



Chapter Leadership Handbook



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

Revised 2012

1. Introduction

A. The North Country National Scenic Trail

The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST), which when completed will stretch more than 4,600 miles from the New York/Vermont border to Lake Sakakawea in western North Dakota, is the longest of the eleven National Scenic Trails authorized by Congress. Like its sister trails, it was designed to provide peaceful recreational opportunities in some of America's outstanding landscapes.

Passing through the seven states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota, the NCNST connects more than 160 public land units—including parks, forests, scenic attractions, wildlife refuges, game areas, and historic sites. The list includes ten National Forest areas (Finger Lakes in New York, Allegheny in Pennsylvania, Wayne in Ohio, Hiawatha, Manistee, and Ottawa in Michigan, Chequamegon in Wisconsin, Superior and Chippewa in Minnesota and Sheyenne National Grassland in North Dakota) and four areas managed by the National Park Service (Michigan's Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Wisconsin's St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, New York's Fort Stanwix National Monument, and Ohio's Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park). Other federal facilities along the NCNST include two National Wildlife Refuges (Minnesota's Tamarack and North Dakota's Audubon), two Bureau of Reclamation projects (North Dakota's Garrison Diversion Unit's New Rockford and McCluskey Canals), and six Army Corps of Engineer impoundments (Baldhill Dam at Lake Ashtabula, North Dakota, Tom Jenkins Dam and Burr Oak Lake, William H. Harsha Lake [also known as East Fork Lake], Ohio, Tionesta Lake, the Kinzua Dam, and Allegheny Reservoir, Penn.). The NCNST also threads its way through 57 state parks and state historic areas, 47 state forests, 28 state wildlife or game areas, seven state water conservation districts and at least ten county forests and parks. Several thousand miles of trail will eventually cross private land thanks to owners who have granted easements across their property.

Existing and new sections of the NCNST are generally limited to foot travel, including hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Other non-motorized uses, such as bicycling and horseback riding are generally limited to areas specifically designed and built to withstand such use.

The History and Management

The National Trails System Act of 1968 was ground-breaking legislation that designated 2 long distance hiking trails (The Appalachian and the Pacific Crest) and called on volunteers and partner groups to make them a reality.

On March 5, 1980 Congress passed legislation adding the North Country National Scenic Trail to the list. The Secretary of the Interior handed management authority to the National Park Service and volunteer organizations in seven states began to mobilize to put the trail on the ground. The [Comprehensive Management Plan](#) was issued in 1982 that would guide us in our planning, management and use of the NCNST for years to come.

The NCNST is administered by the National Park Service, managed by federal, state, and local agencies, and built and maintained primarily by the volunteers of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) and its partners.

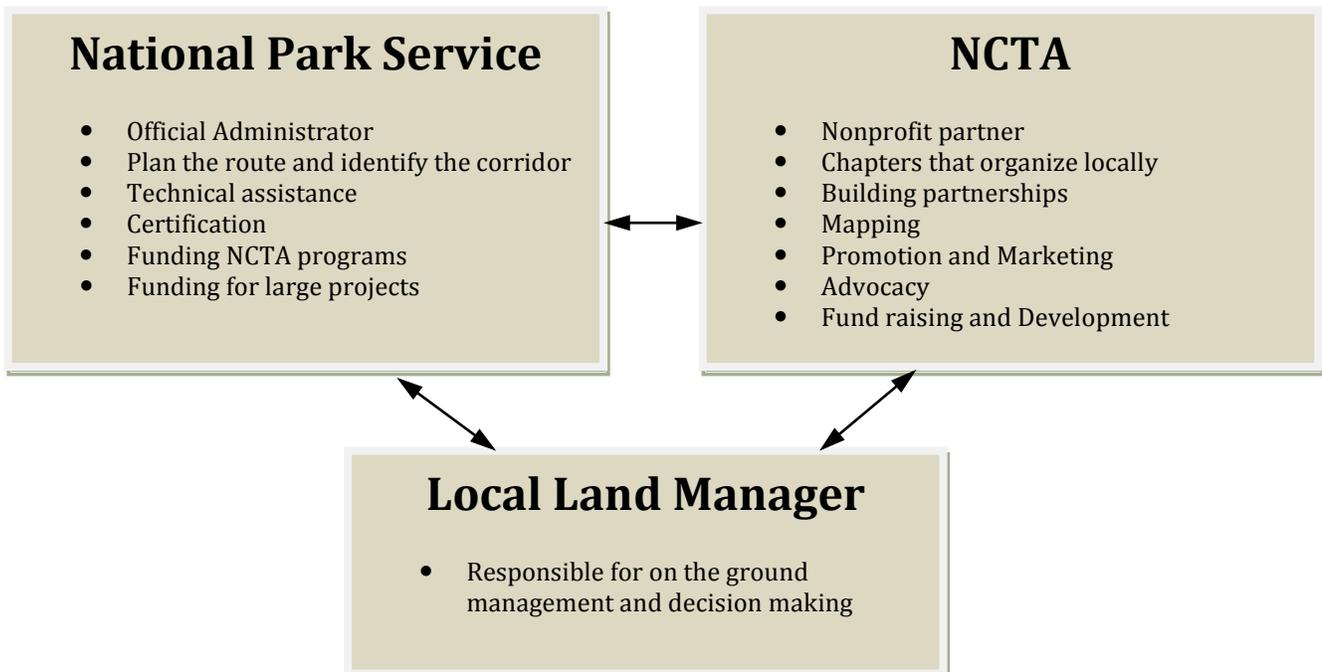
Statement of Purpose and Desired Future Condition

- To be a trail of approximately thirty-two hundred miles, extending from eastern New York State to the vicinity of Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota, following the approximate route depicted on the map identified as “Proposed North Country Trail – Vicinity Map” in the Department of Interior “North Country Trail Report,” dated June 1975;
- To be so located as to provide for its maximum outdoor recreation potential;
- To be so located as to provide for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which it passes;
- To be administered by the Secretary of the Interior and operated, developed, and maintained in conjunction with other Federal Agencies, States, their political subdivisions, adjacent landowners, and private organizations and individuals; and
- To be administered in a manner that encourages and assists volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management of the Trail.

The Trail will be administered and managed as a path whose use is primarily for hiking and backpacking. Management of the North Country National Scenic Trail is also affected by other Federal legislation, including, but not limited to, the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Numerous regulations, policies, plans, and cooperative agreements have been established to provide more specific guidance on management and protection of the North Country Trail.

B. The Partnership

Partnership Structure



National Park Service (NPS)

The National Park Service administers the North Country National Scenic Trail, providing management oversight to the entire trail by working with the federal agencies, state and local governments, private organizations, landowners and land users and providing guidance to NCTA as a partner. The NPS provides: funding for trail projects, planning and decisions on trail routing, trail tools, supplies and signage for volunteers, trail certification guidelines and volunteer support through the VIP program. Currently, the National Park Service has staff dedicated to the Trail in Lowell, Michigan; Madison, Wisconsin; and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA)

NCTA was founded in 1981, and is the primary partner of the National Park Service which administers the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). The NCTA consists of members, chapters and affiliated organizations united in achieving its mission and vision.

Mission: 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.

Vision: The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) will be the primary organization charged with developing, maintaining, protecting, and promoting the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). The NCTA will coordinate, unite, and empower volunteers and partner organizations, land owners, and agencies along the length of the trail to fulfill its mission.

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.

The North Country National Scenic Trail is the grandest dream of those who envisioned and designed the National Trails System. It is the longest, most ambitious, and most creative of all our National Scenic Trails. Those volunteers who have "bought into" the dream of the North Country Trail have dedicated themselves to unselfish service that benefits Nature and generations beyond their own lifetime. Their passion ensures that the trail will eventually be completed, because there is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.

- Tom Gilbert, Superintendent North County National Scenic Trail 1983-2011

The NCTA will:

1. Develop a corridor of consistently and clearly marked treadways, blending with local character as appropriate.
2. Maintain the NCNST through highly successful partnerships among the various entities, providing funding, management, and service.
3. Protect, permanently whenever possible, the NCNST as a public hiking trail showcasing and interpreting the rich variety of historical, cultural, and environmental features in the northern United States
4. Promote the NCNST as a continuous hiking trail of the highest caliber with foot traffic accorded the highest priority to the exclusion of other uses except in short, specifically designated segments.

Board of Directors

A Board made up of directors from each of the seven states along the Trail governs the Association and its staff and make the policies that guide our chapters. The NCTA Board includes two members representing each state and several who are elected at large, for a total of 15 to 19 Board members. Board members are elected in the spring by mail in ballots printed in the Association's membership magazine, *North Star*.

The NCTA bylaws call for an Executive Committee and five standing committees. The President may convene Ad Hoc Committees as needed. Below is our current list of committees.

Standing Committees

- **Executive committee**- The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, the three Vice Presidents and the Secretary. It shall carry out policies previously established by the Board of Directors;
- **Nominating** – Nominating candidates and officers for the Board of Directors;
- **Fund development** - Fund raising and development planning;
- **Awards** - Soliciting award nominations, deciding recipients, and presenting awards at the Annual Conference;
- **Field grants** – Management of the Field Grant program;
- **Membership Conference** - Planning and execution of annual Conference (committee changes each year to consist of local members).

Ad Hoc Committees

- **Advocacy** - Committee carries out efforts to support or fight legislative initiatives, primarily in although not limited to the US Congress and primarily through activity during the annual "Hike the Hill" event;
- **Trail book** - Make recommendations to the BOD on developing and marketing a trail guide to the NCNST; oversee its development;
- **Westward ho "c to c"** - Make policy recommendations regarding advancing the notion of a sea-to-sea trail that includes the NCNST and becomes part of the National Trails System;
- **Trail protection** - The Trail Protection Committee is charged to prepare the NCTA for an acquisition program necessary to complete and protect the NCNST from threats to its corridor or the actual trail location on private lands and may include public lands when appropriate;
- **Information systems** - Review NCTA information technology and systems needs and status, guiding BOD and staffing carrying out related initiatives;

- **Marketing/communications** - Advise the BOD and staff on developing and carrying out a marketing plan. Make recommendations to BOD and staff regarding addressing strategic planning objectives in marketing and communications;
- **Membership** - Make recommendations regarding membership goals in Strategic Plan: coordinate and support chapter member recruitment and retention efforts;
- **Long distance hikers** - Consider issues and opportunities related to long distance hiking on the NCNST;
- **Extended Outing** - Guide Extended Outing Program, develop policy, approve proposals and submit budget requests.

Staff

The Association has full and part-time employees (see current staff contact list). The core staff members are based at the Association's national headquarters in Lowell, Michigan (HQ) with several Regional Trail Coordinators (RTCs) based out in the field. NCTA staff's main responsibilities include advocacy, GIS and cartography, membership and volunteer management, partnership building, marketing, fundraising and development, conference & special event support, guidance with chapter communication activities, and chapter capacity building.

Volunteers

Today, the NCTA's volunteers do it all: Plan, build and maintain the trail, bridges and other structures, lead hikes and attend outreach events, provide meals for a hard working trail crews, manage relationships with our land managers and private landowners as well as support membership recruitment and fundraising for the organization. Last year, our volunteers contributed almost 70,000 hours toward building and maintaining the Trail and telling its story, valued at \$1.5million dollars. And these are the few that report their hours. We estimate that about 10,000 people are involved with the NCNST, either through membership in the NCTA, or one of the Affiliate or Partner organizations: the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Buckeye Trail Association, Superior Hiking Trail Association, Kekekabic Trail Club, Border Route Trail Association, Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association, the Butler Outdoor Club, the Rachael Carson Trails Conservancy and the Friends of the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery. None of this would be possible without them or without you!

C. Annual Conference

The North Country Trail Association hosts an annual membership conference bringing together NCTA members, chapter leaders and trail supporters along with local trail communities to:

1. Celebrate another great year on the Trail!
2. Provide a forum for chapter and membership capacity-building.
3. Conduct the annual membership meeting as required by NCTA's charter.
4. Share camaraderie, hikes and activities of interest and fun to members and their families.
5. Elevate the presence of the NCNST and NCTA in the local community.
6. Build and facilitate relationships with corporate, community and other financial supporters.
7. Provide an additional source of revenue to support NCTA programs.

Annual conference is a partnership effort among NCTA headquarters and local chapters, engaging state and local resources in support. Conference coordination is shared between HQ staff and the local committee, guided by the policies contained in the *Annual Conference Reference Handbook*. NCTA conference hosting rotates through the seven states in order to make conference participation as equally accessible as possible. It encourages NCTA

members to experience the diversity of scenery, features and resources found along the entire North Country Trail. If your chapter is interested in hosting this event when it comes to your state, let us know.

2011 – Ohio (Dayton)
2012 – Michigan (Augusta)
2013 – Pennsylvania (Slippery Rock)
2014 – Minnesota. TBD
2015 – New York. TBD
2016 – North Dakota. TBD
2017 – Upper Michigan/Wisconsin. TBD

Advocacy

Advocacy is the art of building relationships with people representing government agencies and legislators. Persuading officials and Members of Congress or state legislatures to support the North Country Trail agenda is a critically important function for the NCTA, at national as well as statewide and local levels. No one has more influence with a legislator than one who lives and votes in the district or state the legislator represents. Cultivating a corps of NCTA volunteers skilled in and willing to build and maintain key connections at local, state and national levels is an important objective.

Advocacy with legislators involves managing contacts in each of their offices, keeping or contributing to a central database that maintains a record of contact data and meeting outcomes, and responding (1) proactively to gain legislator support for bills, appropriations or other issues of interest to the NCTA and (2) reactively, in educating legislators about the impacts of various bills and actions on the trail.

Advocacy with agency staff entails representing NCTA and trail interests with land managers and local, regional and national levels. NCTA attempts to provide a structure for this through encouraging the NPS to establish and maintain formal Memoranda of Understanding with agencies, which outlines roles and responsibilities of each. Advocacy team members actively nurture relationships with agency staff, educating and informing them of trail projects and issues, and recognizing them for their efforts on behalf of trails.

It's important that the NCTA's advocacy efforts are well coordinated so we have a consistent and powerful voice. The NCTA has an advocacy committee to coordinate these efforts made of staff, Board members and volunteers with a representative from each state. The committee focuses on national legislation and funding appropriations that impact the NCNST like funding for the National Park Service, the Arrowhead reroute and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We currently don't have the capacity to address all of the state and local legislation that may impact the trail but urge you to bring important items to our attention. And if you or another chapter member are interested in taking on this role in your state, let us know. We will do our best to provide you with the guidance and materials you need to be a successful advocate for the NCNST.

Association Organizational Structure

National Board of Directors

The National Board of Directors has ultimate authority and fiscal responsibility for the North Country Trail Association. The Board sets Association-wide policies, oversees the activities of staff and supervises the Executive Director, approves chapter charters, bylaws and may direct the Association's Chapters with needed policies. The Board includes two members representing each state and several at-large members who are nominated by its own Nominating Committee.

NCTA Staff

Staff members manage the day-to-day operations and growth of the Association, following goals set by the Board. NCTA staff manage the organization's finances (including chapter accounts) and reporting needed to maintain our 501(c)(3) status. Staff members provide technical assistance, leadership, and coordination to the Association's volunteers, Chapters, Affiliates and partners. Staff members also provide various services and act as a central point of contact for members and the public and facilitate committee work with the Board of Directors. Staff members are accountable to the national Board of Directors.



Chapter/Affiliate/Partner

Chapters and Affiliates establish methods and set priorities and work schedules for their own activities and for the Trail under their jurisdiction. The Trail should be built and maintained to standards set by the National Park Service. A Chapter or Affiliate may not speak on behalf of the national NCTA without the consent of the appropriate body.

E. North Country Trail Association Contact List

Bruce Matthews	Executive Director	Advocacy leadership, NPS liaison, BOD representative, overall association direction & management
David Cowles	Development Director	Donor relations, planned gifts, endowments, corporate giving, grants, publication development
Rose Ann M. Davis	Office Manager	General office operations, electronic & marketing communications, website management, basic technology support, HR
Jill DeCator	Administrative Assistant/ Membership Coordinator	Office support, volunteer hours & awards, membership records, Trail Shop
Laura Lindstrom	Financial Administrator	Financial reporting, budgets, payroll, audits, organizational financial management
Andrea Ketchmark	Director of Trail Development	Comprehensive trail management, partnerships, landowner relations, trail protection, advocacy, chapter leadership direction, field grants, Trail Towns program.
Matt Rowbotham	GIS Coordinator	GIS/GPS (mapping), trail data, network technology infrastructure support & management
Matt Davis	Regional Trail Coordinator	Trail management and chapter support & direction (Minnesota & North Dakota)
Bill Menke	Regional Trail Coordinator	Trail management and chapter support & direction (Wisconsin), Rovers Crew
Mark Weaver	National Park Service	Superintendent
Jeff McCusker	National Park Service	Route planning, project planning, NPS funding, tools, signage, and supply orders.
Dan Watson	National Park Service	Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program coordinator, chainsaw training, volunteer forms, injury reporting

**Specific contact details available below

How to Contact:

NCTA Headquarters/Main Office:

229 East Main St.
Lowell, MI 49331
616-897-5987 / 616-897-6605 FAX
Toll Free 866-445-3628
HQ@northcountrytrail.org

David Cowles, Director of Development
Extension 3112
dcowles@northcountrytrail.org

Rose Ann M. Davis, Office Manager
Extension 3110
radavis@northcountrytrail.org

Jill DeCator, Administrative
Assistant/Membership Coordinator
Extension 3100
jdecator@northcountrytrail.org

Andrea Ketchmark, Director of Trail
Development
Extension 3105
aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org

Laura Lindstrom, Financial Administrator
Extension 3110
llindstrom@northcountrytrail.org

Bruce Matthews, Executive Director
Extension 3115
bmatthews@northcountrytrail.org

Matt Rowbotham, GIS Coordinator (Mapping)
Extension 3109
mrowbotham@northcountrytrail.org

NCTA's Regional Trail Coordinators

Andrew Bashaw (Ohio, Pennsylvania and
Executive Director of BTA)
andrewbashaw@northcountrytrail.org
740-394-2008

Matt Davis (North Dakota, Minnesota)
701-388-1883
mdavis@northcountrytrail.org

Bill Menke (Wisconsin)
608-935-0986
bmenke@northcountrytrail.org

National Park Service

Mark Weaver
Superintendent
Mark_Weaver@nps.gov

Jeff McCusker
Trail Manager
Cell/Office phone: (616) 340-2004
jeff_b_mccusker@nps.gov

Dan Watson
Office: 651-293-8452
Cell: 715-441-7717
daniel_watson@nps.gov

2. Chapter Basics

A. What does a chapter do?

The better question might be...what doesn't a chapter do? Our chapters build and maintain the trail, associated structures and promote its use. They work to build partnerships with land managers and with landowners to protect it for future generations. They fundraise for the organization and recruit members and volunteers to keep us going. Our chapters aren't part of the NCTA, they are the NCTA.

Managing Volunteers

Each chapter is a team of volunteers. You will have many different volunteers with unique backgrounds and personalities and they have been given diverse duties and responsibilities. It's the job of the Chapter Leadership to ensure that our volunteers feel supported, appreciated and are given the direction and support needed to do their jobs. It's also critical that that they represent NCTA in a positive light. See Section 3: Membership and Volunteers.

Managing the Trail

Responsibility for each mile of the NCNST is covered under charter by a Chapter or a Partner or Affiliate Organization. It is your responsibility to work with the land management agencies (federal, state and local), land owners and partner organizations to insure that the trail is built, maintained and signed properly in accordance with National Park Service standards set out in *A Handbook for Trail Design, Construction, and maintenance*, which can be found online in the Volunteer Resources section of northcountrytrail.org. Rome was not built in a day and neither will be your section of the NCNST. Developing a long distance hiking path takes patience, persistence and a good sense of humor and your perseverance will be rewarded. See section 6: Managing the Trail.

Promoting the Trail

Your hard work building and maintaining the NCNST will create a world class National Scenic Trail. Now let's get the public to enjoy it. Your chapter has endless tools at your disposal to promote the Trail in your community. Public hikes, outreach events, trail festivals, and are just a few ideas of ways to get the word out. Invite your elected officials to go hiking, take out ads in the local paper, start a meet-up group for parents to hike with their kids, develop a hike "challenge" or develop a geotrail. And don't forget online; create engaging content for your website and post regularly on NCTA's and your chapter's facebook pages. See Section 5: Outreach and Communications.

Communication with Headquarters

All chapter officer/leaders will receive a monthly email titled *NCTA News for Chapter, Affiliate and Partner Leadership*. You will also receive announcements as things arise. Don't hesitate to call HQ or our regional staff at any time when you need something, to ask questions, etc. Managing a chapter is a difficult and multi-faceted job. We don't expect you to know all the details. We are here as a resource so call on us when you need it!

Each year, NCTA staff will ask chapters to submit a brief report on their accomplishments of the year and their anticipated projects coming up. This will help us share the BIG picture of the progress we are making Trail-wide. At this time, the Editor of *North Star*, Irene Szabo, will also take submissions to be included in the State of the Trail issue of the magazine. This is a chance to celebrate your successes.

B. Chapter Charters and Bylaws

Each chapter must have an initial charter. A Chapter's Initial Charter shall last for five years. During its first five years a chapter is expected to complete its by-laws. NCTA provides the template for the chapter charter and a template for the chapter bylaws. Several items are required but there is some discretion as to your chapter bylaws.

After successfully completing their first five year Charter, and upon completion of chapter by-laws, NCTA Chapters shall be granted a renewed charter without time limits (lasting indefinitely). Chapter Charters may be revised or renewed with the consent of the Chapter President and the NCTA Board President. The NCTA Board of Directors may void any Charter by written notice to the Chapter leadership on the basis of non-fulfillment of the Chapter's obligations to the NCTA. Any Chapter may notify the NCTA Board of Directors, in writing, of its intent to disband and, by so doing void its Charter. Keep a copy of your bylaws in this book for easy access. Review them on a regular basis and make sure you are fulfilling all the obligations. If not, the chapter should consider revising them.

C. Values and Guiding Principles

Shared values create a strong foundation for an organization by identifying what we stand for, committing to those values and reminding us over time what is truly important.

NCTA hold these values as essential to our work environment:

Be Safe - Understand all risks involved and precautions needed to keep you and your volunteers safe.

Be Respectful - NCTA is a community. Treat one another and members of the community with respect. Everyone can make a valuable contribution to NCTA. We may not always agree, but disagreement is no excuse for poor behavior or poor manners. We might all experience some frustration now and then, but we cannot allow that frustration to turn personal. It's important to remember that a community where people feel uncomfortable or threatened is not a productive one. We expect our volunteers to be respectful when dealing with other volunteers as well as with people from other organizations and individuals.

Be Collaborative - Building, maintaining and promoting a 4,600-mile trail takes collaboration with NCTA and National Park Service staff, multiple land managers, landowners, volunteers and many others within the community. Communication is key and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Be Inclusive – People will amaze you if you let them. Don't make assumptions. Keep an open mind and people will surprise you.

Have Fun – You got involved because you want to play in the dirt, build bridges, hike with like minded people, and because you want to make a difference. You are making a difference so remember to keep a light heart and enjoy your time with the NCTA!

3. Members and Volunteers

A. You are a VIP

What does it *mean* to be a volunteer on the North Country National Scenic Trail? Members and volunteers are the heart and soul NCTA. The words “member” and “volunteer” tend to be synonymous. More members and volunteers give us more hands building and maintaining trail, more leaders taking groups of kids on hikes, more sawyers to clear blow downs after a big storm and more people singing the praises of the NCNST to everyone they come across. And yes, members bring more money into the Association, allowing us all to do more work. Most importantly members share the enthusiasm and passion for a long distance foot trail across the northern states, creating a unified voice speaking on behalf of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

It means something different and unique to each and every one of you but you share a commonality and kinship with a special group of people, not only across our 7 states but across the entire National Park System. You are a Volunteer-In-Park (or “VIP”), one of the trustees of the many special places throughout our country called National Parks. You are one of the lucky people who other people see having fun at work in our nation’s most treasured places and think, “Wow. I wish I did what they do!”

You are the people who tend lighthouses at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, who perform living history demonstrations in period costume at Gettysburg National Military Park, who survey the sandy beaches of Gulf Islands National Seashore in search of endangered sea turtle nests, who lead campfire talks for legions of visitors in the icon parks of the West. And, you are the very special people who build, maintain, and in all other ways make the NCNST a reality for all people to hike and explore, learn and enjoy. Always remember your connection to the greater picture. Your selfless service to the Trail, the Association and the entire National Park System truly makes each one of you a “VIP” in every sense.

You are a volunteer but as a chapter leader you also take on the role of volunteer manager. In this section we will cover the 3 Rs of volunteer management, the importance of and how to report your chapter’s volunteer hours and some key volunteer positions and committee structures for your chapter to consider.

B. The 3 Rs: Recruit, Recognize and Retain

The key to managing volunteers lies in the **3 Rs: Recruit, Recognize and Retain**. You should actively try to recruit new additions; you should be recognizing your volunteers’ work and making them feel appreciated; and you should be thinking of ways to keep them engaged. Remember that this job shouldn’t fall all on one person alone. Inspire those around you and I have no doubt you will be inspired by them. Start a Membership committee and/or designate a Membership liaison that will work with the NCTA Membership Committee to get the job done.

Meeting so many wonderful people has to be the major reward! The volunteers have amazed me with their dedication, thoughtfulness, and perseverance in the face of daunting tasks. These are people and memories that will be with me for the rest of my life.

- Marty Swank, Chequamegon Chapter

You can find additional information and membership/volunteer forms in our [Membership and Volunteer Management](#) page of the NCTA website.

We will also share ideas on the 3 Rs with you in the monthly leadership email. Please share your success stories with the committee so we can pass them on. All Chapters and Affiliates are encouraged to identify a membership contact person and send the name and email to maryccoffin@gmail.com, NCTA Membership Chair.

Recruit

In a recent membership survey, Chapters and Affiliates reported that the top three ways to increase membership are:

1. Trail Events
2. Exhibit at public event/location
3. Focused hikes (section hike challenges, special hikes, etc.)

But there are endless ideas out there you can pursue. Be creative and make it personal. The number one reason people say they don't volunteer is that no one ever asked. Make sure you ask. No matter how great the Trail and the Organization, it's the people that are the real draw.

Some recruitment tools available to you:

- **Volunteer Match Learning Center**
Just a reminder that Volunteer Match can help us recruit volunteers through their website. Not only is this a great way to reach out to new potential volunteers but they offer great resources for managing the volunteers you already have. Check out the schedule of trainings in their [online learning center](#). And if you are interested in posting your volunteer opportunities, contact NCTA staff to create a chapter login.
- **Volunteer.gov** – Submit volunteer listings to the National Park Service that will be seen nationally.
- **Website list of R & R Strategies** <http://northcountrytrail.org/members/volunteer-resources/volunteer-management/>

Recognize

We primarily recognize our volunteers with Volunteer Awards (NCTA, National Park Service and Chapter Honor Awards) but there is also plenty of room for your chapter to develop your own award/reward system and don't discount the how far a THANK YOU goes.

National Park Service Awards – The NPS rewards our volunteers based on volunteer hours. The Awards are presented at the Annual Conference in August (if the hours are reported by May 1st) except for the parks pass which is awarded when earned.

100 hours - NPS pin, name badge, and certificate.

250 hours - Water bottle

250 hours – America the Beautiful Parks Pass

400 hours - Personalized shirt with the NCTA logo and the NPS volunteer patch.

1,000 hours – Personalized vest

2,500 hours - Personalized jacket

4,000 hours - Presidential Award (Pin, certificate and a letter from White House)

10,000 hours – Personalized Plaque

NCTA Awards – Each spring NCTA’s Awards Committee takes nominations for a series of Volunteer Awards (see list of awards, criteria and nomination form at northcountrytrail.org). We have categories for volunteers that build trail and build partnerships, categories for young volunteers and those in government service, for landowners and business owners. So, take a good look at those around you that support the trail in many different ways and choose a few that you think deserve to be recognized. Nominations are **due on May 1st** and awards will be presented at the Annual Conference.

The Chapter Honor Awards are chosen by the chapter to honor someone who demonstrates loyalty, commitment and hard work annually to the local organization’s chosen activities. These Awards will NOT be part of the NCTA Awards announced at the Annual Conference, but instead chosen in early September by each chapter/affiliate and awarded at a local event.

Retain

Each month your chapter receives a set of Membership Reports. The purpose of these reports is to provide our Chapter Officers with the tools and information needed to maintain great chapter membership. This document explains what information is provided in each report.

These reports are sent via email to the list of chapter officers on file at Headquarters. If an officer does not have email, a hard copy will be sent via regular mail. If you need to add or delete a recipient, please notify Headquarters with the changes. Monthly, there are three membership reports:

- 1. Membership Report**

This report lists the number of members your chapter has in the following categories: Student, Dual, Sponsored, Regular, Trail Leader, Pathfinder, NCT Patron, Life Members, Organizations, Business and Free Members. In each box the number of members in your chapter is listed and in the corner of that box will be a negative or positive number showing the increase or decrease in membership from the previous month.

- 2. New and Renewing Members Report**

This report gives you the contact information for those who are new to your chapter and your past members who have renewed their memberships.

- 3. Expiring Members Report**

This report lists members who received final membership notices two months prior and have not renewed.

Quarterly, along with the above three reports, we send a Membership list that contains all the contact information for each member. You will find sample letters to renewing and expiring members and other suggestions online in the [Membership and Volunteer Management Section](#) of the northcountrytrail.org.

C. Reporting Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours are one of the biggest demonstrations of public support when justifying Federal funding or applying for grants and when telling people why they should care about the NCNST. Your hours illustrate the commitment citizens have to the Trail and why it should be supported by our communities.

Volunteers have several ways to report their hours. You can fill out the form online at northcountrytrail.org/members/report-volunteer-hours/ or complete the individual or log sheet mentioned below found at northcountrytrail.org/members/volunteer-resources/volunteer-management/ and mail it or FAX it to NCTA Headquarters.

Some chapters choose to report on behalf of the entire chapter on a regular basis and others let the individual members handle their own reporting. Whichever you choose, the deadline for reporting hours each year is October 10th but your hours must be reported by by May 1st to receive the NPS awards distributed at conference.

Along with the online form, we provide two printed forms for you to report your hours:

Volunteer Log for Groups

- A group who performs service on a limited basis (i.e. the Boy Scouts or a college group.) Total hours can be reported for the group as a whole. Individual names do not have to be listed but a total number of adults and youth is needed.
- A list of volunteers who gathered to work on a specific project. Individual names can be listed for credit. Names and addresses of those who are *not* NCTA members can be listed on the back of the form so that they may be added to our mailing list.

Volunteer Log for Individuals

- Individuals wishing to report their hours themselves. Sheets can be turned in when full, monthly, or quarterly, whichever occurs first.

D. Key Volunteer Position Descriptions and Committee Structures

Chapters consist of volunteers in key positions or entire committees that assist in creating a sustainable chapter. Successful chapters strive to have a large group of volunteers, each doing important tasks coordinated with one another.

Many of our volunteers got involved because they want to dig in the dirt...they want to BUILD trail. But there are many others that want to have a role in assisting with the chapter's other responsibilities – and we need them all! Try to assess the skills that already exist in your chapter. Do you have the head of a PR firm, a professor of history, a lawyer or party planner? Your volunteers are often much more skilled than you realize and it only takes a conversation to open up that door. Recruit new volunteers specifically for the skills you do need. Look to the businesses, universities and other organizations in your area that may have people that could fill a much needed roll in your chapter.

NCTA Headquarters keeps a list of all Officers' and other leadership roles in order to maintain good communication. Please inform us when you have an election or appoint a new position.

The main four Chapter Officer Positions are:

Chapter President (and Vice President)

The Chapter President is the liaison between the chapter and the NCTA. The president should be able to communicate regularly with the NCTA staff about potential projects in the area as well as communicate NCTA news with the rest of the Chapter. The President should be a leader for chapter volunteers, organize, and encourage the chapter's membership, and be able to keep abreast of local issues concerning the trail. It is suggested that the President and Vice President be ad hoc members or liaisons to all committees by each focusing on half of the committees. It is also good practice to plan for chapter leadership succession.

Chapter Treasurer

The Chapter Treasurer is responsible for keeping up with chapter expenses, applying for field grants, and funding from the National Park Service, and keeping tabs on receipts. The Treasurer should report to Chapter Membership regarding Chapter financial statements, approve Chapter expenditures (volunteer reimbursements, vendor/supplier payments), manages the Chapter Petty Cash (if applicable) and communicate effectively with NCTA's financial manager.

Chapter Secretary

The Chapter Secretary keeps the chapter meeting minutes and shares them with NCTA staff, the State Volunteer Council (if applicable), and chapter members. This volunteer should to attend all meetings, and maintain communications between members, NCTA, and other groups.

Other Possible positions

The following are example volunteer position descriptions. Many of these could be filled by one person or a committee of people. The four main officer positions (President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary) are standard but many of the other positions are dependent upon the chapter. Tweak them based on your needs and the strengths and skills of your volunteers.

Events, Outreach and Communication

Develops an effective outreach strategy to promote the NCTA and get people involved including events, improving public information, and building partnerships within the community. They will plan hikes, winter programs, celebrations, and fun activities for the membership. They do not have to be good at any of the specific activities planned; rather they need to be able to attract "specialists" within the membership or friends outside the chapter to lead hikes, give programs, or teach skills.

Possible Volunteer positions within Events, Outreach and Communication:

Outing Leader

The Outing Leader is a huge asset for building membership. The best Outing Leaders are those who know a bit about a lot of things in the area, and who can maintain a reasonable pace for hikes and understand that safety is the top priority. Remember that the slowest hiker determines the pace of a hike. Having an Outing Leader who can make frequent short stops to discuss flora and fauna, keep an eye on those in the back of the group, and share their enthusiasm for the outdoors with all is a real asset. A good Outing Leader also involves others who may have different fields of expertise to expand the value of the outing.

Volunteer Manager

The Volunteer manager insures that all volunteers at work parties are signed up as VIPs, helps coordinate the reporting of volunteer hours for the whole chapter, and helps recruit new volunteers and might start a chapter award program for your existing volunteers as well as share your great volunteer stories.

Communications Liaison

The Communication Liaison maintains contact with members and keeps them informed of work projects, outings, and meetings. This individual should be in charge of the chapter's brochures, newsletters, website, social media and updates the NCTA Calendar with the local chapter's events. In addition, they make sure that the local paper and other media outlets (TV & Radio) are aware of chapter activities, especially workdays and accomplishments.

Webmaster

The Webmaster is responsible for making sure the chapter's website is up to date.

Membership Chair R & R

It is important to have a designated membership contact person to support existing members, recognize volunteers, encourage renewal, and actively recruit new members following the plan of Recruit, Recognize and Retain. One major goal is to offer at least one event per month open to the public by working with the chairs of Trail Development, Outing Leaders and Events & Outreach. It is best if the Membership Chair can recruit individuals to contact renewing, lapsed or expired members, welcome new members, plan events, set up exhibits, contact local organizations, recognize volunteers.

Trail Development/Management

This is a BIG job and will most likely take a committee. This group will develop the plan for the trail in your Chapter's section, assess the needs of the trail and prioritize the projects, communicate those priorities to NCTA's Director of Trail Development and NPS staff, assist in grant writing to fund the projects, manage the relationships with the land managers and insure the quality of the Trail lives up to its National Scenic Trail status.

Possible positions within the Trail Development/Management committee:

Trail Adopter and Adopter Coordinator

The Trail Adopter takes responsibility for a specific section of trail, monitors its condition, maintains what he/she can and reports back if assistance is needed. The Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the entire trail in the chapter's section is well maintained by managing the Adopter program. This includes being sure that no Adopter is responsible for more than they can handle. The Adopter Coordinator recruits new and replacement Adopters, sees that they are trained, and ensures that they do a thorough job of maintaining their sections of trail.

Quartermaster

The Quartermaster is responsible for keeping tools in good condition. The Quartermaster schedules the assignment of tools like DR Mowers. The Quartermaster also makes sure that, along with the Adopter Coordinator, workers are familiar with safe operation of the tools that they check out. Quartermasters also schedule routine maintenance, replacement, or repair of key equipment.

Trail Information Specialist /GIS

The primary responsibility of this position is to provide the NCTA with current geometries (from GPS) for any new or re-routed trail or trail features as well as fill in a list of descriptive attributes about these elements. This person would also act as the contact for the NCTA's GIS Coordinator during reviews and updates of maps being made within that chapter's area.

Blaze Painter

It takes a special individual to mark the trail carefully; placing blazes where they are visible and spaced close enough to be useful but not so close together as to be intrusive. Volunteers who paint blazes must consider the setting of the trail, learn about the characteristics of the bark of a variety of trees, have the patience to pick the best tree for each blaze, and paint neat tidy blazes.

Education/Training

Identify the needs of the Chapter's volunteers to effectively manage their trail section and communicate with NCTA Headquarters and NPS on how to meet those needs.

Camp Cook/Chef

The Camp Cook plans menus, purchases food, and prepares great-tasting hearty meals for workdays and chapter gatherings. Long time campers, scout leaders, or folks with a reputation for great food at potlucks really enjoy this position. It is always OK to have more than one cook!

Other possible Volunteer positions:

Grant Writer/Fundraiser

This person should assist the chapter in all grant writing (public, private, corporate and foundation) and keep track of the requirements, progress and reporting for these funds as well as coordinate their efforts with NCTA's Director of Development.

Trail Protection/Landowner Coordinator

The Landowner Coordinator really needs to like working with new and varied people, have the ability to relate to local issues and values, enjoy talking to people one-on-one, and be able to explain the trail to property owners/managers. Patience and knowledge of landowner agreements is a requirement as well.

Historian

Each chapter has a storied past and an exciting future. Find a volunteer that is interested in researching and recording your past as well documenting what you are doing now so those stories are kept long into the future. This will help you celebrate milestones, anniversaries, accomplishments and significant projects or contributions.

4. Financial Management and Chapter Funds

Financial Management is a skill that does not come easy to all. As a nonprofit organization, NCTA has important financial management standards that must be followed. This section will focus on the ins and outs of managing your chapter funds, what to expect as a chapter treasurer and what support you can expect from NCTA staff.

The North Country Trail Association is incorporated, and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service. As such, the national Board of Directors of the NCTA has ultimate fiscal responsibility for the entire organization. The finances of Chapters are not independent of the overall finances of the NCTA. Although local officers control local funds, all transactions must be reported to the IRS annually, through incorporation in the Association's form 990. Failure to report all transactions of the Association (including those handled locally on behalf of the Association or its local entities) would amount to filing fraudulent or incomplete reports to the I.R.S. Further, due to the level of funding we receive from the federal government, we are required to have an annual audit. Like the form 990, this audit must take into account the entirety of the Association's finances and transactions, including those handled locally. The Association currently manages more than 50 independent accounts, including operations accounts of Chapters and state entities, restricted grants, cost share projects, etc. To facilitate our required annual audit as well as the fiscal oversight responsibilities of the national Board, the NCTA holds these accounts in one central bank. If the accounts were dispersed to local banks, the annual audit required by the federal government would be virtually impossible or astronomically expensive, not to mention a huge additional burden for chapters.

In managing Association funds in this manner chapters enjoy significant freedom from onerous accounting, reporting and licensing requirements—at both state and national levels that each would otherwise be required to do individually in order to maintain non profit (501(c)(3)) status and its associated advantages. Despite the reporting requirements of the IRS, the audit requirements of the federal government, and its need to provide organization wide fiscal oversight, the NCTA Board recognizes that volunteers need and deserve an easy and flexible system to make local purchases and accept local revenues. To meet these expectations the Board has established and improved policies over the years concerning the management of state and chapter funds. This section summarizes the current policies in effect, adds new flexibility for investments, establishes procedures to address noncompliance and offers suggestions for fundraising at the chapter level.

A. Chapter Accounts

The NCTA maintains a basic “operating account” for each Chapter through which most of your transactions will occur. Dues and other revenue shares, and NCTA Field Grants are transferred directly into the operating account and will not be distinguished for separate uses. Generally, local petty cash funds are established from the operating account. Chapters may control various special purpose accounts like National Park Service Challenge Cost Share projects or other local grants that are earmarked for special projects. Juggling multiple special purpose accounts along with the basic operating account increases the complexity of work for the Chapter treasurer and the bookkeeping burden for the NCTA so we try to keep special purpose accounts to a minimum.

Dues Transfers

Each Chapter of the North Country Trail Association shall receive 20% of all annual and life dues collected by the national office from paying members of the Association who choose to affiliate with the Chapter. Dues are transferred to the Chapter's account at the end of each month for dues received during that month.

Start-up Grants

Each new Chapter shall receive a “start-up” grant of \$250 from the national office upon approval of the Chapter Charter by the Executive Committee of the NCTA Board of Directors. Should a chapter’s balance drop below \$400, they can apply for assistance through the field grant program (see below).

Chapter Petty Cash

With Headquarters approval chapters may keep a local petty cash fund to make purchases easier for volunteers. The Chapter Treasurer (or other petty cash manager) may use the funds to reimburse volunteers or to provide “front money” to volunteers who will make purchases later. The Treasurer also can add miscellaneous donations (up to \$200, if donated specifically to the chapter and not NCTA) to the petty cash fund. However, it should be noted that donors who provide funds locally will not receive the benefit of an acknowledgement designating the donation as tax deductible.

All money spent and received, as well as a running balance, must be recorded on a Petty Cash log sheet, provided by the NCTA office. The log sheet is a lot like a personal check register, with a couple of extra spaces for when extra detail is needed. Chapters with more than one fund may run everything through a single petty cash, as long as the Treasurer indicates on the log which fund is being used. Petty Cash is replenished only when the Chapter sends a log form with receipts to the national office for reimbursement. The chapter Treasurer (or petty cash manager) is responsible for reconciling the account balance to the petty cash reserve amount on the chapter NCTA financial statement. In general, large or recurring expenses are better handled by direct reimbursement or bill payment by the national office than through Petty Cash. Management of the Chapter’s Petty Cash must follow these guidelines:

1. The Chapter may keep any amount up to \$400 in its Petty Cash Fund. If the balance exceeds \$400, the Chapter must send in the excess amount with a petty cash log sheet. The log sheet should show which of the Chapter’s accounts the excess should be applied to.
2. The initial funds to set up the Chapter’s Petty Cash Fund will be withdrawn from the Chapter’s Regular account. The national office will only replenish a Chapter’s Petty Cash to the extent that the Chapter has sufficient funds remaining in its account.
3. To request a replenishment of Petty Cash, the Chapter should submit all original receipts and documentation of donations with a Petty Cash log sheet found in the Volunteer Resources section of the NCTA website. If documentation or a receipt is unavailable, just make a note that there was no documentation, in the space provided. All Petty Cash logs or petty cash year end bank statements must be submitted to the office by January 10 so we can close out the year. Chapters can submit a partially completed log whenever reimbursement is needed.
4. The Chapter may keep its Petty Cash either as cash, or in a local checking account. If a checking account is used, it should be opened in the name of “North Country Trail Association XXX Chapter” using the NCTA’s federal employer ID number. The executive director or President of the Board of NCTA must have signature authority, in addition to any local Chapter officers. **The checking account should never be in the name of an individual.** If a checking account is used, a bank statement showing the account number and balance at the end of the calendar year must be sent to the national headquarters by January 10. Chapters should manage petty cash responsibilities with diligence and respect for the Headquarters staff that must coordinate accounting with ALL NCTA chapters.

Monthly Reports from HQ

Monthly reports for each account under the control of each Chapter and state entity are emailed by the 15th of each month. The reports cover the activity for the previous month, and include opening and closing balances. Reports are mailed even if no transactions were recorded. Provisions for document mailing via USPS can be made by contacting the Financial Manager. Generally, the reports are prepared as soon as we have “closed the books” on the preceding month. Volunteers may call or email at any time to ask about the balance of an account, or to question the information shown on past reports. Please see the annotated example at the end of this section.

Paying and Reimbursing Expenses

In general, we will not charge an expense against any account without the authorization of a Chapter President or Treasurer. In some cases, a Chapter President or Treasurer might want to send us a note giving blanket authorization for certain types of expenses for a certain volunteer. For instance: “It’s ok to reimburse any newsletter expenses that John Doe submits.” That way, we can speed the reimbursement up without needing to involve a local officer every time. If we receive reimbursement requests that have not been authorized by a local officer, we will hold them until we can get authorization. This protects the Chapter by ensuring that only approved expenses are charge to the Chapter’s accounts. There are four different ways for a Chapter to access its funds to pay expenses:

1. If a **volunteer pays for expenses personally**, he or she can send Headquarters an Expense Report Form (signed by an appropriate officer) along with supporting receipts, and we will promptly send a check back to the volunteer for reimbursement. The Chapter or state entity can set up any procedure it likes for handling these reimbursement requests and getting them to the national headquarters.
2. A Chapter can **set up a charge account under the NCTA’s name with a local vendor** that it uses frequently (like a hardware store or lumber yard). Then, authorized volunteers can go in, make a purchase, and charge it to the Financial Manager. The vendor then bills Headquarters directly, and we pay the bill. With charge accounts like this, the Chapter treasurer or president should let us know in advance: to expect a bill, roughly how much it will be, that it’s ok to pay it, and which account to apply it to. A quick e-mail to our accountant is fine. For instance: “We’re buying some lumber from ‘Sally’s Lumber’ and you should be getting a bill for around \$250. It’s ok to pay it, and please charge it to our special account for the ‘Rattlesnake Creek Crossing’ project.” Supporting receipts should be forwarded to the Headquarters as soon as feasible after the transaction is made.
3. If a Chapter is going to make a purchase and knows exactly how much it will be and who the vendor will be, the president or treasurer can **request a check made out in advance**. We’ll send it out to whichever volunteer will need it, so he or she can take it to the store make the purchase. Again, supporting receipts should be forwarded to Headquarters as soon as feasible after the purchase is made.
4. Chapters also may keep a **local petty cash fund** to reimburse volunteers at meetings or whenever is convenient. The petty cash fund is explained above.
5. The Chapter President or Treasurer can direct a vendor to send their invoice directly to the NCTA for payment. Prior notification to the NCTA office accountant is appreciated.

B. Local Investments

Chapters and state entities may choose to shift some of their funds to a Certificate of Deposit (CD). Reasons for wanting to do this vary. Some volunteers feel that they could earn a better return on large balances with a CD, or volunteers may want to support a local bank that has helped the trail, by purchasing a CD from it. Regardless of the reasoning, the NCTA **does** allow its Chapters and State entities to invest a portion of the funds under their control in a CD, under these terms:

1. Minimum investment is \$2,000 per account.
2. The CD must be registered under “North Country Trail Association, Inc. – ‘XXX’ Chapter” using the NCTA’s federal employer ID number and address.
3. An officer from the Chapter or state entity must provide the NCTA’s Financial Manager with the information needed to purchase and manage the CD, including: face value, term, contact information for the bank, the account from which the initial investment will be drawn, and instructions on what to do when the CD matures.
4. The NCTA’s Financial Manager will purchase the CD and maintain the records.
5. Signatories must include a chapter officer and NCTA’s executive director.

C. Noncompliance

The I.R.S., our auditors, the federal government, and our donors place various expectations on the NCTA, and the NCTA Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for ensuring that these expectations are met. Inappropriate management of funds could jeopardize our nonprofit status, our federal funding, our budget, or our credibility with donors. Equally important, the NCTA Board acknowledges the importance of open, transparent and timely communications with chapters regarding management of chapter funds as well as NCTA finances. The Board is accountable for the management of chapter funds, acknowledges it cannot use chapter funds without the knowledge and specific permission of the chapters, and pledges adequate oversight of Headquarters operations to ensure that financial management and accounting functions are in accordance with GAAP guidelines. The Board further will ensure and that regular reports on NCTA’s financial status are made to chapter leadership through but not limited to timely monthly statements. We also understand the financial management is a learned skill. Please ask questions and NCTA staff can help you through it. **Examples of problems:**

Over-billing an Account

Volunteers will be held personally liable for any expense they incur (directly or indirectly) on behalf of the Association that **exceeds the available balance** in the account to which the expense is being charged. Under most circumstances, the Association will refuse payment of such expenses. In rare instances, the national Association may agree to loan funds to an account if arrangements have been made in advance between the volunteer(s) incurring the expense(s) and the Executive Director to repay the loan. Alternately, an officer of the Chapter may promptly request the Association to transfer funds from another account to temporarily cover the deficit, provided that the officer has the appropriate authority over such funds and that such use does not violate any restrictions on the funds.

Failure to report transactions and balances

All income generated locally must be submitted to the national office in reasonable time, or recorded on a petty cash log. Petty cash logs must reflect the balance of cash on hand and must be submitted at least once per year. The log due on January 10 must reflect transactions through the end of December.

Dues, other revenue sharing and Field Grants will be withheld from any Chapter or state entity that fails to report transactions and balances according to the guidelines in this document. Chapters experiencing a pattern of limited or non-compliance with this NCTA policy may find that if notification fails to redress the situation their petty cash privilege may be revoked.

Too much money on hand

With the exception of CD's as described above, Chapters and state entities may have no more than \$400 in funds on hand locally (i.e. petty cash). Any funds beyond this limit must be sent to the national office on a quarterly basis, no more than 15 days after the end of each quarter. All funds thus received will be applied to the appropriate chapter account. **Dues, other revenue sharing and Field Grants will be withheld** from any Chapter or state entity that exceeds this limit.

D. Chapter Fund Raising

Chapters are encouraged to pursue funding that will assist them in their local efforts. Funds can be raised from a number of local, state and regional sources for trail projects, outreach, publications and events. Contributions of cash received at the National Headquarters and in-kind contributions should be recognized at the chapter level and all donors with qualifying donations will receive a tax receipt for their contributions.

Some of the sources for funding that have been used by chapters include: members, local conservation and recreation supporters, local businesses, local and regional community and personal foundations, and service clubs. The most common contributions are gifts of cash, grant awards and in-kind gifts of materials and services that are directly useful to chapter efforts. Keep in mind that in-kind gifts of materials are tax deductible; gifts of service do not qualify for an IRS tax deduction.

If you have a project that fits a local or regional foundation, you should consider writing a grant proposal. Usually all the information you need is on the foundation website and foundation program officers are happy to talk with you before you start writing to give you assistance as well as a sense of whether you have a suitable project for their funding guidelines. NCTA encourages chapter initiative, in coordination with Association objectives and policies, to pursue grant funding at the local level. For all grants over \$500, chapters must first coordinate with and obtain permission from Headquarters before submitting the grant application. With appropriate lead time HQ can offer guidance in grant writing, advice in coordinating efforts with other chapters and affiliates, and ensure compliance with NCTA policy. Chapters must list NCTA headquarters as grant recipient or co-grant recipient on all applications (with funds then allocated to chapters according to policy). The exception to this would be with prior approval and a requirement by the grantor for local applicants only.

Two less common fundraising strategies but ones that might work for your chapter are special events and fees for service. A chapter could run or assist running a local special event where there are related fees or business sponsorships that can be obtained, and can offset the cost of the event and maybe even generate a profit. Some chapters have charged fees for their services and made a profit, for example providing trail mowing or event assistance.

Employee Matching Donations

Chapter members who are employed by companies offering matching donations/shared giving options, or who make donations in match to a volunteer's documented hours, are encouraged to designate NCTA as the recipient. Upon request chapter members may share all or a portion of these donations with the local chapter.

Land Protection Grant

NCTA's Trail Protection Grant has been established to provide funding to permanently protect the corridor of the North Country National Scenic Trail. Grants may be applied toward the purchase of Rights of Way including Trail Access Easements (TAE) and related costs and in some cases, the acquisition of conservation easements or fee simple land purchase. The size of each grant is limited only by the funds available and by competing needs for such funds. The Trail Protection Committee meets 3 times per year to review grant requests. To the extent possible, the North Country Trail Association will provide technical assistance, but the awarding of a Trail Protection Grant carries with it the assumption that local volunteers will play a significant role in the acquisition/protection process. See Section 7: Working with Landowners for more information on the *Land Protection Grant Guidelines and Application*.

Field Grant Program

To support the work of volunteers, NCTA offers Field Grants in the amounts of \$200-\$1000 to Chapters, Affiliates and Partner Organizations. Field Grants are funded by setting aside 10% of all membership dues received. Applications are reviewed four times each year by the Field Grant Committee and awarded according to merit, benefits to the Trail and the Association, need of the applicant, the applicant's grant history and available funds. Field Grants funds projects like special events or programs to build public support of the trail; Installation or repair of the trail, trail facilities, trail signage or displays; Purchase of major tools or equipment for work related to the trail; and Volunteer training events.

National Park Service Funding

The NPS has several sources of funding to contribute to your chapter's management of the NCT. Each year, the NPS sends out a project funding request. These requests can include a wide variety of projects including materials and support of trail construction and maintenance, trail structures and kiosks, mowers, trailers, or other equipment, costs to developing plans or identify feasible trail routes, paying transaction costs for donated land or easements and hiring interns or contractors to carry out these types of tasks. You will be asked to submit detailed progress and final reports for all funds granted. All reports should be thorough and timely in order to insure our eligibility for future funds.

The NPS provides funds for chainsaw training as available (check with the NPS Volunteer Coordinator to schedule a training) as well as CPR and First Aid certification (Check with NCTA staff for availability of funds). The NPS provides trail marking and signage, tools, blaze paint and safety equipment as needed. Please use the *NPS Sign, Tool & Equipment Order Form* for these items.

E. Procurement of Products and Services

It is the policy of the NCTA to ensure full and open competition between potential vendors or contractors on project awards, in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget.

Federal Projects or Grants are awarded to applicants from chapters, clubs, and NCTA affiliate/partner organizations. It is the responsibility of the project award recipient to obtain a minimum of three quotes from local vendors or contractors solicited to provide project products or services. If competitive quotes are not solicited a written justification for lack of competition must be submitted to the NCTA Office Manager or Financial

Administrator. (Reference Schedule A in the full policy) The quotes and price/cost support for vendor or contractor selection shall be maintained by the project award recipient for a minimum of one year after completion of the project.

In the event a single vendor or contractor is retained on a project or projects that will pay them \$25,000 or more the NCTA must confirm that the vendor or contractor has not been suspended or debarred by the Federal Government. It is the responsibility of the project award recipient to notify the NCTA Office Manager or Financial Administrator of the vendor/contractor name and address. The NCTA Office Manager or Financial Administrator will check the Federal Excluded Parties List System at www.epls.gov for any incident of suspension or debarment for the vendor/contractor. If the vendor/contractor is suspended the length and reasoning for the suspension can be reviewed and a determination made whether to retain the vendor/contractor. If the vendor/contractor has been debarred, a new supplier must be located and retained.

The NCTA is committed to providing full and accurate disclosure regarding projects and grants from their multiple funding sources. Project award recipients are required to submit project details and supporting documentation upon request from the NCTA in the event of an audit or program review. Questions regarding this policy can be forwarded to the NCTA Executive Director, Office Manager, or Financial Administrator.



Sound financial management is the basis of all successful organizations. If your financial building blocks are in place, you are free to take off and accomplish your mission.

- *Laura Lindstrom, NCTA's financial manager.*

5. Outreach and Communications

A. NCTA Brand Standards

A brand is more than just a logo. It is a promise about what an organization is and what benefits it delivers every time people come in contact with it. Our brand is experienced by the public in what they see, hear, read and personally encounter with the North Country Trail Association and our Chapters. If we are consistent in the way we present ourselves, we can increase the public's understanding of what we do. By adopting a consistent brand identity, our Chapters will help the public to recognize they are a part of the larger whole - whether they are from North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New York, Wisconsin, Ohio or Minnesota. At the same time, the character of each individual Chapter is important. There are many things you can do to highlight what is special about your section of the NCT and your Chapter, while still creating a connection to the larger community. In the long run, adopting a consistent and a unified brand will help us become a stronger organization. Our supporters will remember us, return to us, and recommend us to others.

To help us achieve our consistent and cohesive message, the North Country Trail Association established and approved (March 2010) brand standards for our organization and our Chapters. To review these specific standards, please see the document entitled "*NCTA Brand Standards*" located on the *Promotion, Outreach and Communications* page under the *Volunteer Resources* section of the *northcountrytrail.org* website.

Chapter Logos

NCTA Chapters, as members of the 7-State North Country Scenic trail community and the aggregate North Country Trail Association, need to adopt the established branding standards in order to maintain our organization's cohesive message. As mentioned above, by adopting a consistent brand identity and message, our Chapters will help the public to recognize they are a part of the larger whole. Think of the American Red Cross as an example, no matter where you are when a disaster strikes, you will always be able to know where to find help by recognizing the same organizational brand – regardless of the specific chapter.



We want to achieve the same recognition for NCTA Chapters across the North Country National Scenic Trail. As an added benefit to recognition, NCTA Chapters will also save time, money and effort, by utilizing this design work provided for them. It is for all these reasons, that Chapters are asked to use a logo (samples below) that incorporates the official NCTA logo and the individual Chapter name only.



Chapter Brochures and Newsletters

Chapters are encouraged to create print or electronic brochures and newsletters for their members.

Brochures are primarily a marketing tool to help “sell” your Chapter or event to prospective members. They are also your chance to show off, so make sure to use appealing and positive ideas when developing content. Also keep in mind, that readers generally just scan brochures and do not spend too much time reading specific details. Create content that has both eye-catching visuals and written highlights but does not provide an abundance of detailed information. Chapter brochures should include an overview map of your chapter’s area. Please DO NOT reproduce NCTA’s retail maps but rather contact NCTA’s GIS/Cartography staff for assistance.

Newsletters are a chance to provide more in depth information to current members and possible prospective members. Content can include upcoming event/meeting details, member stories or trail tales, important news updates, success stories, and more. While you may want to use some catchy visuals with newsletters too, information distribution is the main focus of this communication piece. Also, information that is written in a conversational manner, using clear, concise, and professional language, will work most effectively.

Finally, whether you are creating a brochure or newsletter, whether it is electronic or print, please adhere to the NCTA branding standards in their entirety. To review these standards, see the document entitled “*NCTA Brand Standards*” located on the *Promotion, Outreach and Communications* page under the *Volunteer Resources* section of the *northcountrytrail.org* website. If additional information is required (for example, font or color information assistance), please call the NCTA Headquarters for support.

Chapter Websites

Chapters are encouraged to use “Portal Pages,” which have been created for each respective Chapter, on the *northcountrytrail.org* website. These portal pages include general trail information, an event calendar, overview map and Chapter contact information. In addition, a small section of the portal pages have been designed to link to specific individual Chapter details. To request changes or additional information to the specific Chapter sections, please call the NCTA Headquarters.

Many Chapters have developed their own individual websites. Over time, some have become very successful and some have suffered from lack of attention or inability to keep the content current. If your chapter chooses to continue with, or develop your own site, it is essential to have a “webmaster” assigned and dedicated to keeping content, information, and events up to date on a regular basis. It is also encouraged that the NCTA’s current content management system (Word Press) and web design standards are used. To review our standards, see the document entitled “*NCTA Brand Standards*” located on the *Promotion, Outreach and Communications* page under the *Volunteer Resources* section of the *northcountrytrail.org* website.

Chapters also have the ability to contribute to the main North Country Trail Website by providing timely information, such as Trail Alerts, or additional information about the Trail in the *Explore By State* or *Get Involved* sections. Trail Alerts are located on the *Trail Alert* page under *The Trail* section of the *northcountrytrail.org* website. There is a link provided, on the top of this webpage, for an easy way to submit alert communications.

The Google Calendar of Events gives Chapters a central place to list all activities and events (see section C), and we encourage folks to submit stories and highlights to the *Insights* Blog (see section E).

You will also notice that *northcountrytrail.org* allows comments from the public on almost every page. If there is a post requiring Chapter input, they will be forwarded to Chapter e-mail addresses (see section B) and it is preferred

that answers be posted on-line as well. Posting responses is done by clicking on the word “REPLY” just below the original post/comment or by submitting a full comment via the small comment section form at the bottom of the respective webpage. If an on-line post response is not possible, a direct e-mail response is acceptable, including a cc: to the e-mail address from where the forward originated. Please call the NCTA Headquarters with any questions regarding this process.

B. Chapter E-Mails

Each Chapter is set up with a standard e-mail address including the three digit Chapter abbreviation and @northcountrytrail.org; for example, BSC@northcountrytrail.org. It is the responsibility of a Chapter’s Communications Liaison (or other designated Chapter Leader), to check this e-mail regularly. These e-mail addresses are the primary form of communication for Chapter specific questions, general Association information, inquiries from potential members, questions posted to the NCTA website, etc. Moreover, it is recommended that Chapters use these standard e-mails, rather than personal e-mails, when communicating with volunteers and members as whole. If you have questions regarding your Chapter e-mail and/or need login assistance, please call the NCTA Headquarters.

The chapter e-mail gives you access to the other Google applications like Google Calendar, Google Docs, Google sites, Google groups and a few other tools that are great for sharing information within your chapter and beyond.

C. Events

Outreach events, hikes and trail projects are at the core of Chapter activity. This is how you engage and grow your membership and create the sense of community that keeps them involved for years to come. Types of events can include, but are not limited to; day-hikes, extended outings, community involvement events, Trail Town celebrations, pot lucks & picnics, trail maintenance events, Chapter volunteer appreciation events, regular Chapter meetings, etc. Be creative and consider teaming up with other groups to make events more diverse and to reach new audiences (see section D for more information on promotion).

While many Chapters coordinate Events through their Communication Liaison, it is encouraged to recognize a designated Event Coordinator. In either situation, please remember to track any volunteer hours that result from NCTA events. See Section 3: Membership and Volunteers, for more information on tracking volunteer hours.

Larger scale “Special” Events such as the Annual Conference, may request assistance from the staff at NCTA Headquarters for help with registration and promotion. Support from Headquarters will be determined on a case to case basis, depending on event scale, overall need requirements, and availability of resources.

Event Calendars

In addition to Chapter E-mail, it is the Communications Liaison’s role (and/or a designated Event Coordinator) to ensure individual Chapter event calendars are up to date. Chapter event calendars are accessible through the Chapter e-mail accounts. It is also important for the main calendar on the northcountrytrail.org website to show current events. For your benefit, we have a link to a quick “how to” presentation on the Trail Wide Events Calendar, located under the [Get Involved](#) section of the northcountrytrail.org website. You can also call the call the NCTA Headquarters with any questions.

D. Promotion and Publicity

Promotion and publicity is all about getting your chapter out there and connecting with the community. It's fairly easy to promote an event internally- sending out an email announcement to your chapter mailing list- but how do you reach those in your community who might be really interested, might want to attend your event, and might even join your chapter... if they only knew?

Finding creative ways to reach new people is the focus of promotion and publicity. Part of the equation is where you look to find those people who share your interests, and the other part is how you reach those people in a meaningful, effective way. To get you started, think of who might be interested in your activity (hike, trail work, etc.). Who are your potential volunteers/participants/members? Imagine what they do for a living, how they spend their leisure time, and what other organizations they may belong to. Write a list, and then think of ways you could reach them through each of those outlets. Ways to reach out could include (but are not limited to): partaking in community events, writing on-line articles, publishing a newspaper blurb, creating a brochure, mailing an announcement, putting up flyers, or promoting details through social media. Just remember to link people back to your website and/or provide contact information regardless of the means you choose. In addition, please adhere to the *NCTA Brand Standards* where necessary.

Presentations

Chapters are encouraged to give presentations about the trail to their members, volunteers, supporters and other local community groups. To assist with presentation materials, template PowerPoint presentations have been provided on the NCTA website. These PowerPoint presentations are designed with general information and should be edited to reflect the local Chapter or geographic information before use. Chapters are also welcome to create and/or design their own materials in accordance with the NCTA Branding Standards (see Section A). PowerPoint presentations are located on the *Promotion, Outreach and Communications* page under the *Volunteer Resources* section of the *northcountrytrail.org* website. Program specific presentations may also be available for use, see Trail Town (Section F), for example.

E. North Star and Blue Blaze Bulletin

Content for both our *North Star* magazine (print) and our Blue Blaze Bulletin (electronic) is intended to share material of common interest and provide opportunities to learn about how other's in our 7-State community have experienced success. To do this, we rely on local Chapters and groups to provide details on hiking events, extended outings, trail improvements and development status, outreach & membership programs, and noteworthy news of many different kinds. All Chapters, Affiliates, and Partners are invited and encouraged to provide stories and pictures to either publication.

1. North Star

North Star is the quarterly magazine of the North Country Trail Association. Its content is intended to share material of common interest among our members and supporters, including permitting landowners, agency partners, and legislators. While we like to have at least one good hike article in each issue, much of the content shares triumphs, passions, projects, and even problems of the various groups which host the trail, both chapters and affiliates. So we like to have input from local groups about successful outreach or membership programs, trail care items, and major trail improvements.

Please feel encouraged to share your news at any time of the year, perhaps even to the point of including the editor on your newsletter email list. Deadlines for the next issue are always published in a "Submission Guidelines" box somewhere in each issue of the magazine, along with the editor's email, phone, and postal address. Yes, we look for good pictures of events or places, prints, slides, or digital contributions, preferably sent as .jpg attachments, NOT embedded in your email. Please include a caption for each picture, AND the photographer's name.

If you'd like your picture to be considered for the front cover, vertical format is better, and it must be at least 300 dpi. The rear cover photo is always horizontal format.

The biggest reader contribution issue of the year is the first one, in which our State of the Trail feature shares accounts from groups all across the trail about their projects for the previous year. All chapters and affiliates are invited to provide text and pictures, and we have much to learn from each others' efforts. Remember that a line of people facing the camera at a trailhead is mostly boring, while a picture of people actually doing something is much more intriguing!

Volunteer editor: Irene Szabo, treeweenie@aol.com, 585/658-4321, 6969 Creek Rd., Mt. Morris, NY 14510.

2. Blue Blaze Bulletin

The Blue Blaze Bulletin is the NCTA's electronic newsletter which is sent out between 8 to 11 times per year via e-mail subscriptions. NCTA members are automatically signed up for this distribution, but anyone with an e-mail address can be added to the subscription list. Like the *North Star*, its content is intended to share material of common interest among our members and supporters, including permitting landowners, agency partners, and legislators. The Blue Blaze Bulletin also prefers to have input from local groups about successful outreach or membership programs, trail care items, and major trail improvements.

To share your news, at any time of the year, please e-mail information to the following address BBB@northcountrytrail.org. Feel free to add this e-mail to your Chapter distribution lists. If you are hoping to have information referenced in the bulletin in a timely manner, please make sure to indicate the approximate date you would like to have your info included, in the e-mail subject line.

Different from the *North Star*, the Blue Blaze Bulletin generally provides the highlights or introduction to articles and information with a link to where readers can find more information on-line. Links can be set to direct readers to Chapter websites, Facebook pages, etc. Please make sure to include any link URLs (a.k.a. web address information) in the e-mail request sent to BBB@northcountrytrail.org. The Blue Blaze Bulletin also requests that photos or graphics are sent with articles to appear in the electronic newsletter. For photos and graphics, please use a .jpeg format with a resolution of 72dpi or greater.

Since the Blue Blaze Bulletin is created internally by NCTA staff, if you have questions and/or additional information is required please call the NCTA Headquarters for support.

Additional Media

1. *Insights* Blog

We would like to keep our NCTA *Insights* Blog up to date with topics from all around our 7-State community. These types of topics include, but are not limited to: community events, out of the ordinary projects, news about hiking the trail, re-routes, etc. Chapters are also encouraged to create their own blogs for topics such as routine Chapter maintenance, Chapter meetings, etc.

2. Social Media

Chapters are encouraged to use Social Media to further spread the word about their community and happenings. There are many different types of social media platforms available to use. The top three that currently seem to work best for our Chapters are Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUps.

It is the Communications Liaison's role (and/or other Chapter designee) to ensure individual social media communications are kept professional, respectful, and engaging. It is also important that any social media platforms utilize standard naming conventions and follow branding standards.

F. Trail Towns

Chapters are encouraged to establish "Trail Towns" along the North Country National Scenic Trail. A Trail Town is a community through which the North Country Trail passes that supports hikers with services, promotes the Trail to its citizens and embraces the Trail as a resource to be protected and celebrated. To assist with cultivation of community relationships and to provide information about Trail Towns in general, you can find resources (checklists, logos, template MOU's and presentation materials), located on the *Trail Town* page under *The Trails* section of the *northcountrytrail.org* website.

As an added benefit to the establishment of a Trail Town, the NCTA Headquarters will assist with promotion of the towns by highlighting the communities on the Trail Town portion of the main NCTA website. Communications Liaisons (and/or other Chapter designee) are asked to provide town/community narratives, along with pictures of the town, to HQ@northcountrytrail.org. If you have any questions regarding the Trail Town program and promotion thereof, please call the NCTA Headquarters.

G. State of Emergency Communications

In the event of full scale "state of emergency" situations affecting the North Country National Scenic trail, each Chapter is asked to designate a single response representative (such as the Chapter President or the Chapter Communications Liaison), who will communicate timely and on-going information to the NCTA headquarters for trail wide information distribution. "State of emergency" communications are high priority and it is vital they occur throughout the entire duration of such an event.

"State of emergency" conditions are defined as severe circumstances, which have been officially recognized and responded to by the Local, State, or Federal Government authorities, including the National Park Service, National Forest Service, DNR, or applicable Law Enforcement agencies. Emergencies may include fire, flood or other severe weather incident impacting the trail, tragedy related to an injury of a volunteer or a hiker, or any other controversial topic.

6. Managing the Trail

There are many things to consider when managing the trail itself. The details of your chapter's work plan are dependent on the status of your section of trail, the resources of your land management agency and the strength of your relationship with them, the size of your chapter's active volunteer force, the funds available and the availability of other partners to help get the job done.

The specifics about how to build the NCNST can be found in the National Park Service's [Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance](#). That document should become your #1 trail building companion. Other in-depth "how to" resources are available in various publications, dvd/video, and on line from many of the other trail organizations and agencies. Check out the Student Conservation Association's "Lightly on the Land"; the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Design, Construction and Maintenance manual; the Adirondack Mountain Club's Complete Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance, and a [training series from the USDA Forest Service](#) on many more topics.

But there are many other topics outside of building the tread to consider in the trail development process so we've outlined some major steps below to provide some guidance. Your chapter should have a volunteer position or an entire committee dedicated to the management of the trail. Each chapter has unique strengths to draw upon as well as faces challenges that may differ from their neighbors. Play on your strengths, ask for help to fill in the gaps and don't be afraid to learn by trying.

A. Stages of trail development:

Trail Planning and Design

1. Identify the needs – Make a list of your projects. Prioritize that list but be flexible as the situation may change and opportunities arise.
2. Form a trail planning committee that includes your agency partner, NCTA and NPS staff if needed.
3. Identify rules and regulations – What restrictions do you have from land managers, landowners, federal regulations, state laws, etc.
4. Analyze your options - Look at multiple routes, get input and then select the best option.
5. Layout the Trail - Flag and refine the route
6. In both #4 and #5, choose the option that offers the best combination of permanency and good design parameters such as scenery, dry/constructible soils, least stream crossings, etc.

Construction

7. Develop a Construction Plan – You have decided why and where in the previous step, now put together the who, when and how it will get done. It's important to consider the timing of key steps – e.g. a NEPA analysis or Cultural Resources Review may take the NPS a year from start to completion. This has to occur before ground disturbing construction starts.
8. Project funding - Funds for construction and maintenance projects can come from various sources including and not limited to the NPS, NCTA, chapter funds, federal, state and local grants. (See section 4 on financial management for more info).
9. Clearing the Trail and building Trail – Follow the guidelines provided in the *NPS manual on Design, Construction and Maintenance* for the NCT as well as guidance and approval from the land manager.

10. Volunteer Support - Dependent on complexity of the project, you may be able to accomplish it with a weekend work party or you may want to consider contracting with another organization like Americorp-NCCC, Student Conservation Association, Minnesota Conservation Corps, a Boy Scout troop or host an American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation. Or, if you have considerable, recurring construction to do, consider establishing a chapter trail construction patterned after the Brule St. Croix Rovers in Wisconsin. Some of these options cost and some don't, but all require coordination far in advance of the planned project date.
11. Support Structures – Follow the guidelines provided in the *NPS manual on Design, Construction and Maintenance* for the NCNST as well as guidance from the land manager for what structures are appropriate and what permits are required. Contact the NPS or NCTA for sample construction plans if needed.
12. Signing the trail - Follow the guidelines provided in the *NPS manual on Design, Construction and Maintenance*. Some basic signage is provided (see NPS Order Form) and your chapter can apply for grants for larger signage needs like highway signs.
13. Tools and Equipment - The NPS provides basic tools as needed for chapter use (see the NPS Order Form) and provides funding for larger equipment like mowers and trimmers as funding is available. Many chapters own trailers to house and transport their tools. Tool trailers should be licensed to and insured by NCTA including all equipment within. Adding official NCTA decals to your trailers is a great way to promote the Trail and the Association.
14. Safety First! - Make sure all volunteers on the project are signed up as VIPs and that everyone take necessary precautions for the situation, anyone using a chainsaw has a current certification and that safety issues are addressed properly (See *Focus on Safety* below).
15. Project Completion – Make sure you fill out the certification application to insure your sections of trail are considered official North Country National Scenic Trail by the National Park Service. Certification applications must meet the approval of the land manager or land owner to ensure the longevity of the NCNST on their property.
16. Update maps and trail information – NCTA manages a GIS database for the entire trail. As soon as a section of trail is built arrangements should be made with the NCTA (either the GIS Coordinator or local RTC) to get this new construction GPS'd and mapped. Often times a chapter may have a particular volunteer that has worked closely with NCTA regarding the requirements for GPS'ing a section of Trail (See Section 3 for the Trail Information Specialist /GIS Volunteer description and the appendix for the GIS and Map input form).
17. Celebrate success! If is a significant addition or reroute of the trail, we should celebrate. Promote your accomplishments within your chapter, local community; and NCTA staff can help sing your praises across the 7 states.

Maintenance

Your section is built and signed! Before you barely finish celebrating, regular maintenance will be needed to keep it in good condition. Your trail management committee will need to monitor the condition and assess what's needed and assign the tasks to regular adopters, work crews or organize volunteer days to get the job done.

18. Trail Adopter Program – Many chapters rely on a trail adopter program to keep their section maintained. Check out our [Adopter Manual](#) for details.

B. Managing Partnerships

Protecting the corridor of the North Country Trail is a difficult task that includes building relationships with multiple public land managers, partnering with local conservation and recreation groups, and negotiating rights of way with private landowners.

The North Country Trail crosses 160 different land management units on its way from New York to North Dakota. From National Forests, Grasslands and Wildlife Refuges, State parks and recreation areas to county forests and other locally managed areas, we must work with many different partners to make the NCNST a reality. While NCTA and National Park Service staff focus their efforts on the national or state level, our volunteers are building these relationships from the ground up with the land managers that have direct management responsibility of the Trail.

These partnerships bring ideas and resources to the table, enabling us to accomplish more than we ever could alone, helping us “do more with more”. We have incredible success stories across the trail and celebrate when it works well. But we sometimes gloss over the fact that building effective partnerships is difficult. It takes time, patience, persistence and sometimes, a good sense of humor. Every relationship has its tough times and partnerships aren’t about always agreeing; they are about working towards a common goal. We must keep a positive working relationship with those that manage the trail even if we don’t always see eye to eye. With a shared vision, clearly defined roles and responsibilities and the will to empower our volunteers, there is no limit to what we can do together.

We suggest regular communication and a yearly partnership meeting with the agency, your chapter leadership, NCTA staff and a NPS representative. At this meeting, we can discuss the state of the trail in and the state of the partnership, focusing on where things are working and what improvements we would like to make.

There are great tips for [Managing Partnerships](#) on northcountrytrail.org and the [National Park Service partnership website](#).

We are all doing the best we can with what we have. It's not perfect but you should applaud your successes, take the long view and remember to not take yourselves so seriously. You don't always accomplish what you want but if both parties are doing good work, you can't go wrong!

– Melanie Fullman, Ottawa National Forest

C. Focus on Safety

Last but certainly not least, let's talk safety. In FY10, the 770 volunteers of the North Country NST reported just two injuries, for an overall injury rate of less than 0.26% of all NCT volunteers. While we beat the national average, we continue to seek improvement and strive for an injury-free record.

How can we ensure the safety of our volunteers in the future? By integrating a "culture of safety" into each task we perform and each decision we make, and being strong enough to stop ourselves or others when safety is about to be compromised. Take the time to review and discuss safe work practices before the start of a project, and at each changing phase of the job. Use the "Tailgate Safety Series" found on the NPS website at www.nps.gov/noco as a good conversation starter for these discussions with your crew. Review the Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) sheets also found on the web site. Integrate safety into your thought process. Look up, down, and around at your surroundings. Look out for the volunteer next to you. Set an example for others and wear your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). And by all means, stop what you are doing if you find yourself getting into a sticky situation. Find a safer way to accomplish your task, even if it means coming back to it another day with a better plan.

NPS Volunteer Coordinator Dan Watson is the Workers' Compensation Coordinator for all North Country NST volunteers. All current NCTA members are officially registered with the NPS as VIPs, and are entitled to the same injury considerations and protections through the Department of Labor that regular government employees receive. All other volunteers must fill out the volunteer agreement in order to be covered. That form can be found at northcountrytrail.org in the [Membership and Volunteer Management](#) section. It should be filled out and sent to Dan Watson at the address below. Immediately report all injuries to Dan, and he will help you through the claim process. Your chapter has Injury Reporting Kits. Be sure you know where they are and how to use them, share kit locations with others, and use them if need arises.

Daniel W. Watson
Volunteer Coordinator
Ice Age & North Country National Scenic Trails

Satellite Office:
111 E. Kellogg Blvd.
Suite 105
St. Paul, MN 55101-1256

Office: 651-293-8452
BlackBerry: 715-441-7717
FAX: 651-290-3214
daniel_watson@nps.gov

7. Trail Protection

Private landowners play an integral role in developing the NCNST. Many key pieces of the current Trail could not exist without generous permissions from private landowners to cross their land, and the next 2,000 miles of Trail development depend on them! While the trail goes through many federal, state, and county lands, the miles of private land in between are critical to maintain a continuous path. Many of you already have handshake or written trail access agreements with landowners but few permanent easements exist to secure access for the NCT into the future. It's time we begin solidifying our rights for public access to ensure the trail you build stays intact and that the North Country National Scenic Trail is here for future generations. Collectively, NCTA chapters, staff, affiliates and partners as well as the National Park Service, state and local agency partners and local land trusts need to team up to accomplish this task.

This section will outline the basics and then you will find tools for working with landowners like the Landowner Packet, current Recreational Use Statutes for each state, template trail use agreements and easements, and other resources in the Volunteer Resources section of northcountrytrail.org, under [Working with Private Landowners](#).

A. Private Landowner Permissions

There are currently four types of permissions the North Country Trail Association endorses. There are many other agreements and arrangements that can be made if you have a partner at the table willing to hold title to land. Permanent protections like easements are preferred over non-binding agreements but much harder to get. Your chapter should focus on the following options and negotiate with your landowners to achieve the highest level of protection possible:

A) Handshake Agreement: This is our most common type of permission.

- 1) This agreement is revocable by the owner at any time.
- 2) This agreement does NOT pass to the next owner.
- 3) Special conditions or signage are always negotiable (like closure during hunting season)

B) Trail Use Agreement: This is a signed, non-binding agreement between the NCTA and the landowner outlining conditions and permitted uses on the landowner's property.

- 1) This agreement is revocable by the owner at any time.
- 2) This agreement does NOT pass to the next owner.
- 3) This agreement outlines all the stipulations for trail passage on the landowner's property. This agreement is a good vehicle for outlining usages permitted, special blazing, or sign requests. (Form supplied by the NCTA.)

C) Trail Access Easement: This is a permanent permission granted by the landowner for the North Country National Scenic Trail to pass through a defined corridor on the landowner's property and any special conditions are identified within the agreement and are outlined on a supporting property map.

- 1) This agreement offers permanent permission for trail passage and is not revocable under normal circumstances.
- 2) This agreement is bound to the property and passes on to subsequent owners.

- 3) This easement agreement is recorded, with a copy of the property deed, at the local County Clerk's office.
- 4) May incur financial costs.

D) NPS VIP Agreement: This Agreement is between the National Park Service (NPS) and the landowner and is usually with a large corporation or organization. The VIP Agreement is administered by the NPS and is not a preferred method for securing trail passage unless all other types of permissions are inadequate for the landowner.

- 1) This agreement is revocable at any time.
- 2) This agreement has a preferred 3-5 year commitment or a permanent easement.
- 3) This agreement is administered by the National Park Service.

B. Working with landowners

NCTA provides a Landowner Packet for you to present to your prospective NCT Host that includes the above information about types of agreements, a copy of the Recreational Use Statute for your state, and our template trail use agreement and easement. You can find the materials on our website or request a printed copy (with landowner video) from our HQ staff. We suggest you designate a volunteer or committee charged with being the liaison between the chapter, NCTA Headquarters and the landowner.

It takes time, care and understanding to reach your goals with private landowners. The most important thing to do is LISTEN and have the answers when a landowner has a question. Some landowners will agree on the first ask, some will take a year, others ten years, and some will never agree. You must keep perspective. A 4,600-mile trail doesn't get built overnight and might not get built in our lifetime. Enjoy the process and people you meet along the way instead of focusing on needing to see results right away.

The following are answers to the most frequently asked questions by landowners:

Types of Agreements - There are many options for a landowner from a handshake agreement or a written trail use agreement to a permanent easement and possible purchase or donation. It's up to the NCTA chapter to help explain the options and the landowner can decide what is right for them and their family.

Liability- Both the NCTA and the landowner (typically) have liability insurance, but permission to allow the trail should not add a burden to the owner's risk exposure. The landowner, acting as a Trail Host, is protected under the state's Recreational Use Statute, which relieves an owner of any special liability if they permit recreational usage of their land for free to the public.

Landowners seeking additional reassurance could be added to the NCTA's liability policy or the National Park Service may offer private landowners Volunteer in the Parks (VIP) status which would provide assistance with tort claims to the landowner. The NPS is only willing to give the VIP Status to owners willing to grant multi-year or permanent access for the trail. Volunteers who are working on private lands and who report their work hours are also given this VIP assistance for injuries incurred while volunteering.

Routing- NCTA will only place the trail where the owner fully approves. All routing details should be placed on a map before the trail is constructed. It is important to walk the proposed route with the landowner.

Access- Trail signs should indicate that the property is private and users must stay on the designated trail. Property owners will continue with the normal use of their property including hunting, fishing, or farming unless otherwise stated in the agreement.

Design and Uses – The NCT is designed and built as a footpath according to the NPS Manual for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance. The Trail on private property will normally be constructed for foot travel only to live up to our Desired Future Condition as a premier hiking trail (See the DFC in Section 1). Other uses may be permitted only if insisted by the landowner.

Camping- Owners are encouraged to consider whether they will permit camping and whether they wish to designate a camping site. Maps should reflect this information and signs should indicate whether camping is permitted.

Gates and Fences- If there are existing fences that would need to be crossed by a hiker; volunteers should include construction of a stile into their work plan. Gates should always be left as found and hikers will be encouraged to do so.

Signs- The National Park Service and the NCTA provide and install necessary signs and trail markings. The owner should be advised of the proposed method of signing and special signs needed which can be found in the NPS Manual for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance.

Monitoring – The local NCTA chapter/Affiliate/Partner will work with the landowner to keep the Trail maintained and regularly address any issues the landowner has. The relationship is a long-term commitment on both sides.

Enforcement- The NCTA will work with the private landowner on enforcement problems if they arise. This can include signs, barriers, or contact with local law enforcement

C. Funding for Trail Protection

This can be an expensive, legally difficult and time-consuming endeavor. Many grant programs exist to help organizations protect land or recreation resources. Work with your state and local government and local land trusts to identify sources of funds that can assist you in your work. Please keep NCTA staff informed of your actions, ask us for assistance and remember that the NCTA Executive Director needs to sign off on any grant application you submit on behalf of the organization.

Trail Protection Fund and Easement Acquisition

Although mostly relying on donated easements in the past, NCTA has realized the need for flexibility in working with landowners' needs, which translates to needing funds available to compensate landowners or assist with the other associated costs. To address this need, we have built a Trail Protection Fund and an easement acquisition grant program as a way to use those funds. (See Section 4: Financial Management). This program is available for your Chapter/Affiliate/Partner Organization.

Willing Seller

In 2009, the NPS was given the right to purchase land on behalf of the North Country Trail. Each year, NCTA and NPS staff will work to identify our land acquisition priorities and submit requests for funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It is important to note that neither the NPS nor the NCTA wants to be the title holder of the property, but we have many emerging opportunities to work with our

land management partners like the USDA Forest Service, state agencies and local land trusts to find solutions that can make us all happy. Learn more about [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) and how it helps Trails and if you know of properties that are a priority to your agency partner and your chapter, please let NCTA staff know.

Recording the agreement and recognizing the landowner

Once a private landowner grants permission for the Trail on his/her property, a chapter/affiliate/partner representative should register the landowner's name, address, and property location, with a map and tax map property number, with the NCTA Director of Trail Development. The landowner is entitled to a regular NCTA membership free of charge and will receive our quarterly magazine, *North Star*, as a small token of our appreciation. Once your local trail includes private landowners, you'll also be amazed how many of them change hands each year, so you must monitor the status of your private trail segments, and share the updates with the NCTA.

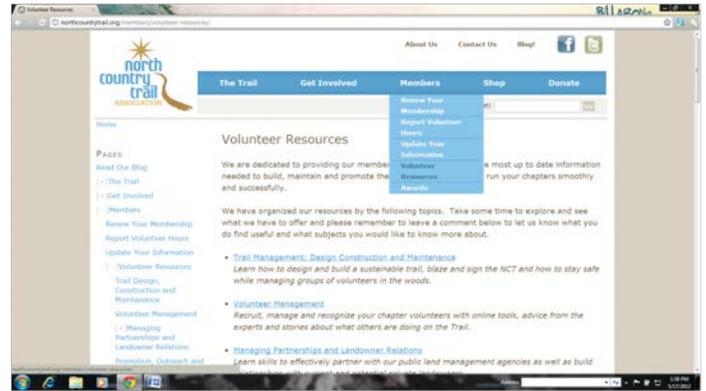
Once you get the "yes" your work with that landowner isn't done. Every one of them deserves a little attention occasionally, even if it's only an annual Thanksgiving Day card, repeating your appreciation for their permission, especially if it's not permanent! The repeated contact info is useful, too, since some worry may have been festering for a while. Make it easy for them to find you to talk about that worry.

- Irene Szabo

8. Summary

We hope this handbook provides you with an overview of the North Country National Scenic Trail, insight into the North Country Trail Association and the guidance needed to effectively manage and grow your chapter. But this is just a start; many other resources are available to help you take the next step.

- Volunteer Resources on northcountrytrail.org and nps.gov/noco provide the tools, documents and additional information mentioned in this handbook.
- The monthly leadership email will provide the most current updates to keep you informed;
- Workshops at our Annual Conference cover topics including trail management, communication and outreach, fundraising and much more, while also providing a chance to share with and learn from your peers;
- Publications like the *North Star*, *Blue Blaze Bulletin* and the [Insight Blog](#) share skills, techniques and stories to inspire you;
- Check out the training programs of our Affiliate and Partner Organizations like the [Buckeye Trail Association](#), [Finger Lakes Trail Conference](#) and the [Superior Hiking Trail Association](#);
- Organizations like American Trails and Land Trust Alliance offer great online information and you can turn to many other local organizations for workshops in your area; and
- Most importantly, remember the NCTA staff is here to help!



So, get out there and challenge yourself, have fun, and don't forget to celebrate your successes! You are leaving a legacy that will be enjoyed by generations to come. But for now, simply enjoy your time on the Trail and with the NCTA family. Welcome to the Red Plaid Nation!

"As a Chapter Leader, you are only as good as the people with whom you surround yourself. Inspire others with your dream and inspire them to dream. Be a wellspring of knowledge, but let it flow freely as advice and teaching not as directives and orders. When you move on, your successors should be better than you were because you inspired them".

– Larry Hawkins, Chief Noonday Chapter and President of NCTA's Board of Directors.

Appendix

If you have questions about the North Country Trail, there are many different places to go for information. This directory provides you with key contacts.

When in Doubt, Try NCTA Headquarters: If you're not sure whom to contact, or prefer to talk with our office instead of contacting a volunteer at home, your best bet is to connect with the NCTA's National Office. If we can't help you, we'll be able to put you in touch with someone who can. Staff members are listed on page 3 (table of contents page).

North Country Trail Association

229 E Main St, Lowell, MI 49331

Toll-free: (866) HikeNCT Fax: (616) 897-6605

www.northcountrytrail.org HQ@northcountrytrail.org

Visit our web site; it's a sure bet that you'll find most of what you need. Here you can join or contribute to the NCTA, browse the events calendar, explore NCTA Chapter pages, purchase maps and trail-related products, follow links to Partner organizations, read up-to-date news items, report volunteer hours, and, of course, learn more about the trail itself!

National Park Service: The NPS is an excellent technical resource for volunteers, agencies, partner organizations, and the media. As our official trail administrator, the NPS sets trail standards, determines trail route, and provides the overall vision for the trail. The NPS maintains a duty station for the NCNST Trail Manager in Lowell, Michigan. Other management and staff positions are located at the NPS office in Madison, Wisconsin.

Jeff McCusker, NCNST Trail Manager
113 Riverwalk Place, Lowell, MI 49331
jeff_b_mccusker@nps.gov • (616) 340-2004

Pam Schuler, Acting Superintendent
Dean Gettinger, Management Assistant
700 Rayovac Drive, Suite 100
Madison, WI 53711
(608) 441-5610 (608) 441-5606 FAX

NCTA Chapters: For information about local activities or volunteering, contact the Chapter representative for your area of interest. We have almost three dozen local volunteer trail clubs scattered along the trail that are Chapters of the NCTA. NCTA members can affiliate themselves with any Chapter they'd like. Whether or not the member volunteers, a portion of their dues will help support Chapter activities. Chapters build and maintain trail, host hikes and other events, and work to promote the trail and the Association in their areas.

Affiliate Organizations: The NCTA enters into affiliate agreements with other organizations who envision the completed trail. Trail Maintaining Affiliates are independent organizations who also work to build, maintain, and promote sections of the trail. Supporting Affiliates are independent organizations who work with us to help fulfill our Mission, but are not responsible for a specific section of trail. Each has its own membership program, so we encourage NCTA members to support them as well. If you have questions about a section of trail that is managed by one of these organizations, your best bet is to contact our Affiliates directly.



NORTH DAKOTA

1 Lonetree Wildlife Management Area

Matt Davis • (701) 388-1883

mdavis@northcountrytrail.org

2 Shyenenne River Valley Chapter

Deb Koeplin • (701) 845-2935

dkoeplin@msn.com

3 North Dakota Prairie Grasslands Chapter

Ron Saeger • (701) 232-1612 • rnsaeger@cableone.net

MINNESOTA

4 Star of the North Chapter

Brian Pavak • (763) 425-4195

stn@northcountrytrail.org

5 Laurentian Lakes Chapter

Ray Vlasak • (218) 573-3243 • highpines@arvig.net

6 Itasca Moraine Chapter

Bruce Johnson • (218) 732-8051 • brucej@arvig.net

7 Arrowhead Chapter

Doug Baker • (218) 326-4030 • baker_j_d@q.com

8 Kekekabic Trail Club

(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):

Mark Stange • info@kek.org

9 Border Route Trail Association

(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):

Ed Solstad • (612) 822-0569

info@borderroutrail.org

10 Superior Hiking Trail Association

(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):

Gayle Coyer • (218) 834-2700 • hike@shta.org

WISCONSIN

11 Brule-St.Croix Chapter

Tim Mowbray • tmowbray@earthlink.net

12 Chequamegon Chapter

Marty Swank • (715) 682-2254

martynct@gmail.com

13 Heritage Chapter

Michael Stafford • GBPACKR@aol.com

UPPER MICHIGAN

14 Ni-Miikanaake Chapter

Dick Swanson • (906) 229-5122

nmk@northcountrytrail.org

15 Peter Wolfe Chapter

Doug Welker • (906) 338-2680 • dwelker@up.net

16 North Country Trail Hikers Chapter

Lorana Jinkerson • ljinkers@nmu.edu

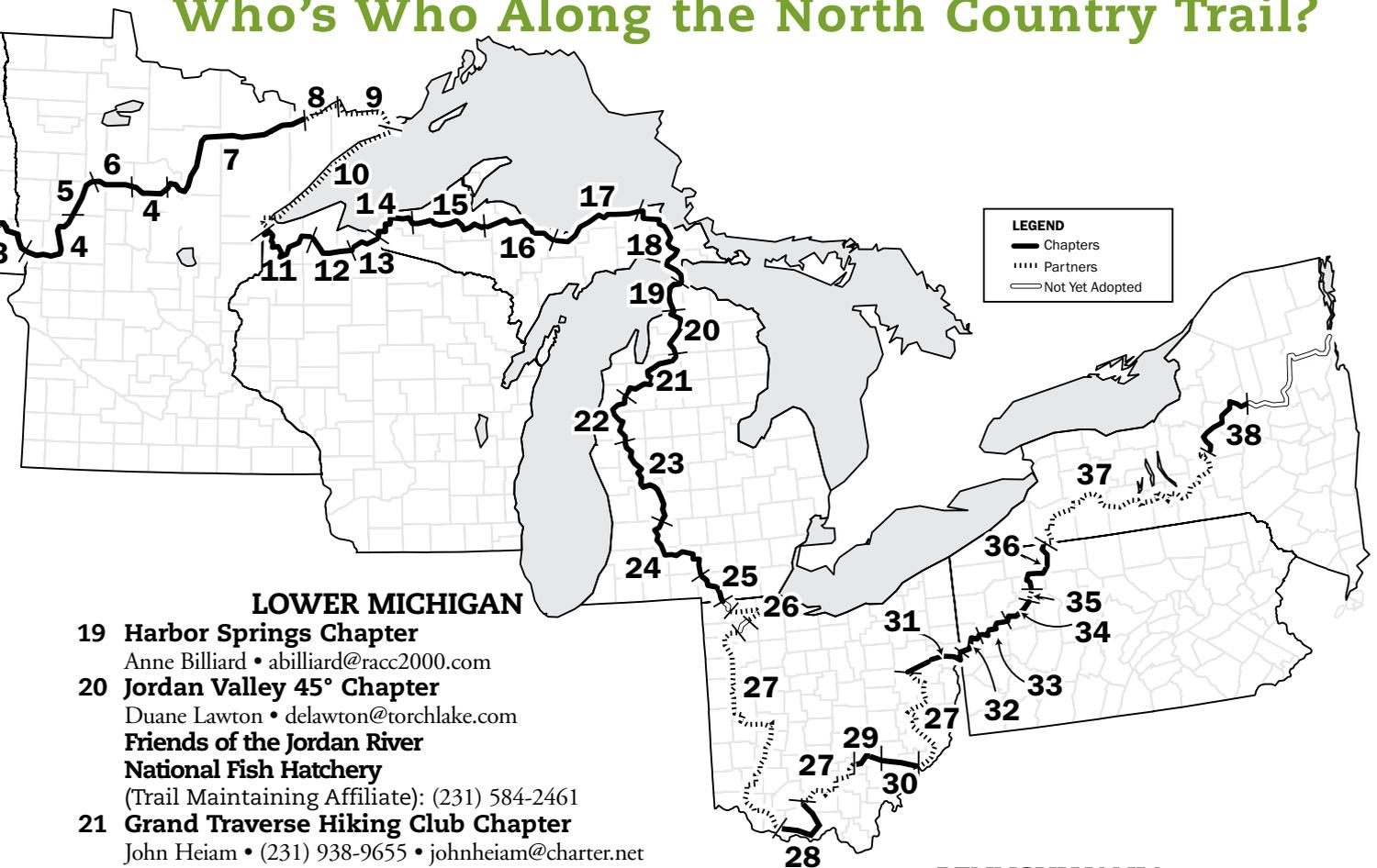
17 Superior Shoreline Chapter

Tim Hass • SSC@northcountrytrail.org

18 Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter

Charlene DeWitt • HSS@northcountrytrail.org

Who's Who Along the North Country Trail?



LEGEND
 — Chapters
 Partners
 - - - - - Not Yet Adopted

LOWER MICHIGAN

- 19 Harbor Springs Chapter**
Anne Billiard • abilliard@racc2000.com
- 20 Jordan Valley 45° Chapter**
Duane Lawton • delawton@torchlake.com
Friends of the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery
(Trail Maintaining Affiliate): (231) 584-2461
- 21 Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter**
John Heiam • (231) 938-9655 • johnheiam@charter.net
- 22 Spirit of the Woods Chapter**
Ed Chappel • (231) 266-8008
ed.chappel@goldcommcable.com
- 23 Western Michigan Chapter**
Chuck Vanette • (616) 456-9725
WMI@northcountrytrail.org
- 24 Chief Noonday Chapter**
Larry Pio • (269) 327-3589 • nalcoman1@aol.com
- 25 Chief Baw Beese Chapter**
Ryan Bowles • bowlesr@msu.edu

OHIO

- 26 NW Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association**
(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):
Tom Duvendack • (419) 822-4788
tomfortrails@windstream.net
- 27 Buckeye Trail Association**
(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):
Melissa Reed • (937) 381-5100 • president@buckeyetrail.org
- 28 Adams County Chapter**
Andrew Bashaw • (740) 934-2008
abashaw@northcountrytrail.org
- 29 Little Cities of the Forest Chapter**
Andrew Bashaw • (740) 934-2008
abashaw@northcountrytrail.org
- 30 Ohio Valley Chapter**
Ryan Smith • (740) 374-5666 • rsmith365@hotmail.com
- 31 Great Trail-Sandy Beaver Canal Chapter**
Brad Bosley • (330) 227-2432 • bbosley@cceng.org

PENNSYLVANIA

- 32 Wampum Chapter**
Lee Fairbanks • (724) 847-0589 • fairbanks14@comcast.net
- 33 Butler County Chapter**
John Stehle • (724) 256-0674 • stehles@yahoo.com
Butler Outdoor Club
(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):
Steve Bickel • (724)794-3719 • cbickel@zoominternet.net
- 34 Clarion County Chapter**
Ed Scurry • (814) 437-1168 • EDSDC85@yahoo.com
- 35 Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy**
(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):
Patty Brunner • (724) 325-3224 • info@rachelcarsontrails.org
- 36 Allegheny National Forest Chapter**
Keith Klos • (814) 484-7420 • nct001@verizon.net

NEW YORK

- 37 Finger Lakes Trail Conference**
(Trail Maintaining Affiliate):
Gene Bavis, Executive Director • (585) 658-9320
FLTinfo@fingerlakestrail.org
Additional Maintaining Organizations Coordinated by FLTC:
Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK),
ADK-Genesee Valley Chapter, ADK-Onondaga Chapter,
Cayuga Trails Club, Foothills Trail Club, Genesee Valley Hiking Club, and Hammondsport Boy Scout Troop 18
- 38 Central New York Chapter:**
Jack Miller • (315) 446-7257 • jacobr7@yahoo.com

Membership Categories

Student Member	\$10
To Qualify:	Must be a current K-12 student or a degree-seeking student of a college
Benefits:	<i>Same as Regular Membership</i>

Dual Supporter	\$23
To Qualify:	Must be a current member of an NCTA Affiliate organization
Benefits:	<i>Same as Regular Membership</i>

Sponsored Membership	\$23
To Qualify:	Recruited by a current member of NCTA Must not have been a member for at least two years Good only for the first year of membership
Benefits:	<i>Same as Regular Membership</i>

Individual Membership	\$46
Benefits:	- Includes membership in a local chapter - Subscription to <i>North Star</i> magazine - 10% discount on NCTA Trail Shop items - Can sign up new members at discounted rate

Household Membership	\$60
Benefits:	- Includes membership in a local chapter - Subscription to <i>North Star</i> magazine - 10% discount on NCTA Trail Shop items - Can sign up new members at discounted rate

Additional Levels of Support: Contributor \$100, North Country Trail Supporter \$250: Same benefits as Individual Membership plus a free gift membership to give.

Life Membership	\$1000
Benefits:	<i>Same as Regular Membership plus...</i> - Benefits continue for the lifetime of the individual(s) involved - Special mention in NCTA's Annual Report

Organizational Membership	\$45
To Qualify:	Must be a club, nonprofit organization or government agency Donations and grants must be to the national NCTA
Benefits:	- One-year subscription to the <i>North Star</i> - Wholesale cost on maps and Trail Shop merchandise - Can sign up new NCTA members at discounted rate

Business Membership	\$150
To Qualify:	Must be a business or corporation Donations and grants must be to the national NCTA
Benefits:	- One-year subscription to the <i>North Star</i> - Wholesale cost on maps and Trail Shop merchandise - Can sign up new NCTA members at discounted rate

North Country Trail Blazer **\$1000 or more**

To Qualify: Must be a business, corporation, agency or organization
Donations and grants must be to the national NCTA

Benefits: *Same as **Organization Membership***

North Country Trail Association, Incorporated Chapter Monthly Report

As of June 30, 2012

	<u>Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Num</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Memo</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Balance</u>
099 - Checking							1,983.53
110 - Chapter Operations							1,983.53
110.XXX - Chapter Operations							A 1,983.53
110.XXC - Chapter Petty Cash							200.00
Total 110.XXC - Chapter Petty Cash							B 200.00
110.XXX - Chapter Operations - Other							C 1,783.53
Check		06/05/2012	5300	Hooper Printing	Invoice #35324	-198.73	1,584.80
General Journal		06/30/2012	MBS-0612ME		Membership Dues - June 2012	109.80	1,694.60
General Journal		06/30/2012	DON-0612ME		Donations - June 2012	0.00	1,694.60
General Journal		06/30/2012	INT-0612ME		Interest Distribution - Q2 2012	1.08	1,695.68
Total 110.XXX - Chapter Operations - Other						D -87.85	E 1,695.68
Total 110.XXX - Chapter Operations						-87.85	F 1,895.68
Total 110 - Chapter Operations						-87.85	1,895.68
Total 099 - Checking						-87.85	1,895.68
TOTAL						-87.85	1,895.68

A - Total Carryforward Balance from Prior Month

B - Petty Cash (imprest) Balance, amount remains constant representing a combination of cash/bank balance and reimbursed receipts, maintained by local Chapter Treasurer

C - Carryforward Balance from Prior Month of Chapter Operations Account, maintained by NCTA Financial Administrator

D - Summary of Chapter Operations Account activity for the current period

E - Balance of Chapter Operations Account for the current period to be carried forward to the next period

F - Total Balance of Chapter Operations plus Petty Cash Accounts for the current period to be carried forward to the next period



Map/Information Request

Date: ___/___/___

Name: _____

Chapter/Organization: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Requested Completion Date: ___/___/___

Request Type:

- Map Request
- Data Request
- Statistical Request

...if Map Request (select):

- Project Map
- Brochure Map
- Event Handout
- Event Poster
- Other _____

Map Size:

- 8.5" x 11"
- 11" x 17"
- 22" x 34"
- 34" x 44"
- Other _____

...if Data Request (select):

- Shapefile
- GPS file
- Tabular
- Other _____

Define the geographic area of the request (map boundaries, data extent, etc):

Briefly describe the audience and how the map/data/statistics will be used: _____

Delivery Instructions: _____



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

Policy on Chainsaw & Crosscut Saw Training & Certification

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) endorses the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the National Park Service (NPS) approach to the administration of their respective employee worker-safety programs and joins with those agencies in the administration of safety programs to protect volunteers and employees working on the North Country National Scenic Trail. The NCTA appreciates and supports programs that protect trail workers under the Volunteers in the Forests Act, the Volunteers in the Parks Act, and related agency sponsorship of training and safety programs.

In its authorization to equip and train NCTA workers, including volunteers, employees, and workers from the maintaining clubs, as well as in its work with cooperating state agencies, NCTA:

- Recognizes that, individual North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) workers have primary responsibility for their own personal safety and for compliance with the requirements for chainsaw and crosscut saw operators. Furthermore, each volunteer engaged in club- or crew-sponsored maintenance and construction activities assumes personal responsibility for following crew-leader or club directions, assessing his or her own physical condition and preparedness for engaging in trail-work activities, and coming properly equipped and clothed in a manner appropriate for the location, duration, weather conditions, and proposed work.
- Acknowledges that, through its agreements with the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service, NCNST-maintaining clubs have—through individual memoranda of understanding sub-delegating to them leadership and control over their respective sections of the North Country National Scenic Trail—the authority and responsibility to control all club volunteer-maintenance activities by their members and affiliates.
- Follows current individual safety requirements that apply to federal employees in those agencies but recognizes that volunteers may require additional time, resources, and assistance to meet agency requirements and goals. Those requirements can be found in the USDA Forest Service Health and Safety Code Handbook’s “Minimum Requirements for Chainsaw Operation” (Section 22.48, pages 20-47 through 20-62) and “OSHA General Requirements for Logging Operations.”
- Follows the Missoula Technology and Development Center’s curriculum, or its agency-approved successors, for chainsaw and crosscut saw certification. In evaluating individual sawyer skills when certifying or recertifying sawyers, NCTA authorized chainsaw instructors may consider equivalent course materials from other programs.
- Encourages trail-maintaining crews and clubs to maintain current voluntary services agreements with their federal agency partners. These agreements generally will list all volunteer workers and will outline any applicable medical coverage and tort protection for incidents on the NCNST arising from these groups’ volunteer activities there. These agreements are authorized under agency sponsored Volunteers in Parks (VIP) or Volunteers in Forest (VIF) programs at the local level.
- NCTA recognizes that, under the VIP and VIF programs, volunteers are considered “federal employees” for the purposes of medical and tort-claims protections. However, the NCTA maintains that its organization, its Chapters and Affiliates, and its individual volunteer workers and employees are independent citizens working under private NCTA or club auspices within the law, regulations, and policies set by the federal agencies.

To the extent financially feasible, NCTA will:

- Seek public funding to fully implement training and equipment programs necessary for safety management.

- Seek instructor-certifiers who can be qualified under USDA Forest Service and NPS auspices as instructors who can authorize local instructors and operators. NCTA's state partners, and trail-maintaining clubs should encourage willing, skilled, regularly practicing sawyers with talents for teaching to become qualified as instructors by a Forest Service qualified instructor-certifier.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) meeting current best management practices to its instructor-certifiers, its local instructors, its certified operators, and its trail-crew leaders.
- Reimburse approved volunteer expenses for first-aid/CPR training and PPE purchases.
- Encourage both agencies to recognize current certifications still in effect through their full three-year terms.
- Prepare current best management practices (BMPs), which will be summarized in a volunteer-friendly format.
- Work with the agencies to publish and distribute attractive and effective training and safety-administration handbooks, videos, and other media and to minimize reporting requirements and other paperwork.



Policy on Timber Harvesting

Preamble:

The North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) passes through a wide variety of ownerships including both public and private working forests. We are privileged and pleased that the trail is allowed to cross these properties and in general are supportive of sustainable timber management.

In an effort to work more closely with the various landowners and to further enhance cooperation, this policy statement provides guidance and documentation to both forest managers and association members as they work together to mitigate potential impacts to the trail.

The primary purpose of this policy is to protect the scenery along the trail and to help preserve the recreation component in areas that are managed for timber. A secondary purpose is to educate North Country Trail Association (NCTA) members about acceptable timber harvesting procedures and allow them to interact with forest managers in an informed manner that is consistent with NCTA policy.

Benefits:

- Increased support for active forest management.
- Better public relations for the logging companies and forest managers.
- A quality trail experience is maintained for trail users and a new respect for forest management is nurtured. It shows that logging operations can also be good neighbors.
- Trail maintaining volunteers will not be surprised by management and will be more likely to assist the land manager temporarily reroute or restore the trail.
- If notified in advance, NCTA and the National Park Service (NPS) can take steps to make hikers aware of the planned management activities by publishing the information on the association's website and the quarterly North Star magazine.
- If notified in advance, NCTA and NPS may be able to provide a Geographic Information System (GIS) map of the trail route to assist in sale unit planning. They may also be able to assist in keeping the trail route intact by suggesting alternatives or even providing posts, wooden stakes, or temporary signs to be placed along the designated trail route during the logging process so that hikers don't get lost.

Policy Guidelines:

| We suggest that if any timber harvesting is done near the North Country NST that the following guidelines be followed:

- Please contact the North Country Trail Association's national headquarters located at 229 East Main St., Lowell, MI 49331 (616-897-5987). If you have a working relationship with the nearest

local NCTA chapter or Affiliate, feel free to also contact them. Otherwise, the association will contact the local chapter/Affiliate.

Also please contact the National Park Service's Ice Age and North Country Trail Office, located at 700 Rayovac Drive-Suite 100, Madison, WI 53711 (608-441-5610). This initial action about a proposed timber management activity will alert both parties and provide them with an opportunity for input.

- Cutting that is adjacent to or in the foreground view¹ of the trail should be accomplished with scenic quality foremost in mind and include the design assistance of a landscape architect whenever feasible. Most National Forests, for instance, already have a landscape architect on board who automatically reviews sensitive areas.
- Cutting units should be designed to protect the trail by approaching it on only one side.
- Partial cutting or selective cutting is encouraged.
- In areas where clear cutting is done, the cutting unit should be designed to create a temporary vista that appears as natural as possible. Through shaping design the "apparent" size of the clear cut should be less than five acres
- An uncut strip separating a clearcut unit from the trail is an option. But, we do not advocate a narrow uncut strip along both sides of the trail—unless it is of sufficient width to withstand windthrow. Narrow "peek-a-boo" strips are often blown down across the trail and prove to be of no value.
- If large equipment must cross the trail it should do so at only one point or at points no closer than one quarter mile apart. When large equipment does cross the trail, the trail tread should be restored, after the harvest, by the logging company and some native vegetation restored at the crossing points to visually de-emphasize the travelway.
- All markers (including blazes and other signs) should be protected during the logging operation. Any that are destroyed or removed should be replaced by the logging company.
- Informational signs (sample attached) should be posted on the trail (on both sides of the harvest area) informing hikers of the work being done and the potential benefits to the forest.
- When possible, alternate temporary routes around the harvest area should be established for trail users. Or, the existing route through the harvest area should be kept passable via prompt almost daily slash management.
- Ideally, upon completion of the harvest activity slash should be removed from within 25' of the trail and lopped and scattered to within two feet of the ground for the next 100 feet. At a minimum, the slash should be removed from the 4-foot wide trail corridor so that maintainers can use mowers or weed whackers to set back the new sun-loving growth.
- Following the harvest, placement of an interpretive sign explaining what was done along the trail and its benefits to the forest is an optional item for a logging company or forest manager to consider. Such signs educate the public and foster better relationships between trail users and forest operators.

¹ USDA Forest Service Landscape Management Handbook (Ag 434), Vol. 1: The viewable area immediately adjacent to the trail—generally less than ¼ mile.



Policy on End-to-End Hikes and Trips

OBJECTIVES:

To provide guidelines for hikers and followers of the North Country National Scenic Trail by which muscle-powered milestones will be recognized. Although the honor system will be used to determine who has completed the trail, certain standards will be put forth so that potential end-to-enders of any kind will know what is expected.

To provide long-term stability to the process by which recognized long-distance hikers and followers will be rewarded.

SITUATION:

Prior to 2011 no standards for recognition of an end-to-end hike of the North Country Trail existed. In theory, someone could hike from Crown Point, New York, to Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota by any route and claim to have hiked the trail. On occasion, long-distance hikers have skipped large portions of completed trail, replacing it with a road walk. Many people believe this sort of arbitrary choice of routes is not in keeping with the spirit of an end-to-end hike.

In addition, two people have already followed the trail by a combination of hiking and bicycling road sections. While this is not an end-to-end hike, it certainly is a worthy accomplishment and merits recognition.

The only recognition officially given in the past has been an embroidered patch bearing an NCT map, which does not show the Minnesota Arrowhead, and is thus outdated.

POLICY:

Three opportunities will be available for recognition.

1. Long-distance Hike/Trip
2. End-to-End Trip
3. End-to-End Hike

A North Country Trail Long Distance Hike/Trip definition: Completion of one or more of the following milestones (according to the standards outlined in the next paragraph):

- Any one of the seven states of the NCT: NY, PA, OH, MI (which includes the Mackinaw Bridge Labor Day Walk), WI, MN (which includes the Arrowhead Route), ND
- A total of 1000, 2000, 3000, or 4000 miles

A North Country Trail End-to-End Hike/Trip definition:

Completion of the entire 4400-4600 mile route of the NCT as it was recognized at the time of hiking/following.

In all cases, the following stipulations must be met for recognition of mileage:

1. All existing off-road trail and blazed on-road trail, except in cases of high water bypasses, bridges which are out, logging operations, or other minor detours due to emergency situations, however
2. It may include short detours to take in scenic, cultural or historic features near the trail (see instructions for a list of currently acceptable detours which require no approval).
3. It must include walking the Mackinac Bridge on Labor Day.
4. It must include the Minnesota Arrowhead (Duluth to Grand Rapids via the Superior Hiking Trail, Border Route, Kekekabic Trail and connection to Grand Rapids).
5. It must include some reasonable connection between established trail either on-road or legally off-road.

An **“End-to-End Hike”** designation will be awarded when the entire trail is completed on foot. It may not include bicycling or paddling sections of the trail or road.

An **“End-to-End Trip”** designation will be awarded when the entire trail is completed using muscle power. Sections may be bicycled, paddled (if waterways closely parallel the official trail), roller bladed, etc. Illegally bicycling sections will not be acceptable.

Levels of recognition:

There is no distinction as to value/awards between a thru-hike/trip and a section-hike/trip. There is no variation of recognition based on the speed with which the hike/trip was completed. The only distinction which will be recognized is between those who complete the entire trail on foot, and those who follow portions of the route using other muscle-powered means.

How State and Mileage Milestones will be recognized:

- To receive the Long Distance patch, an initial NCT Long Distance Hike/Trip application must be submitted.
- Upon completing the first milestone (either one entire state or 1000 miles or more), and completion of a Long-Distance Hike/Trip Application, the hiker/follower will be given a central Long Distance patch, and any appropriate first-tier rockers. First-tier rockers will be in two sets: the seven states; and 1000, 2000, 3000 and 4000 miles.
- After the initial application, the hiker/follower will need to submit another Long Distance Application documenting the additional mileage for completion of other milestones.
- Those who qualify for milestones may buy additional sets of patches and awarded rockers for personal use.

How End-to-End Hike/Trip will be recognized:

- To be recognized and added to the official roster, a hiker/follower must complete the NCT E2E Hike/Trip application form and submit it to the Long Distance Hiking Committee.
- To receive a second-tier rocker, certificate, and pin, the E2E Hike/Trip Application must be completed and signed, avowing completion of a trip under the above standards. Two second-tier rockers will be available: End-to-End Hike and End-to-End Trip, and the appropriate one will be awarded.
- Those who qualify for the award may purchase additional sets for personal use.

Monitoring of the North Country Trail Long Distance Hiker application process:

The Long Distance Hiking Committee will oversee the process and keep records, until such time as a separate North Country Trail Long Distance Hiking Organization is created. At that time, said organization will designate a body to oversee the awards and keep records.

Recognition of followers of the North Country Trail prior to Jan 1, 2012:

These 11 (eleven) people are considered to be recognized as official End-to-Enders and will not need to complete the new application form:

- Carolyn Hoffman (E2E Trip 1978)
- Peter Wolfe (E2E Hike 1974-1980)
- Chet Frome (E2E Hike 1992-1995)
- Ed Talone (E2E Hike 1994)
- Andrew Skurka (E2E Hike 2004-2005)
- Don Beattie (E2E Hike 1980-2005)
- Allen Shoup (E2E Hike 1995-2005)
- Bart Smith (E2E Hike completed 2007)
- Eb Eberhard (E2E Hike 2009)
- Joan Young (E2E Hike 1991-2010)
- Judy Geisler (E2E Trip completed 2011)



Policy on Mountain Bike Use

Policy Statement:

“The policy of the North Country Trail Association is that bicycling is best accommodated as a use on the North Country National Scenic Trail on rail-trail segments and on other short segments of hardened surface (1) specifically designed for wheeled vehicles, where the bikes would not damage natural or trail resources; (2) that are previously established multiple use trails that become part of the North Country Trail route; (3) where bicycles could be physically restricted to the designated section; and (4) where bicycle use would not adversely affect the recreational experience of hikers. We realize these conditions generally are not found on the typical single-track forested and rural segments of the North Country Trail, and we believe bicycle use on such segments is inadvisable at best.”

Reasons for the Policy:

The vision that the Association and the National Park Service have is that of a premier hiking trail patterned after the Appalachian Trail. The Trail is meant to provide and protect an experience that more and more is lost in our busy and growing world. Whether exploring wilderness or rural landscapes, for an afternoon or weeks on end, hikers should expect to find peace, solace, insight, and a reconnection with the natural world as they journey along the North Country National Scenic Trail. Many trails offer the opportunity for exercise in a natural environment, but few seek to protect this type of experience that we feel is a crucial and growing need in human nature.

Part of the reason the Association discourages bike use is that it threatens to displace hikers seeking the type of experience for which the Trail is intended. In addition, heavy use by mountain bikes can quickly lead to trail erosion and degradation. The degree of such damage depends on soil conditions, and the level of responsibility and extent of bike activity. However, the North Country Trail generally has not been constructed to withstand bike traffic. Tire tracks can provide an uninterrupted course for water flow, quickly leading to trail erosion. This has led to poor walking conditions, unsightly views, and an overall degradation of the hiking experience.

Local Effect of the Policy:

This Policy does not represent a ban on mountain bikes on the trail, as the local managing authority has the final decision over whether or not to permit bike use. It does mean that the Association is on record as opposing mountain bike use in most situations.

Need for Expanded Mountain Biking Opportunities:

With its tremendous growth in recent years, mountain biking clearly is in need of the support of related organizations and agencies if opportunities for biking will ever meet demand. The North Country Trail Association remains supportive of expanded bike trails in the vicinity of, but not coinciding with, the North Country National Scenic Trail. By working together, hikers and bikers can ensure that adequate sustainable opportunities exist for both types of use.



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

Policy on Geocaching

Policy Statement

The North Country Trail Association recognizes that the sport of geocaching offers a unique and social approach to exploring the outdoors that may appeal to a growing segment of trail users. At the same time, the Association also recognizes the potential drawbacks of practicing this sport, which may include resource degradation, infringement of property rights, and/or conflicts with “tread lightly” trail use ethics. Therefore, to minimize these concerns, the Association endorses geocaching and similar activities along the North Country National Scenic Trail only under the following conditions:

1. Where written permission has been obtained in advance from the appropriate land manager or land owner, providing a specific timeframe and location for the activity, and
2. Where proper care is taken to avoid damage caused by digging or trampling to vegetation, archeological evidence, trail tread or other fragile resources in the area.

Background

Geocaching is an exploration activity for GPS users. Individuals and organizations set up caches all over the world and share the locations of these caches on the internet. GPS users can then use the location coordinates to find the caches. Once found, a cache may provide the visitor with a wide variety of rewards. Visitors are expected to leave something in exchange for whatever they may take from the cache. All caches also generally contain a logbook. According to the website geocaching.com, “Where you place a cache is up to you.”

Rationale

This policy was enacted because a growing number of members were expressing interest in geocaching, and the NCTA needed an official statement of policy to help minimize or eliminate potential damage to the trail and surrounding resources.