

Adirondack Mountain Club Trails Program 2025 Field Season Work Report

October 22, 2025

The 2025 trails season was another great season for ADK's professional staff and volunteers. ADK hired 16 seasonal staff for the Trails Program this year, including the professional trail crew (Pro Crew) which consisted of two Crew Leaders and 11 Crew Members, two Volunteer Crew Leaders, and a Food Coordinator.

ADK's Johns Brook Lodge also celebrated its centennial this year, so the crews focused much of their maintenance efforts on trails in the Johns Brook Valley.

The professional and volunteer crews worked in ten locations in and around the Adirondack Park this year. The Pro Crew dedicated a total of 4680 people-hours to Adirondack trails, 4480 of which were spent on the Forest Preserve. The volunteer trail crew program hosted a total of 109 volunteers this summer. Volunteer crews worked a total of 2816 people-hours, 920 of which were worked on the Forest Preserve.

In addition, ADK boasted 218 volunteers in the Trail Steward and Adopt a Lean-to Programs this year, who volunteered 1437 hours of their time on trails and lean-tos across the Adirondack Park.

Professional and Volunteer Trail Crews

ADK Heart Lake Program Center

The Pro Crew and Volunteer Crew Leaders began the summer learning and honing their skills on Mt. Jo's Long Trail. New members learned the basics of sustainable trail design, rock and wood working, and the use of hand- and power-tools. The crew spent three days on Mt. Jo learning how to build rock staircases, rock turnpiking, and native bog bridging. By the end, they installed 18 ft of turnpiking, 6 rock steps, and one 11-ft bog bridge.

Mt. Jo also hosted two teen volunteer crews from YMCA's Frost Valley summer camp. The two week-long crews installed a total of 14 ft of rock turnpiking, 3 stepping stones, 2 rock steps, and 2 drainage structures on various parts of the Long Trail.

ADK volunteers finished up the 2025 season on the Heart Lake ski trails, patrolling approximately 5 miles of trails. Volunteers sidecut and brushed the trail corridors, installed trail markers, and removed blowdown in preparation for the upcoming ski season.

High Peaks Wilderness

Both the Pro Crew and volunteer crews spent time working in the High Peaks Wilderness. On National Trails Day, ADK staff, including the Volunteer Crew Leaders and Pro Crew, led six groups of volunteers on patrols, in and around the Johns Brook Valley. Trails patrolled included the Klondike Notch trail, the Big Slide trail, the Big Slide trail via Yard, the Hopkins trail, and a section of the Phelps trail. By the end of the day, the



National Trails Day volunteer on Big Slide Mountain

crews patrolled 10 miles of trail, removing 42 blowdown and clearing drainages along the way.

The Pro Crew spent an additional four days patrolling Indian Pass, the Calamity Brook trail, Avalanche Pass, the Whales Tail ski trail, the Van Hoesenburg trail from the Loj to the Hopkins trail junction, and to the summits of Phelps, Tabletop, First Brother, and Upper and Lower Wolfjaw. They patrolled a total of 30.6 miles and removed 247 blowdown along the trails.

The Pro Crew and volunteer crews also spent time doing recovery maintenance on heavily impacted sections of Avalanche Pass and the Orebed Brook trail. This included recovering drainages, 9 rock steps, and 224 square feet of crushing and capping in Avalanche Pass and 29 drainages on the Orebed Brook Trail.

Vanderwhacker Wild Forest

The Pro Crew spent a total of 7 weeks of the summer on Ragged Mountain, constructing a new trail that accesses a popular climbing area. The crew grubbed and benched the entire 0.4 mile trail and installed a total of 48 ft of rock turnpike, a 19 ft retaining wall, and 20 rock steps. The resulting trail has sustainable trail features, a hardened tread, and incorporates 14 drainages to shed water. At the climbing area, they installed a 12' x 12' platform at the base of the walls, with 16 box steps leading from the access trail up to the platform.

West Canada Lake Wilderness

In June, the Pro Crew spent eight days in West Canada Lake Wilderness on the Northville-Placid Trail, sidecutting a total of 9 miles of overgrown trail, and removing 25 blowdown. This project is the kind that ADK's crews specialize in—work that is so remote that maintenance is seldom done out there.



Volunteers build a rock turnpike

Pigeon Lakes Wilderness

Led by Tahawus Trails LP, the Pro Crew spent two weeks in August working on the Cascade Lake Trail. Together, the crew completed a total of 180 ft of turnpiking, with 229 rocks set. Working with Tahawus gives ADK's Pro Crew the opportunity to learn from seasoned trail builders who have made careers out of trail building and maintenance. We are immensely thankful for Tahawus's continued collaboration with ADK's Pro Crew.

Debar Mountain Wild Forest

One of our teen volunteer crews spent a week in Debar Mountain Wild Forest. The crew recovered 8 drainages on an eroded section of the Azure Mountain trail. The crew also did 1500 ft of sidecutting along an access trail to the Saint Regis River.

Giant Mountain Wilderness

One of our volunteer crews spent a weekend on Iron Mountain, helping to construct the new trail to the summit. The crew installed 25 ft of rock turnpike.

Elk Lake

Elk Lake hosted both the Pro Crew and a volunteer crew this summer. The volunteer crew worked on making the trail to Duck Hole more easily accessible to hikers with reduced mobility, making the tread wider and smoother. The crew installed 20 ft of rock turnpike, 6 ft of retaining wall, 3 rock steps, and an 11 ft bog bridge. The Pro Crew, meanwhile, worked on a 400 ft reroute on the trail up Sunrise Mountain. Throughout the week the crew grubbed and benched the reroute, installed one armored drain, 7 ft of rock turnpike, and 4 dirt drainages.

Stone Valley Cooperative Recreational Area

Two teen volunteer crews each spent a week working on the Stone Valley trails located in the towns of Colton and Parishville, just outside the blue line. They replaced a 14 ft bridge over a small stream, widened 350 ft of trail by benching the uphill side of it, and patrolled 3.5 miles of the trail system, removing 5 blowdown and sidecutting 1450 ft of trail.



Teen volunteers build a footbridge using dimensional lumber

Johns Brook Property

ADK had one volunteer crew spend four days at ADK's Johns Brook Property where they replaced a footbridge leading to Grace Camp. Volunteers used a crosscut and axes to fell a tree on-site, which was used to build the new 12 ft bridge.

Trail Steward and Adopt a Lean-to Programs

This year, ADK brought on 56 new volunteers in the Trail Steward and Adopt a Lean-to Programs for a total of 218 volunteers in both programs. In April, May, and June, eleven training days were held to teach volunteers about their respective duties. Trail Stewards learned about proper sidecutting, drainage clearing and blowdown removal, and Lean-to Adopters learned about their maintenance duties as well as how to move and repair privies.

Over the past year, Trail Stewards cleared 228 drainage structures, removed 1281 blowdown, and sidecut 17.8 miles of trail. Lean-to Adopters swept 88 lean-tos, removed trash from 79, cleared debris from the roofs of 53, dug out or rebuilt 40 fire pits, cleared deadfall at 32 lean-to sites, and replaced 26 lean-to registers. These volunteers traveled from all over New York, as well as from Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Quebec, to work on their trails and lean-tos.

Conclusion

Below is a breakdown of the total work completed by ADK's professional and volunteer crews in 2025.

	Total Crew Members	Total People-Hours Worked	Rocks Set	Bridge Feet Built	Feet of New Trail Built
Pro Crew	13	4680	322	62	2512
Volunteer Crews	111	2816	37	37	400

Below is a breakdown of time volunteered by ADK's Trail Stewards and Lean-to Adopters in 2025.

	Hours Spent Driving to/from Trailhead	Hours Spent Hiking and Working
Adopt a Lean-to	348.7	452.7
Trail Stewards	215.1	420.7

Trail construction and maintenance is a core mission of the Adirondack Mountain Club since its founding, and ADK's Trails Program continues its commitment to trail work now and into the future. ADK proudly collaborates with the DEC and other partners to build and maintain hiking, biking, skiing, and equestrian trails in and outside the Adirondack Park.

Our trail crews focus on and excel in sustainable backcountry trail work, utilizing mainly hand-powered tools and natural materials sourced on-site. ADK takes pride in recruiting people with grit and determination for work in these remote wilderness areas, as well as equipping these individuals with the expertise required for building trails of professional quality. As the outdoor recreation industry continues to expand, and as more and more people hit the trails, demand for skilled trail work grows. ADK is committed to meeting this demand and cultivating trail-building professionals who go on to work for organizations throughout the Adirondacks and beyond.



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

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the volunteers who took time out of their summers to work with us out on the trails, as well as our generous donors, sponsors, and partners who supported our work. A special thank you goes to the Adirondack 46ers, the Miller Family Charitable Trust, L.L.Bean, the North Star Sustainability Fund, Athletic Brewing Company, Raquette River Fund, Tahawus Trails LP, anonymous donors, and to DEC. Funding for trail crew state contracts is through the Environmental Protection Fund administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Thank you also to the alums of the Trails Program who volunteer their time and expertise in training our new staff. We would not have been able to do the work described above without your help and support.

The Adirondack Park stands as a unique national treasure, offering unparalleled wilderness experiences and recreational opportunities. It is an honor for us to contribute to the building and maintenance of sustainable trails that both protect these pristine landscapes and facilitate meaningful connections between people and the natural world, now and into the future. If you have any questions or comments regarding the Professional Trail Crew and the work they do, please contact Kayla White. If you have any questions or comments regarding the work of the Volunteer Trail Crew, Adopt a Lean-to Program, or Trail Steward Program, please contact Virginia Ruhland-Mauhs.

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