



Adirondack Mountain Club Trails Department 2022 Field Season Work Report

November 21, 2022

The Trails Department was busy during the Adirondack Mountain Club's centennial year! As the snow has begun to coat the Adirondacks, the field season is beginning to wind down. The trails season started off strong and kept up the intensity to the season's end. After being hired in January as Trails Manager, it was off to the races interviewing and hiring seasonal staff for the 2022 season, scouting, and finalizing projects and material purchases. ADK's professional trail crew boasted eleven new crew members, four crew leaders and the crew boss. The volunteer crews were led by two crew leaders, and all our crews were well fed by the Food Coordinator. There were twenty-three different project locations our crews worked on throughout the summer, including seven locations along the entire length of the Northville-Placid Trail on National Trails Day. The season started mid-May with training and wrapped up at the end of September, totaling forty-eight crew weeks altogether.

I would like to thank my incredible crew, fantastic volunteers, and Trails Department supporters far and wide for making this amazing field season possible.



A professional trail crew member works to set a rock for turnpiking near Avalanche Lake.

Thank you to our volunteers, donors, sponsors, and partners!

A big thank you goes out to the [Adirondack 46ers](#) for their continued support for ADK's professional trail crew. The organization donated \$46,000 to fund trail projects in the High Peaks Wilderness. The 46ers have been a consistent supporter and partner in trail work in the Adirondack Park, investing \$400,000 in ADK's Trails Department over the last two decades. Their commitment to supporting trail projects has also scaled with increases in visitor use, with over \$300,000 of that support coming over the last decade when visitation has been the highest.

[Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine](#) continues to be a valuable partner in trail work on Poke-O-Moonshine in the Taylor Pond Wild Forest. ADK is grateful for the funding of this year's work, which came from Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine via a New York State Park and Trail Partnership Grant. The Friends group has led the way for trail work on the Ranger Trail and raised \$300,000 for this project since 2014.

Thanks to the [North Elba LEAF Grant](#), which has helped fund the Mount Jo Long Trail relocation. This multi-year project began in 2021 and continues into 2023 to build a model sustainable trail to the summit of the iconic mountain.

The [North Country Trail Association](#) (NCTA) has partnered with ADK to continue construction of the North Country National Scenic Trail through the Adirondack Park. Thanks to a National Parks funding awarded to ADK, several weeks of trail work on Jones Hill have been funded.

ADK is grateful to have partnered with the [Adirondack Chapter of the Nature Conservancy](#) for four weeks of trail work on their Silver Lake Bog Preserve. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) wants to ensure that the family-friendly hike, which offers stunning views of Whiteface and surrounding mountains, is safe and sustainable for foot traffic.



We are thankful for partnering with Hamilton County in the planning and construction of the new trail up Buck Mountain in Long Lake. The trail, once open, will add a new fire tower with views of the Long Lake region. The opportunity to collaborate with the County in providing access to a new fire tower located on private lands is unique and exciting.

ADK continues to work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to address trail construction and maintenance on Forest Preserve lands. Special thanks to the staff we have worked directly with the season including Rob Daley, Tate Connor, Jon DeSantis, Dan Levy, and Rob Ripp. Without the DEC we would not be able to do the work we love!

Training and Patrols, Heart Lake Program Center & High Peaks Wilderness

This year, our trail crew members spent two weeks at the end of May focusing on developing the skills required to live and work in an Adirondack backcountry setting. Beginning with orientation and a “stations day,” crew members moved through nine different hands-on skills stations where they learned everything from how to chop out blowdown, find and move rocks, identify, fell, and process native trees, and set-up and operate rigging and high-line systems. After stations day the crew embarked on a five-day training week on Mount Jo where they received in-field training while building a new stretch of trail. At the end of the first week, the crew had installed six rock steps, sixty square feet of scree, a 12-foot native bog bridge, and 1035 feet of new trail. In the second week of training, crew members received Wilderness First Aid certification and Leave No Trace training. In two days, crew members patrolled four different sections of trail in the High Peaks Wilderness and cut out forty-four blowdowns and cleared over five hundred drainages.



Charlotte Staats

Trail Crew received hands-on training while working on Mount Jo. Each training week includes going over the entire process of building native bridging.

National Trails Day, Northville-Placid Trail

National Trails Day (NTD) was held on June 4th in various locations along the Northville-Placid Trail (NPT) from the Lake Placid terminus all the way down to the Northville terminus. During this one-day event, groups focused on clearing any trees that were across the trail, clearing drainages, removing overgrown branches and brush along the corridor, campsite clean-up, outhouse relocation, and campsite relocation. Thank you to all who participated!



Dan Kane Memorial Work Weekend at Johns Brook Lodge

The group of eight volunteers and three leaders spent the weekend installing six rock step stones and replacing an old native bog bridge on ADK's property in the Johns Brook Valley. This annual project is named for longtime ADK trail supporter and volunteer Dan Kane.



Charlotte Staats

Volunteers at the Dan Kane Memorial Work Weekend celebrate installing step stones and a native bog bridge.

Great Camp Sagamore & Elk Lake Lodge

Four days were spent working near Great Camp Sagamore. Volunteers built a hand-launch dock in Sagamore Lake and a five-step rock staircase on the trail that leads to the dock. At Elk Lake Lodge volunteers got down and dirty building one hundred feet of bog bridging and span bridges across water crossings and wet, muddy sections of trail. After working hard, they were able to enjoy the amenities and beautiful scenery of Elk Lake Lodge.

Mount Jo Long Trail, Heart Lake Program Center

[Mount Jo's Long Trail](#) is currently undergoing a multi-year total trail relocation. The existing trail poses a safety risk for hikers and faces extreme degradation from erosion. This project has been made possible by North Elba's LEAF Grant and donations made to ADK. The first portion of newly constructed trail opened to hikers mid-September. Professional and volunteer crews worked for 9 weeks on the first half-mile of establishing the trail corridor and tread and building sustainable trail infrastructure when necessary. During that time 1,559 feet of new trail cut, seventy-two rocks were set for rock staircases and retaining walls, and two native bog bridges were built.

Buck Mountain, Long Lake NY

ADK worked with Hamilton County to [build a new 1.5-mile-long hiking trail](#) up Buck Mountain to the newly restored fire tower at its summit. As a privately owned parcel, Hamilton County has been granted access to a portion of the property to make this possible. ADK began construction on the new trail last summer and continued to do so this summer. The professional trail crew spent two weeks building rock turnpiking and rock staircases. The teen trail work program built stepping stones and dimensional bog bridging. Altogether, about one hundred feet of bog bridging was installed and fifty-two rocks were set for the staircases, turnpiking and step stones. The trail is still currently under construction and is not yet open to the public. ADK's crews spent a total of three weeks working on the trail this year. ADK has been fortunate to partner with Hamilton County to bring this trail concept to life.



Silver Lake Bog, Hawkeye NY

The Nature Conservancy contracted ADK's professional trail crew to work on the [Silver Lake Bog Preserve](#) trail for four weeks. Goals of the work were to improve the trail's sustainability and ensure the trail is safe for hikers. During this time, a 32-foot-long span bridge was replaced, a 100-foot-long reroute was installed, and the social trail to the vista was formalized with two wooden staircases and three rock steps to make it safer when accessing. Crew members were thrilled to work in such a beautiful and iconic location.



Professional trail crew members set up parts of the dimensional wood staircase to custom cut portions of the lumber for an exact fit.

Jones Hill, Hoffman Notch Wilderness

ADK has been working with the NCTA and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to build a section of the North Country National Scenic Trail over Jones Hill in the Hoffman Notch Wilderness. As the second year of working on this section of trail, we focused on building raised, hardened tread surfaces along low, wet stretches of the trail closer to the Dirgy Lot Trailhead. After a two-week period, 220 feet of raised and hardened tread and three new drainages were installed.

Lake George Land Conservancy

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Lake George Land Conservancy had been awarded a grant to begin working on community connector trails. This summer, as part of that grant, ADK installed over five hundred feet of new trail and built three-dimensional span bridges to cross a wetland.

Phelps Trail, High Peaks Wilderness

Thanks to the financial support of the Adirondack 46ers, ADK's professional trail crew was able to spend three weeks near Slant Rock on the Phelps Trail to Mount Marcy building rock turnpiking to raise and harden the hiking tread. 134 crib stones and 385 square feet of new tread were installed during the three-week period. This was year two of a multi-year effort to install rock turnpiking along this section of trail and is part of a larger ongoing effort by the DEC Forester Tate Connor to realign, reconstruct, and/or rehabilitate the Phelps Trail from the Garden trail head to Mount Marcy.



Avalanche Camps, High Peaks Wilderness

The Adirondack 46ers funded four weeks of professional crew time near the Avalanche Lake camps. This is a multi-year project to construct a new, hardened trail between Avalanche Lake and Lake Colden. The current existing trail's placement unfortunately lends itself to consistent flooding and would require intense rebuilding and annual maintenance to provide natural resource protection and safe recreating conditions. The new trail is out of the flood plain and is a raised, hardened surface that sheds water quickly and can withstand high use. Over a four-week timeframe, we installed nine rock steps, sixty-nine crib stones, and 282 square feet of new tread. One of the four weeks brought all this year's women of trail crew together, what is lovingly called "Babe Crew," to celebrate the strength and abilities of those who work in largely male-dominated fields.

Northville-Placid Trail, Various Locations

ADK's professional and volunteer trail crews worked throughout the NPT in various locations throughout the summer. Efforts to maintain the 137-mile-long thru hike started off with National Trails Day, then transitioned to several 5-day-long projects. An anonymous donor provided funding for the professional trail crew to build eighty feet of native bridging in near Buck Horn Lake in the Silver Lake Wilderness in two weeks. Prior to this bridging, hikers had to risk taking a "bath" in a beaver swamp or falling 4-feet as they balanced across a 4-foot-tall beaver dam for several hundred feet. The new bridging makes that unnecessary. ADK's teen trail program spent 4 weeks working on the NPT: one week rehabilitating the 100-foot-long suspension bridge across the Hamilton Lake Stream in the Silver Lake Wilderness and three weeks removing overgrown branches and brush from 2.1 miles of the trail corridor between Mud Lake and Rock Lake in the Silver Lake Wilderness.

Poke-O-Moonshine, Taylor Pond Wild Forest Complex

Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine, the DEC and ADK have partnered over the last 8 years to make the Ranger Trail from the trail head to the fire tower sustainable and safe to hike. [This summer](#), ADK's professional trail crew focused on reconstructing a steep and eroded section of trail. A 60-step rock staircase was installed using rocks purchased from a local quarry and helicopter dropped near the summit. Over the course of seven weeks, 185 rocks were installed as part of the rock staircase and two retaining walls. ADK partnered with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) in relocating part of the hiking trail near the summit. The one thousand foot reroute will replace a steep and eroded length of trail; however, it is not yet open to the public.



Charlotte Staats

The Babe Crew working on the trail between Avalanche Lake and Lake Colden in the High Peaks Wilderness.



A series of photos of the rock staircase built on Poke-O-Moonshine this year. Left to right: the bottom of the staircase, two middle portions, and the top of the staircase.

Work Totals

It can be difficult to fully portray the quantity of work ADK’s trail crews accomplished this summer. The table below is a summary of all this summer’s projects boiled down into several different metrics. On average, professional crew members set seven rocks a day, built fourteen feet of bridging or twenty feet of new trail. Keep in mind, all this work has been accomplished primarily with hand tools and human power. All tools and materials, except for the rocks used on the Poke-O-Moonshine staircase, were carried in and/or harvested from the surrounding forest.

	Total Crew Members	Total Hours Worked	Total Crew Weeks	Rocks Set	Bridge Feet Built	Feet of New Trail Built
Pro. Crew	16	23,232	38	681	256	2922
Volunteer Crews	144	3240	10	42	252	1000

Looking Ahead

The 2023 field season is already right around the corner, and I am excited for what lies ahead! As we get closer to finishing the Mount Jo Long Trail, I will be working with ADK staff and others to develop adaptive management and monitoring protocols to be implemented on the new trail. This project will help collect information on how sustainable trails in the Adirondacks hold up to heavy foot-traffic and a changing climate. With this data, ADK will be able to make informed decisions on trail management as well as bring about science-driven understanding to trails in the Adirondack Park as a whole.



Conclusion

ADK's Trails Department has and will continue to play a significant role in building and maintain trails throughout the Adirondacks. We have proudly worked with NYS and other partners for over 40 years to construct and maintain hiking, biking, ski and horse trails throughout the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Our trail crews excel in skilled hand-powered backcountry wilderness trail work, utilizing natural building materials found nearby a trail project site. It takes experience, skill, and a fair amount of sweat and grit to build in backcountry wilderness settings. We employ and train the best folks to do exactly that. Not only does ADK work in these hard to get to areas, but we are a proving ground for people to become nationally recognized professionals. As the outdoor recreation industry continues to grow, so does the need to build and maintain trails in and outside the Adirondack Park. We are training young trail building professionals and providing much needed trail workers to organizations across the globe.

Thanks again to our dedicated volunteers, donors, sponsors, and partners. Your support ensures ADK will continue to build and maintain trails in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. I am proud of all the work we accomplished this year. The Adirondack Park is a unique national treasure with world-class wilderness and recreational opportunities. I am honored to play a part in building sustainable trails that protect these wildlands and ensure people connect with our natural world today and in the future. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions, suggestions, or opportunities for the program.

Happy trails,

Charlotte Staats

Charlotte Staats (Char)
ADK Trails Manager
charlotte@adk.org
518-523-3441 x118 (office)
(she/her/hers)



The annual Crew Photo, taken at the end of the summer!