIKERS

183

APPALACHIAN TRAIL
SECTION-HIKERS

65

APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKERS
AWARE OF VISTAS

160

LOST HIKERS HELPED

179

INJURED HIKERS HELPED

1

AVG HIGH

80°

AVG LOW

59°

2023 marks the inaugural year of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's stewarding program at Anthony's Nose, in the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve. Trail Steward Program Coordinator Myra Romano selected it for various reasons; chief amongst them was its popularity with new and inexperienced hikers. Located just across the river from Bear Mountain and Popolopen Torne, and a few miles south of Breakneck Ridge, the viewpoint of Anthony's Nose is a popular day hike. Many hikers are coming from New York City, and for some, it is one of their first hikes ever. The hike is challenging but short, the views are spectacular, it is very accessible by car and reasonably accessible by rail, and it is located close to very densely populated areas. It also contains part of the long-distance Appalachian Trail, so the presence of thru-and section-hikers creates new opportunities for trail stewards to engage with and benefit a unique demographic of the hiking community. In addition to all of these factors, the section of the Appalachian Trail going up Anthony's Nose is severely eroded, and there is much ongoing conversation about how to address the issues on this section of trail. The goal of placing stewards here is to discover some of the challenges hikers face, and what aspects they appreciate most about the trail.

In the pre-season, Myra Romano scouted out the location, and once the Steward Leader, Ryan McClean, started, the two went again to decide how to structure a typical day of stewarding there. Because parking is limited relative to the number of people interested in hiking in the area, they agreed that stewards should carpool to the location as frequently as possible (this was not enforced but was followed for all except one weekend over the season). They also workshopped some talking points and visited viewpoints and intersections where stewards may have more opportunities for engagement with hikers.

A lot of the success of the program, as well as the overall structure of the average day there, can be traced back to the early weeks of stewarding there. The brunt of this work was done by the first two stewards to be stationed at Anthony's Nose.

Anthony's Nose

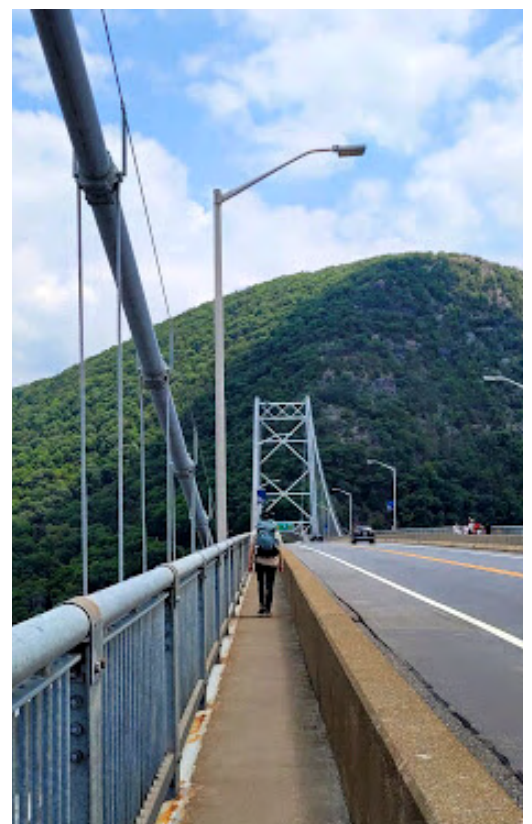
Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve



Stewards Sarah Spencer-Piszczek and Eleanor Dunlevy were there from 8 am - 4:30 pm over three days on Memorial Day Weekend, hours that would remain consistent throughout the season. Spencer-Piszczek even recorded helpful, engaging, and funny quotes from various hikers. This addition was expanded to be an optional feature of data collection at all locations, and stewards throughout the program consistently recorded interesting interactions because of this idea. The pair spoke with thru-hikers about their needs and experiences, dismantled illegal fire rings and monuments, picked up litter, checked out various points of interest on and near the trail, and provided guidance and asked for feedback from hundreds of day hikers over the three-day weekend. The pair took diligent notes on the experience and shared them with their Program Coordinator and Steward Leader. They both agreed that being stationed at or near viewpoints or intersections led to more fruitful interactions than posting up at trailheads, a claim repeated in the following weeks by fellow Stewards Sydney Veitinger, Declan Urffer, and Christina Ufland.

Over the season, the stewards took different approaches to familiarize themselves with the area and maximize effectiveness. Stewards Ryan McClean and Ben Straebler investigated the AT north and south of Anthony's Nose, as well as the entirety of the Camp Smith Trail. Declan Urffer and Sydney Veitinger found graffiti along the trail and hid or removed it when possible. When more serious issues were discovered, stewards would notify New York State Parks staff. Stewards also took the initiative to start conversations on invasive species awareness and management with hikers and demonstrated how to use a handheld boot brush before and after their hikes.

While patrolling alone, Urffer came across a thru-hiker who was part of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's Conservation Corps in 2017, working as a trail-builder in the Catskills. The two spoke a bit about the program and mutual friends within the organization. These small moments of connection create positive interactions for both hikers and stewards.



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In late July, Stewards Declan Urffer, Eleanor Dunlevy, and Ben Straebler came across a genuinely absurd and highly dangerous scene. Walking up the AT towards Anthony's Nose from South Mountain Pass Road, the three stewards smelled smoke. They followed the smell off trail a bit and discovered a group of around 15 people had started multiple fires in the brush, amongst the leaf litter, and without creating protective rock rings. When the stewards asked what they were doing and suggested that they stop, the group argued that the fires kept the mosquitos away, and that with the heavy rain the area had recently gotten, the fire spreading was impossible. It took a back-and-forth conversation, but eventually, the group extinguished the fires and agreed not to start any more. The stewards patrolled the general vicinity of where the group had set up, giving them space while monitoring for additional fires until the group returned to their cars.

Historical Floods and Trail Maintenance

On Sunday, July 9, a massive rainstorm and flooding hit the Hudson Valley. Stewards Phoenix Pliskin and Christina Ufland were stationed at Anthony's Nose, which was very near the epicenter of the storm in New York, which would go on to make history in Vermont as the state's second most severe storm. The day began as a typical stewarding day with rain in the forecast, but as predictions became increasingly dire, the pair began advising hikers to get off the trail. Many of the thru-hikers they spoke with planned on heading over to the Appalachian Market, known by many thru-hikers as an excellent place to stop in the area. The last hiker they encountered, a man whose trail name was 'Wrong Way,' told Pliskin and Ufland that he planned on hiking further. The rain was already quite heavy, with flash flood warnings for the area. The stewards offered to drive him to the Appalachian Market, but he turned them down and continued north along the Appalachian Trail. Later, when the extent of the damage done to the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain, located just south of Anthony's Nose, was revealed, Pliskin commented on the irony of his trail name, saying that this time, he was very much heading in the right way. Pliskin and Ufland drove between trailheads, looking for signs of struggling hikers. Eventually, the pair returned home. In the coming days, Pliskin and Ufland frequented Appalachian Trail chatrooms until they received confirmation that Wrong Way had arrived safely at his next destination.



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Six days after the storm, on Saturday, July 15, Steward Phoenix Pliskin returned to steward at Anthony's Nose, this time with Ryan McClean. Even days after the storm, the trail was, in many places, still overtaken by streams winding their way down the mountain. As they began their day, they decided to focus more on locating, identifying, and, if possible, remedying damage done to the trail and obstacles in its way.

On the Appalachian Trail up Anthony's Nose from Route 9D, they found two downed trees blocking the trail and severe erosion. The pair worked to remove the first of these trees and then returned to their car before driving to South Mountain Pass Road. On this section of the AT, they removed the first downed tree they encountered and continued along the trail, marking but not removing the many obstacles they found.

They continued to the viewpoints atop Anthony's Nose along the Camp Smith Trail. Over the course of the day, they spoke with many thru-hikers about the conditions on the trails. Reports that the stewards had at that point were often contradictory, and they utilized much of the first-hand information they got from hikers who had just experienced the trails. They could then relay this information to thru-hikers heading in the opposite direction.



The following week, McClean returned, this time with Christina Ufland, and the two continued this "trail maintainer first, trail steward second" approach that Pliskin and McClean had taken the week before. By this point, the trails had ceased to contain multiple streams running along or through them, but the fallen trees and extreme erosion remained. McClean and Ufland removed an additional five trees and many branches, scouting the Camp Smith Trail from end to end over the two days. One tree that was too large to remove was reported to park staff. All of the downed trees on the Appalachian Trail from Route 9D to South Mountain Pass Road were removed with only hand saws and much determination. The on-the-ground steward presence for both education and maintenance proved to be very effective.



Before and after photos of a fire ring removal near the Anthony's Nose viewpoint



Steward Christina picking up litter at the Anthony's Nose viewpoint



Thank you!

Thank you to our partners and volunteers for all of your support. We would not be able to do it without you.

Please email Myra Romano (mromano@nynjtc.org), Trail Steward Program Coordinator, with any questions or comments on how we can continue to improve the program.