



Thank You, Volunteers!

Find out who to thank for helping to keep trails in our region open and accessible.

READ MORE ON PAGE 6 ▶



Hike the High Line

A hike in New York City may be a good choice during spring mud season.

READ MORE ON PAGE 12 ▶

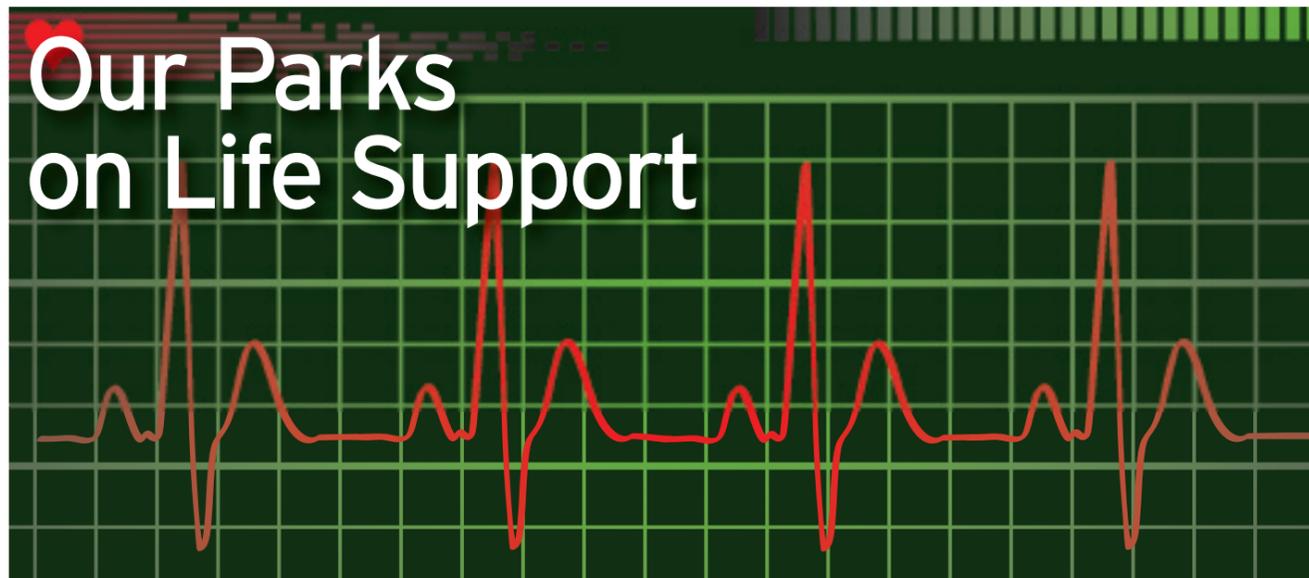


TRAILWALKER

March/April 2011

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference – Connecting People with Nature since 1920

www.nynjtc.org



Our Parks on Life Support

It may appear at first glance that the park systems in both New York and New Jersey have been unaffected by the economic downturn. After all, the gates have remained open and public access to the trails, pools, and recreational areas have been relatively uninterrupted in both states.

Over the years, the public use of parks has steadily increased. New York's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) reported in January that visits to state parks and historic sites in 2010 was 57 million, up one million from the previous year's total. In New Jersey, park officials report steady increases in park user numbers, from 10.5 million visitors in 1990 to 15.7 million in 2000 to 18.8 million in 2010.

Behind the open gates however are shrinking park staffs that have been struggling for years to keep facilities open to the public on seriously downsized budgets. In both states, administrations facing severe budget deficits have sought to close parks in an attempt to save money. Though these plans wilted in the face of strong public outcry, parks budgets have been regularly targeted for disproportionate budget cuts.

Last year in New York, OPRHP, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) all received double-digit cuts in contrast to cuts of less than 5% to budgets of other agencies.

Are crossed fingers and duct tape enough to keep our state parks alive?

The Trail Conference is acutely aware of the budgetary challenges, but states' fiscal problems were not caused by their open space and park budgets and will not be solved by cutting them further. Nevertheless, further cuts have been proposed to the environmental agencies in New York by Governor Cuomo and are under discussion in New Jersey.

New York: Bad News Is Good News

On February 1, New York's governor set forth his proposals for fiscal year 2011-12.

They included cuts to State Parks (8.3% according to his executive summary) and DEC (5%). The "good" news is that these proposed cuts are in line with, not more than, cuts proposed to other agencies.

Additional "good" news is that he proposes to appropriate \$134 million to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), the same as the prior year. (This includes \$17 million for open space acquisition and funding for other parks and stewardship programs.) And the governor has promised no "sweeps" from the EPF, the practice of diverting money from environmental projects into other state projects.

Given the fiscal situation in the state, many environmentalists consider the governor's proposals a good sign that he is committed to environmental concerns, although at a much reduced level. (The EPF was scheduled to be funded at \$300 million in the 2011-12 budget year.) As this budget is negotiated with the legislature, those who support parks and open space need to stay vigilant and be ready to jump to their defense.

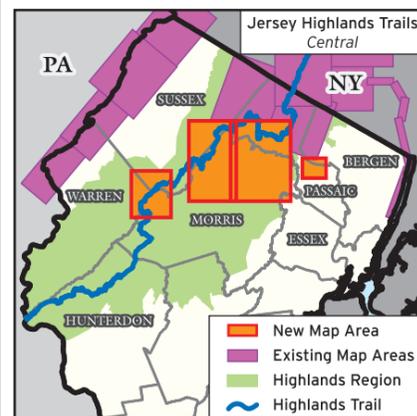
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New Map Set Will Lead the Way To Trails in Jersey Highlands!

For the first time in 11 years, the Trail Conference is adding a new region to its popular line of durable Tyvek map sets.* This spring, be on the lookout for Jersey Highlands Trails—Central.

This two-map set will show marked hiking trails throughout the central part of the New Jersey Highlands and adjacent areas, including parks such as Fanny State Park, Pyramid Mountain, High Mountain Park Preserve, Allamuchy Mountain State Park, and Mahlon Dickerson Reservation. A large portion of the Highlands Trail is also shown. The map complements the current North Jersey Trails map set, which focuses on an area of the Jersey Highlands further north.

The map set is being produced in partnership with the Land Conservancy of New Jersey.



Name That Map Contest Winners To Get Free Copies

Last fall, the Publications committee expanded participation in the project by sponsoring an online "Name That Map!" contest. The committee received 180 entries. Many thanks to everyone who provided their input!

Thanks also to the Land Conservancy of New Jersey for helping to spread the word and providing great feedback as well. Three lucky contest winners will be notified soon, including our grand prize winner, who will receive a free copy of our 10 current map sets (plus this new map set) and a free one-year Trail Conference membership. The maps are in the final stages of production and will be available soon.

For more information about this new map set and to sign up to receive an email when the map is available for purchase, visit www.nynjtc.org/panel/jersey-highlands-trails-central-map.

*Sterling Forest Trails map, first published in 2000, was the last "new" regional map added to our catalog.

Eddie Walsh Gets State Trail Worker Award from American Trails

Eddie Walsh, a life-long member and volunteer of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, was recognized as State Trail Worker in New York for 2010 by American Trails, a national trails advocacy organization. The award was made at the group's 20th annual symposium held in November in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Eddie has been assisting with trail development and maintenance since an early age, learning in the company of his father Ed, a Trail Conference Life Member (as is Eddie) with decades of trail service to his credit, particularly on the Long Path.

Over the years Eddie's passion for trails

has led him to become a leader in both training volunteers in the various skills for trail development and coordinating the on-the-ground work. While Eddie continues to volunteer his expertise and muscle on trail projects, he has also turned his passion into a career and business, building trails professionally since 1993.

Before founding a trail-building company, Tahawus Trails LLC, Eddie worked for many Northeast trail organizations, including the Trail Conference, the Adirondack Mountain Club, Appalachian Mountain Club, Appalachian Trail Conservancy

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American Trails' State Trail Worker Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated outstanding contributions and provided consistent support for trail planning, development, or maintenance. It is intended to recognize the commitment and efforts of a private or public sector individual working for enhanced trail recreation in their local area/state.



Eddie Walsh, center, a mentor to many, was named New York Trail Worker of the Year



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Mission Statement

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a federation of member clubs and individuals dedicated to providing recreational hiking opportunities in the region, and representing the interests and concerns of the hiking community. The Conference is a volunteer-directed public service organization committed to:

- Developing, building, and maintaining hiking trails.
- Protecting hiking trail lands through support and advocacy.
- Educating the public in the responsible use of trails and the natural environment.

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The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. It is a federation of 103 hiking and outdoor groups, and 10,000 individuals.

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Nominations - We Want Your Voice To Be Heard

The Trail Conference Nominating Committee is seeking Delegates-at-Large and nominations for membership on the Board of Directors. The qualification for Delegate-at-Large is current membership in the Trail Conference. The qualifications for Board of Directors are current membership in the Trail Conference and service participation in trails maintenance or on a Trail Conference committee. Self-nominations for Delegate-at-Large and Board of Directors are appropriate and welcome. Please email your nomination to nominations@nynjtc.org. Nominating Committee members are: Allyn Dodd (chair), Jim Gregoire, John Gunzler, Eddie Saiff, and Mary Smart.

Thruway Sporting Goods Now Offers Discounts to Our Members!

The Trail Conference is pleased to announce a new retail partner.

Thruway Sporting Goods in Walden, NY, now offers our members a 10% discount (you must show your member card) off of any item in the store, **excluding sale items**.

Thruway Sporting Goods is a full line outdoor sporting goods retailer specializing in hunting, fishing, camping, and work clothes and footwear. It also sells athletic clothing and footwear and team sports equipment.

Special Note to Trail Maintainers:

Thruway Sporting Goods is offering a tool kit package at a special discount—while supplies last. Show your member card to get the special price. Thruway will also make a donation to the Trail Conference for each package sold. See details in their ad on page 9.

Visit Thruway Sporting Goods online at www.thruwaysports.com or in person at 78 Oak St. Walden, NY.



OUR PARKS ON LIFE SUPPORT *continued from page 1*

New Jersey: Where's the Duct Tape?

In New Jersey, park personnel overseeing administration, maintenance, and operations at parks is 35% below levels targeted for good stewardship, down to an average of just one superintendent (or less), one customer service assistant, and two to three maintenance workers per park. Some of these parks are over 50,000 acres with swimming areas that fill to capacity in the early morning hours. This ongoing lack of funding from the state has also led to the cumulative degradation of the maintenance equipment used to keep parks open.

For example, since 2006 no new maintenance vehicles or equipment purchases have been made in the New Jersey parks system, forcing maintenance staff to push older vehicles and tools well beyond their safe operating life. This has led to a host of horror stories that involve PVC piping being used to replace broken shifters, old road signs being repurposed to patch rusted holes in the floors of trucks, and staff going to junk yards to buy replacement parts that have been out of production for years. Just how long these parks can operate at this level before public access is reduced is uncertain. During the January

2011 blizzard for example, many parks were closed for several days because all their plows were broken.

With staff barely able to keep parks open as is, additional cuts could well be the death blow that results in park closings.

Message to Officials:

Public Money + Volunteer Help = Value Officials in both New York and New Jersey need to realize that parks are some of the best examples of well-managed, cost-efficient, public-private partnerships. Nonprofit groups, including the Trail Conference, already subsidize operating and capital costs, saving the taxpayers millions. But volunteers can't do it alone. We need the gates open and support from staff to help keep parks accessible to the public.

Now is the time advocates for our parks should speak up. Visit our website (click on Get Involved Tab-Advocate for Trails) to find the latest info and links to elected state officials. If you are interested in leading the Trail Conference efforts to support New Jersey's state parks system, contact our New Jersey Program Coordinator Chris Ingui at cingui@nynjtc.org. In New York, contact West Hudson Program Coordinator Larry Wheelock at wheelock@nynjtc.org.



EDDIE WALSH

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(ATC), Maine ATC, and others.

For the Trail Conference, Eddie supervised the Twin Forts Steps Project (Fort Montgomery State Historic Site), Popolopen Creek Bridge (Harriman State Park), and Southfields Furnace bridge (on land owned by Scenic Hudson), the Wappinger Greenway Trails Project (NY), Closter Nature Center Trails project (NJ), the Echo Lake Handicap Accessible Trail Project (NJ), and the Bear Mountain Trails Project. He has also taken on many private trail contracts.

Eddie's dedication to trail development and rapport with trail volunteers is captured by Chris Ingui, once a volunteer at Bear Mountain who trained with Eddie and who is now a trails professional himself; formerly project manager at Bear Mountain, Chris is now New Jersey program coordinator for the Trail Conference. "I recall meeting Eddie on my first day almost three years ago and making comment to someone at how humble he was,"

Chris says. "Now that I have gotten to know him and understand just how talented he is, I am truly astonished at how humble he is. Eddie is always open to others' concepts and never dismisses another idea regardless of who it comes from. He is

"I have memories of Eddie coming down the mountain with what seemed to me to be impossible amounts of tools strapped all over his body..."

deeply committed to working with volunteers and welcoming people of all levels to the work that he loves so much. For Eddie, trail work is not just a job but something he truly enjoys, and that rubs off on everyone around him."

"I have memories of Eddie coming down the mountain with what seemed to me to be impossible amounts of tools strapped all

New Board Member Appointed to Fill Vacancy

George O'Lear was appointed to the Trail Conference Board of Directors at the January meeting. He fills the position recently vacated by Seth McKee. George, who holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Pittsburgh together with a master's in urban planning from New York University, brings more than 30 years of planning experience for Rockland County. He is a hike leader for both the New York-North Jersey Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Westchester Trails Association. He recently stepped down as president of the latter organization. George lives in Tarrytown, NY, with his wife, Toni.

Dept. of Clarifications

In the January/February *Trail Walker* story, "OSI Purchase Closes Long Path Gap on Shawangunk Ridge," Andy Garrison was quoted as saying: "Now we have a permanently protected trail corridor ... stretching from Wurtsboro to Jenny Lane in Minnewaska State Park Preserve." Clarification: while the OSI purchase does close a gap in a protected corridor on the ridge, the Long Path/Shawangunk Ridge Trail does not stay on those protected lands; its route also crosses privately owned land, with the permission of the land owners.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's 38th Biennial Conference Virginia Journeys 2011

July 1 - 8, 2011

Emory & Henry College
Emory, Virginia

Hosted by the seven A.T. maintaining clubs of Central and Southwest Virginia, the Biennial will celebrate the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and the Blue Ridge Mountain Trails of Virginia. Planned around ATC's membership meeting, Virginia Journeys 2011 is also an opportunity for A.T. enthusiasts to take a Trail-related workshop, hike on the A.T. (and other trails) in Virginia and Tennessee, and explore Damascus, Virginia, the "friendliest town on the trail."

Register, volunteer, and find out more about the Biennial. Find links at www.appalachiantrail.org.

over his body; of him not only being the first one at the project but the last to leave; of month-long stretches where he simply did not take a day off. In fact, even on his days off, he would still be responding to my emails at 2am and returning my phone calls regularly, so it's quite possible that Eddie has not taken a day off from this project since he started over four years ago. And somehow he seems to never slow down or lose his spirit, a spirit that has really drawn every member of the Bear Mountain crew together. In short, I look up to Eddie immensely and am really proud to say that I work with him."

The Trail Conference joins American Trails in thanking Eddie Walsh for his outstanding contributions and congratulates him on this recognition on the national stage.



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