

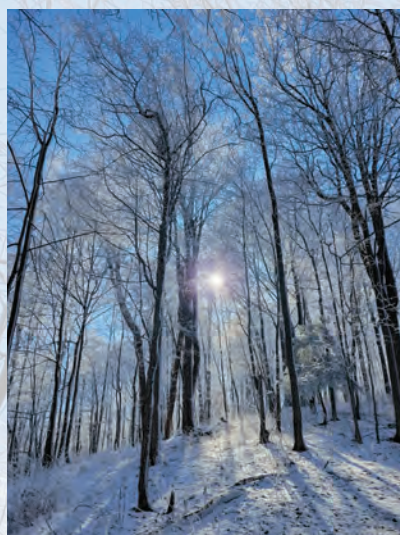
Finger Lakes Trail NEWS

Winter 2023



Inside...

- * *FLTC and NCTA awards*
- * *Many new End-to-Enders share their stories*
- * *Deb Nero reflects on her time as Executive Director*
- * *Newly completed trail projects*



Jill Wilson

A winter scene on Map 19.

Finger Lakes Trail News

Volume 62 Issue Number 4

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Finger Lakes Trail News is the official publication of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Inc., a private not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, 6111 Visitor Center Road, Mt. Morris, NY 14510. The *Finger Lakes Trail News* is published four times a year for promotional and entertainment purposes, as well as a benefit for its members. Comments and original contributions are welcome and may be submitted to the editor.

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Finger Lakes Trail Service Center

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About the Cover:

Icy branches abound on Map 19.
Photo by Jill Wilson.

Winter 2023

Mission Statement

The mission of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference is to build, protect, enhance, and promote a continuous footpath across New York State for the enjoyment and health of residents and visitors. Forever!



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President's Message

Pat Monahan

This fall was a spectacular time of the year for any outdoor activity. I enjoyed a few leisurely hikes on my section of the trail (Crystal Hills Trail in Steuben County, Meads Creek State Forest) with my lopping shears in hand to get it ready for the winter. The bridge repair done over the summer looks good and there were no trees down across the trail. It gave me an opportunity to do some birding in the forest. My last trip out found me dressed in orange and talking with some bow hunters who did not have any luck yet this year. No one was at the new bivouac area camping, but it is a great location to spend the night for some early morning fishing. I have known about the many uses for this foot trail, in theory, but this fall, for some reason, it truly made sense to me that there are many users who enjoy the Finger Lakes Trail.

At the annual meeting in Watkins Glen this September, I thanked outgoing Board members for their years of service. This included Donna Flood, Sharon Ray, and Willa Powell. Their service over the years has helped keep the FLTC moving forward. The membership approved Willa Powell, Colin Parrish, and Josh Balisteri as new Board members. Willa is serving her second term on the Board. We welcome Colin and John as new members. I also commented on a few Board issues that I want to highlight here. First, we still need volunteers to serve on the Board in various high-level positions. We are looking for an Executive Vice President, Vice President of Finance, Human Resource Chairperson, and others to serve on our mapping, IT, and major donor Committees. We are monitoring our finances as good stewards of your contributions to operate the Conference. We are also taking a deep look into how the FLTC is organized. Our Board retreat is scheduled for early December. We will continue our discussion on these and other topics at the retreat. I will report on that in my next column.

As many of you know, Deb Nero, our interim Executive Director (ED) will be stepping down at the beginning of 2024. Nearly three years ago, I asked Deb if she would be willing to fill in for "a little bit" as part-time interim ED. She agreed to do that and has done more than fill in. I cannot do her justice by listing the many projects and committees she has served on. Her passion and leadership have helped us position the organization for the next steps in its organizational growth. Whether you know her from either a committee or the Board, from the county hike series, or from her quest to work on her end-to-end accomplishments on the trail, she has made an unforgettable mark on the FLT. On behalf of the Board and the members, thank you for your years of service.

As winter sets in, some of you will be reading this next to the fireplace or sitting poolside in the warmer climates. I enjoy getting my snowshoes out and taking a walk through the snow. Regardless of where you are, get out there and,

"Go take a hike!!" 🍁



Join the FLT Googlegroup E-Mail List

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference's e-mail list is a discussion group hosted by Googlegroups.com. Its purpose is to allow the subscribers (approximately 850 people) to communicate information to each other pertaining to FLT hikes and other FLT activities, and to also allow subscribers to post general hiking-camping-backpacking and/or FLT-related questions that can be answered by any of the other participants.

The co-moderators who oversee the use of this electronic mailing list and offer help with questions are: Larry Blumberg (lblumberg@stny.rr.com) and Scott Geiger, (scott.geiger@gmail.com).

To join the group, send a note to lblumberg@stny.rr.com requesting that you be added to the FLT HIKING Googlegroup. If you have any problems or questions, contact one of the co-moderators.



Schuyler County Hike Series Recap

Eva Capobianco and Deb Nero

This is an excerpt of an article written this summer by Eva Capobianco for the North Country Trail Association's *North Star* magazine describing the Schuyler County Hike series group hikes.

Each summer, the Finger Lakes Trail Conference organizes a County Hike Series. There are two options – the group hikes or the independent hikes. The group hikes happen on the third Saturday of each month, starting in April or May and going through September. This year, we crossed Schuyler County, and the length of each hike has varied quite a bit. The shortest hike was just over six miles while the longest was 11.2 miles. It is a logistical challenge for the coordinator, (this year it was Acting Executive Director Deb Nero), to lay out the hike plots. The goal is to divide the total number of hiking miles to cross the county into five or six roughly even hikes. With only 45 miles to cover, Schuyler County is fairly short, so we only did it for five months. Most years, we do it in six. The first challenge is that the meeting place must have ample parking space for about 50-70 cars. It also must be accessible by three or four school buses. The meeting location will be the END of that day's hike. The beginning of the hike must ALSO be accessible for the school buses.



Deb Nero

The group hikers meet at this location early that Saturday morning and everyone is excited for a day in the woods. When hikers register for the series, they choose the speed at which they prefer to hike. Most months we have a few trail runners, then groups ranging from fast, medium fast, medium, etc., with the last group designated as “nature appreciators”. (Full disclosure, though I am not hiking the series this year, when I DO hike, I am always proud to be included with the nature appreciators!) Groups are kept at twelve people or less to comply with Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) guidelines, so there are always several groups of medium-paced hikers. After a pep talk and instructions from Deb, the hikers board the buses to be transported to the trailhead where the hike begins. There, the groups congregate, each with their own volunteer leader and sweep. Deb sends them

off with a bit of space and time between each group.

The third challenge to plotting the hikes is finding a good spot for the “SAG Wagon” location. SAG is a bicycling acronym for “supplies and gear,” but our SAGs are all about refreshment and replenishment. In Schuyler County, this is where I entered the picture in my volunteer role as SAG coordinator. Along with four or five other volunteers, we set up tables and a few camp chairs and put out snacks, extra water, electrolyte mix, and some fresh fruit. Watermelon is always a big hit, especially on hot days! The SAG must be located near a road crossing as close to the midpoint of the hike as is feasible. We bring some canopies in case of rain. (These hikes do go on rain or shine because with 100 or more hikers signed up, and buses that can't be re-scheduled, it's too complicated to make changes at the last minute.)



Deb Nero

The trail runners are the first to arrive at the SAG. They re-fill their water bottles and grab some food, chat a bit, and usually all smiles and amazingly un-sweaty, continue on their way. Then there is a break before the next group. As the morning continues, groups arrive and stay a bit longer, sitting for a rest, getting food and water, chatting about the hike so far, and asking about what the rest of the hike holds in store: Hills? How steep? How many miles to go? In the middle, we may have three or four groups congregating together. Each group leader checks in with one of the volunteers, confirming how many hikers are in the group. Records are kept to be sure no one gets lost. A group photo is taken before they continue. If anyone is too tired to go on, they can “sag out” and one of the volunteers will drive them back to their car. There's no shame or blame. Safety is the highest priority.

As hikers arrive at the SAG, everyone is SOOO thankful to find us there. They are often hot and sweaty, ready for a break, some snacks, and conversation. The food and buses are paid for with the hikers' registration fees. But many also leave additional donations in our “Where's Waldo” bucket. I (Eva) thought for a while that it was named for Wally Wood, one of the founders of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT). But I've been told this is not true – it is named for the children's book character. The bucket is strategically located along the trail shortly before the SAG. Hikers drop in a few coins or bills to help support the FLT Conference. As SAG

coordinator, one of my last jobs is to count those donations. Often, the paper bills are damp with sweat or sometimes wet with rain, but it warms my heart month after month to see how generous people are!

Now, some of the numbers and special challenges of the Schuyler County Hike series by Deb Nero.

This year there were 127 registered group hikers and 45 independent hikers. There were between 70 and 80 hikers at each of the five group hikes in May through September. As of this writing, 72 group hikers and 22 independent hikers have completed the County Hike series and received their certificate and patch. Many of the County Hike completers attended the Awards Ceremony at the FLTC Fall Weekend Festival [see Fall Weekend Festival re-cap elsewhere in this issue] where they received a rousing recognition for their accomplishments and picked up their certificate and patch. CONGRATULATIONS to everyone who completed all 5 hikes!!! Hikers have until December 31, 2023, to complete the hikes.

A total of 7 Schuyler County Hike series hikers finished their End-to-End of the main trail with these 5 hikes! The new E2E hikers are:

Independent hikers:	Group hikers:
Amanda Pritchard	Donna Ruszaj
Kimberly Lewis	Marty Ruszaj
Colin Prichard	Janice Miller
	Lisa Weismiller

Congratulations to all!!

This year, for the first time, we had sponsors for the County Hike series. These included Great Escape Ice Cream, Toast Winery, Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards, and Famous Brands Outlet. Thanks so much to our sponsors for helping to make the Schuyler County Hike series a success.

Four of the five group hikes coincided with the FLTC Founder Hikes. These hikes commemorate four of the people who were instrumental in founding the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and building the Finger Lakes Trail system. The May hike celebrated Wally Wood, the June hike recognized Erv Markert, in July we commemorated Howard Beye, and in August we honored Ed Sidote.

The 2023 Schuyler County Hike series had some very interesting organizational challenges! It all began in late April, a couple of weeks before the first hike in May, when we discovered that the hoped-for parking near the FLT trailhead in Sugar Hill State Forest was not available. Instead, we had to use a designated parking area 2 miles from the trailhead. This impacted 2 of the 5 hikes. Some quick thinking led to renting a mini-van and shuttling hikers from the trailhead to their cars at the end of their hike. The sponsor of the June hike, Great Escape Ice Cream in Watkins Glen, gave each hiker a coupon for a free small ice cream cone. The ice cream store was only ½ block off the trail on that hike, and the coupons were a huge hit! For the July hike, some very last-minute trail work (the day before the hike) led to the very unexpected discovery that the last mile of the hike was right through the middle of the nationally recognized 24-Hour

Northeast Motocross Challenge! The 11.2-mile motocross course crossed the FLT 4 times in the last mile of the hike. Thanks to the volunteers who spent the afternoon waiting at these crossings to ensure that there were no hiker-motorcycle accidents and that all hikers made it safely through the crossing. It seems unlikely that the County Hikes will ever again coincide in space and time with a national motocross event.

A TREMENDOUS THANKS to everyone who helped with the Schuyler County Hike series! These include those who helped with the planning, and the volunteers who found the sponsors for



Deb Nero

Motocross racer crossing the FLT during one of our hikes.

the series. Then there is the group of volunteers, mostly not hikers, who spent 2 days before each hike doing trail maintenance for that month's stretch of trail, making sure it was in great shape for the hikers. There are the volunteers who arrive early each month to help everyone park as efficiently as possible, sign in the hikers and answer questions – many of these are hikers themselves. Another essential group are the hikers who offer to lead and sweep for all the groups during the hikes. A critical piece of the County Hike series puzzle is Eva Capobianco, the SAG wagon coordinator, and her volunteers who helped set up the tables, chairs, food, and drinks, check in with the hikers, take group photos and take it all down and pack it up each month. The County Hikes wouldn't be possible without all these volunteers!

Please join us next year for the Steuben County Hike series. Registration will open on the FLT website in February. If you'd like to join us, or if you're interested in helping with any part of the County Hike series, please email us at events@fingerlakestrail.org.

Happy hiking! 🍁

Eva Capobianco, SAG wagon coordinator, Finger Lakes Trail end-to-ender #530

Deb Nero, County Hike Coordinator, FLT end-to-ender #346, 386, 443, 498, 537



Deb Nero

The 2023 Schuyler County finisher patch.



Executive Director Report

Deb Nero

This is my last Executive Director (ED) report for *FLT News*. I will be stepping down as Interim ED at the end of 2023 – a decision I shared with the Board of Managers in December 2022.

I have enjoyed my time as part-time Interim ED. When I said yes to Pat Monahan's invitation in May 2021 to be the Interim ED for "6 months, a year max" I wanted to learn more about the workings of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. I can confidently say that I have! I have developed a deep appreciation for the tremendous strengths and complexity of the organization. It's astounding how much the FLTC accomplishes with the thousands of hours of time and effort from our staff and hundreds of volunteers – everyone from Board President Pat Monahan and the members of the Board of Managers, our officers – Secretary Lori Chiarilli, Vice President for Trail Preservation Dave Newman, Vice President for Trail Maintenance John Schmitt, Vice President of Finance Lisa Barrett, Vice President of Marketing and Membership Tim Holahan, Coordinator of Crews and Construction Mike TenKate, Mapping Coordinator Jo Taylor, Treasurer Willa Powell, and the indispensable office staff. The list of critical volunteers includes committee chairs, all the Regional Trail Coordinators, trail maintainers, and everyone who pitches in and helps with trail work, FLTC programs and events, and everything else.

During my time as ED, I have worked on making the organization stronger, helping to define areas to improve then following up with the needed changes, and encouraging people to come up with new ideas and plans for the future.

This summer I helped facilitate conversations with several landowners who host sections of the trail about trail preservation issues and the possibility of trail easements to protect the route of the Finger Lakes Trail system. Some of these conversations began at the 2023 Trails Day events in McDonough and Ellicottville where we celebrated our landowners and trail maintainers. In 2024, please join us for Trails Days on May 11 in Bainbridge, NY, and June 8 in Hammondsport, NY.

For the past 3 years, the FLTC has sponsored an American Hiking Society (AHS) Volunteer Vacation. The AHS volunteers have joined the FLTC to work on Alley Cat projects in Letchworth State Park, and the third Letchworth Alley Cat this summer completed the major work we had planned for the park. On October 5 and 6, I hiked the more than 20 miles of Finger Lakes Trail in Allegany State Park with VP of Trail Maintenance John Schmitt and Coordinator of Crews and Construction Mike TenKate, and on the second day, we were joined by Regional Trail Coordinator Maria Cooper and Trail Specialist Erin Potter. The goal was to assess the condition of the trail and structures, including lean-tos, privies, bridges, and puncheons, and to identify needed improvements and maintenance in the park. It turns out there is more than enough for at least 2 years of Alley Cats, and the park administration is

very happy with the proposed work and has offered to house the Alley Cat participants in the park. The FLTC has submitted a proposal to AHS. FLTC volunteers will be invited to help with the Alley Cat in the spring - please join us!

For the last several months I have been working with the *ad hoc* reorganization group to clarify and streamline the governance and operations of the FLTC. While there are still many details to work out, the Board is beginning to institute some of the suggested improvements. This work helped us to understand that maintaining – and improving – ~1,000 miles of the Main Trail and Branch Trails and working with the hiking community that uses it is a significant undertaking, and this is best coordinated by a full-time ED with a strong background in directing nonprofit organizations. The *ad hoc* group wrote a job description for a full-time ED and a search committee is currently interviewing candidates for this position. Board member Chris Proulx and I also wrote a grant proposal for Parks and Trails New York requesting 2 years of funding for a competitive salary for this full-time position. Our grant proposal has successfully made it through the first-round screening, and we await a final decision on funding in early January.

In September I attended the North Country Trail Association's annual Celebration in Chestertown, NY. This was a great weekend of hiking and socializing with people from all along the 4,800-mile-long North Country trail, stretching from North Dakota to Vermont! The FLTC hosts the NCT for more than 400 miles from the Pennsylvania state border to the northern end of the Onondaga Branch Trail. I am honored to be the recipient of an NCTA 2024 Leadership Award.

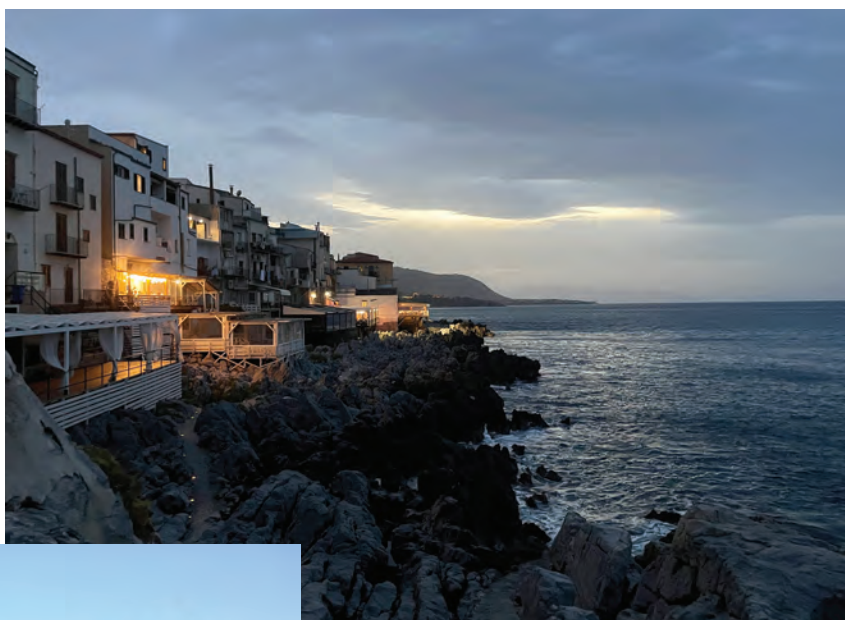
Work continues on the proposed 2024 budget to support our current staff and continue our work on the trail and our programs. This will be finalized at the Board Retreat in early December.

In 2023 I was also the coordinator of the 2023 Schuyler County Hike series and am happy to announce that those hikes were a huge success! The five organized hikes this summer overcame some unexpected challenges but the ~80 hikers each month hiked on regardless! [See article on County Hike series elsewhere in this issue] As of the end of October, 72 of the 127 registered group hikers and 22 of the 45 registered independent hikers had completed the Schuyler County Hike series and have received their certificates and patches. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL COUNTY HIKERS!! Please join us in 2024 for the Steuben County Hike series, which will be starting on the third Saturday in April!



Colin Parrish

My FLTC volunteer time this summer was also spent organizing the Fall Weekend Festival in Watkins Glen. The festival was held September 15-17 in the lovely Seneca Lake Events Center. [See article elsewhere in this edition of the News.] The most enjoyable part of the entire weekend was the Awards Ceremony on Saturday night. Pat Monahan and I emceed this event, and the group celebrated the Schuyler County Hike series hikers, everyone who had completed an End-to-End of either the Branch Trails or the Main Trail in the last year, and those who received FLTC awards [See article on awards elsewhere in this issue.] It's amazing to spend time with so many people who are passionate about the Finger Lakes Trail and the FLTC! Thanks to everyone who attended!!



Colin Parrish



Colin Parrish

◀ *Erice, Sicily*

▲ *Cefalu, Sicily*

In the middle of October, I took an entire email-free week and visited western Sicily with my husband. We had an amazing time visiting ancient Greek and Roman sites and walking through small villages along the Mediterranean.



Colin Parrish

◀ *Temple of Segasta, Sicily*

▲ *Deb in Erice, Sicily*



Colin Parrish

Next year I look forward to helping with the Trails Days and the Fall Weekend Festival. I will be the coordinator for the Steuben County Hike series, and I will take on the new role of helping to mentor and support the new volunteers who offer to help the FLTC.

I look forward to watching the FLTC become a stronger and more diverse organization, and as always – please “Take a Hike,” and I look forward to seeing everyone on the trail and at the 2024 events! 🍁

Contact: Deb Nero
fltcexecd@fingerlakestrail.org



Wanted: New Regional Trail Coordinator (RTC)

We have begun searching for a new RTC for the Genesee West Region. This region includes Maps M4 (Intersection of the Conservation Trail east of Ellicottville) through Map M6 (West of the Genesee River). This is a voluntary position.

The duties of this RTC (with the help of the VP of Trail Maintenance and others) include:

- Primary duty: Identifying and training maintainers/sponsors for all sections within the region.
- “Inspect” for trail quality. Advise and work with maintainers/sponsors on problems or if there are complaints.
- Advocate for maintainer/sponsor proposed larger projects as appropriate.
- Promote healthy landowner relations.
- Serve as the frontline contact with the regional DEC and other public agencies.
- Work with the Mapping Committee for map questions, adjustments, and revisions.
- Submit Trail Notices for problems and changes.

Training will be provided to the new RTC by the VP of Trail Maintenance and others.

Are you interested in applying for this opportunity, or just want to learn more? Please contact John Schmitt, VP of Trail Maintenance, at John.Schmitt@fingerlakestrail.org.

Wanted: Landowner Relations Volunteer

Are you good at talking with people? Landowner relations may be a way for you to help the Finger Lakes Trail without doing physical trail work. Many of the club-supported sections of the trail have landowner relations teams. We would like to extend this concept to regions with Regional Trail Coordinators (RTCs) that do not have strong club involvement. In particular, we are looking for an individual or individuals to help the RTC in the Genesee West Region (M4 through M6) with landowner relations. Volunteers are also welcome for other regions.

Training will be provided to the new Landowner Relations Volunteer by the VP of Trail Maintenance and especially others who have had considerable experience.

Are you interested in applying for this opportunity, or just want to learn more? Please contact John Schmitt, VP of Trail Maintenance, at John.Schmitt@fingerlakestrail.org.

Volunteers Wanted!

John Schmitt

Wanted: Trail Section Sponsors wanted for Map M4

Would you like to feel more ownership over a part of the FLT/NCT? Trail section sponsors (maintainers) are being sought for sections M04-2 & M04-6. Map section M04-02 is from the junction with the Conservation Trail east of Ellicottville to AP2 by Boyce Hill State Forest. This section includes the Cobb property loop trail. Map section M04-6 is from Upper Bear Creek Road to AP4 Kingsbury Hill Rd near Franklinville.

Section sponsors are generally requested to visit their sections three times per year: spring cleanup and assessment; early summer vegetation trimming and other necessary minor work; and fall assessment and cleanup.

Typical tasks include:

- Branch and debris removal from the trail.
- Brushing (cutting) back leafy vegetation.
- Cutting grass and weeds in the trail.
- Picking up litter.
- Refreshing blazing.
- Cleaning water drainage (request assistance if significant work).
- Requesting the Regional Trail Coordinator (RTC) to obtain Sawyer assistance when needed.
- Assessing other trail issues/opportunities and reporting to the RTC as necessary.
- Keeping track of volunteer hours to be reported during the annual volunteer census.

Training will be provided in tools and techniques. Tools can be borrowed from the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC). Additional on-trail assistance/training will occur until you are comfortable with the tasks. Roving crew and others are available upon request to help with more significant work.

In addition to fresh air and knowing that you are helping the FLTC, an added benefit is that trail sponsors are offered free membership in the FLTC.

Are you interested in applying for this opportunity, or just want to learn more about this area or other areas of the FLT? Please contact John Schmitt, VP of Trail Maintenance, at John.Schmitt@fingerlakestrail.org. 🍁



Send **address changes** to:

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6111 Visitor Center Rd.
Mt. Morris, NY 14510
FLTinfo@FingerLakesTrail.org

Look How Far We've Come!

Willa Powell

The NY/NJ Trail Conference archivist sent an FLT News "First Edition" to us earlier this year as an alternative to simply culling it from her inventory. Notice "The Idea of a Trail Across New York State" presenter, according to the Organization Meeting agenda, was Wallace (Wally) Wood, "Chairman, Finger Lakes Trail Committee, GVHC."

The tri-fold agenda appears to have been made on an ordinary typewriter using carbon paper, and the newsletter was (perhaps?) produced using an offset printer. By the end of the meeting, it would seem that Wally Wood had been elevated from Finger Lakes Trail Committee Chairman to Finger Lakes Trail Conference "Provisional Chairman."

As you can tell, I am "geeked out" about every aspect of our history, whether we are talking about the people, the places, related organizations, or modes and methods. But I'm still working full-time for you all. If you, dear reader, find this as fascinating as I do, won't you consider volunteering to be our Archivist? The position is open! 🍁



AGENDA

Welcome from Daan Zwick, Pres.,
Genesee Valley Hiking Club,
and from Stuart Smith,
Director of Camping, Oteti-
ana Boy Scout Council.

The Idea of a Trail Across New
York State -- Wallace Wood,
Chairman, Finger Lakes Trail

FINGER LAKES TRAIL CONFERENCE

News Letter No. 1 December 12, 1961

THE FINGER LAKES TRAIL CONFERENCE was initially organized at a meeting on November 18, 1961, at Boy Scout Headquarters, 474 East Avenue, Rochester, New York. At this meeting, a provisional Conference organization was formed with the Finger Lakes Trail Committee of the Genesee Valley Hiking Club as the nucleus. This nucleus, along with appointed representatives of other interested organizations and individuals, will make up the planning committee.

Thank You

Landmax Data Systems, Inc.
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585/533-9210
www.landmaxdata.com



Donor of land boundary research and property information
for the Finger Lakes Trail and the North Country National
Scenic Trail

FLT News Columnist Wanted:

Are you a Naturalist? Do you like to write? After contributing 40(!) articles to FLT News over the past 10 years, D. Randy Weidner is looking to turn over his column "A Naturalist's View" to someone else. If you are interested in this opportunity on either a quarterly or ad hoc basis, please reach out to FLT News Editor Nicole Pane at fltnews@fingerlakestrail.org. Please note that this is a volunteer opportunity.



A Naturalist's View

Story and Photos by D. Randy Weidner

Winter will be coming to our Finger Lakes Trail. In this time of climate change, we can never be too sure exactly what that means for weather. Lately, it has been like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates – "you just never know what you're going to get." Recent winters have been relatively mild, with little snow on much of the Trail. This winter, with a strong El Nino in effect, the predictions from NOAA are for another somewhat warmer and drier winter in the Finger Lakes. Even so, we probably will have snow sometime.

Saying we will have snow conjures a vision of frozen white precipitation, often beautifully decorating the forests and fields, while carpeting the ground. But anyone with a few winters' experience realizes that snowfalls are quite variable, both in intensity and quality. For snow to fall, the air temperature in the atmosphere where the snow forms needs to be below freezing. The colder the temperature, the less moisture content in the snow. The heaviest snowfalls tend to occur when the air temperature near the ground is 15 degrees F or warmer. For snow to accumulate on the ground, temperatures there need to be lower than 41 degrees F.

The moisture content of any given snowfall, when measured in inches, varies significantly depending on the air temperature, snow crystal structure, wind speed, and other factors. Ten inches of fresh snow may contain as little as 0.1 inch, or as much as 4 inches, of liquid water. For the majority of our snowfalls, 10 inches will reduce to $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch of water. New cold snow composed of loose ice crystals is 'powder' snow. Warmer, wetter snow grades all the way to 'slush,' a mixture of ice crystals and unfrozen water. 'Corn' snow is rough granular snow that has been frozen and thawed. 'Graupel' is rounded opaque pellets of snow. Where snow falls on glaciers, there are other terms such as 'firn' which is snow lasting more than a year and ultimately compressing into ice.

The intensity of snowfalls is usually mentioned in weather reports. Snow 'flurries' are snowfalls of short duration, varying intensity, and usually with little accumulation. A snow 'squall' is usually of brief duration but high intensity, and always accompanied by strong winds. A 'snowburst' is a very intense, short-duration snowfall that greatly restricts visibility and results in rapid accumulation. A 'blizzard' is a violent winter storm lasting at least 3 hours and accompanied by blowing snow that limits visibility. A 'snowstorm' denotes any snowfall with significant accumulation.

Winter winds are important factors accompanying snowfalls. 'Drifting' snow is fallen snow blown across the ground. 'Blowing snow' signifies fallen snow blown around to at least a height of 8 feet above the ground. Blown snow may aggregate into 'drifts'; mounds of fallen snow, some quite high, occasionally forming horseshoe-shaped 'snow barchans.' Sometimes over frozen crusted snow in open areas, you see undulating deposits of more fragile snow formations termed 'sastrugi.' The rarest wind-assisted snow formation is a 'snow roller,' when strong winds roll wet snow along the ground like someone would while making a snowman.



D. Randy Weidner

An entertaining thing to try is to be in the woods when a snowfall begins, and watch, as did Robert Frost, a “woods fill up with snow.” One windless morning after a cold night with temperatures well below freezing, I watched such an event. The snow was of fairly high moisture content. The first spot to collect snowfall was the dried dead leaves of the forest floor. Next were the horizontal branches of trees. Soon after the limbs, logs collected snow, perhaps a bit warmer than other horizontal surfaces from the metabolism of decaying organisms within the log. The last surface to whiten was the bare ground, although exposed rocks were covered earlier. The final tree feature to be covered was the waxy-coated needles of conifers. A surprisingly interesting observation was that of tree trunks, where snow not only accumulated early in cracks and creases in bark but also on the bulges left from fallen limbs, leaving my mind to visualize the trees as they once were, not just as they were then. This was a brief phenomenon, quickly erased by any wind.

At the beginning of my observations of that snowfall, I concentrated on those dried leaves. As the earliest snowflakes, with their varied icy branches and interconnections, hit the dried leaf, they largely maintained their structural integrity. At first, several flakes came to rest horizontally, but then some landed inclined against an earlier flake, and others landed atop them, and so on, as their icy prongs became interlocked. In this way, individual flakes became knitted into a thin blanket of snow. This

loose accumulation process traps air and thus becomes insulating for tree roots.

In northern forests, a blanket of winter snow is hugely beneficial for trees. Researchers at New Hampshire’s Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest have been monitoring the effects of snowfall on trees. Lack of insulating snow allows the cold and frost to penetrate much deeper into the ground, deep enough to damage tree roots and their mycorrhizal fungal associates. Trees where researchers cleared away snow all winter grew 40% less in each of the following two years than adjacent trees where snow covered the ground. It took five years for the exposed trees to fully recover their growth lag.

I hear people grumble about snow. Yes, to enjoy the outdoors in snowy winters you need warm clothes and special footwear. It requires much greater effort to hike through a snow-covered landscape. Some parts of the Trail may be inaccessible for a while. Plan a shorter hike over easier terrain. Recall that snow cover is vital to northern forests, also beset in warmer times by drought and invasive insects. With this in mind, relish the snow. Go out into the snow and see for yourself the beautiful spectacle of falling and accumulating snow. Make the most of a snowy winter. You know that eventually you will come in, get a warm beverage, and then you too will be rejuvenated. 🍁

FLT50 2024 Challenge starts January 1st!

The challenge is FREE! All miles completed on trails within the Finger Lakes Trail system in calendar year 2024 will count - this includes the main trail, branch trails, and loop trails that are part of the system, and all miles for out-and-back hikes. You can hike your favorite section of FLT over and over again or explore other sections.

Share your stories and photos by tagging @fingerlakestrail and use the hashtags #FLT50 and #fingerlakestrail and we might use them in Footnotes, FLT News, and other promotional materials.

We look forward to your participation and can’t wait to hear about your adventures!

You will need your participant ID # to register your miles. You will receive your ID # when you register (registration is not yet open for 2024). Upon completion and submission of your miles, a certificate, patch, and sticker will be mailed to you.



The Hike 101 series will be offered beginning in the spring. It is a free program designed to educate people about hiking, our trails, and get them comfortable hiking. We are looking for hike leaders and sweeps. The hikes are easy hikes, most will be from the passport hikes.



2024 Trail Days

will be in Bainbridge on May 11th and in Hammondsport on June 10th. These days are dedicated to trail maintainers and landowners. More information, as well as specific locations, will be forthcoming.



Fall Weekend Festival 2023

Erin Potter, Trail Specialist, and Deb Nero, Interim Executive Director

The FLTC annual Fall Weekend was held in the charming village of Watkins Glen, NY, on the weekend of September 15 through 17, 2023. The venue was the new Seneca Lake Events Center in Clute Park at the south end of Seneca Lake, with a gorgeous view of the lake. New members and veteran fall weekenders enjoyed beautiful weather for guided hikes and camaraderie.

The weekend started on Friday afternoon with guided hikes on the lovely trails nearby and dinner afterward. Families visiting Clute Park stopped in to talk to our volunteers and learn about the Finger Lakes Trail.

Saturday was busy. The last hike of the Schuyler County Hike Series met at the Events Center in the morning, regular guided hikes were also offered in the morning, the annual members meeting was held in the afternoon followed by a happy hour and catered dinner, and all wrapped up with the awards ceremony.

The awards ceremony, emceed by Board President Pat Monahan and Interim Executive Director Deb Nero, began by recognizing the Schuyler County Hike series hikers. Those who had completed all 5 hikes received their patches and certificates. [See the article elsewhere in this issue for more on the fun and excitement of this year's Schuyler County Hike series!!] The awards ceremony also included the list of this year's End-to-End hikers, including the 7 hikers who completed their End-to-End by finishing the Schuyler County Hike series - Amanda Pritchard, Kimberly Lewis, Colin Prichard, Donna Ruszaj, Marty Ruszaj, Janice Miller, and Lisa Weismiller. The following 2023 FLTC awards were presented:

- The Wally Wood Distinguished Service Award to David Priester and Terry Meacham
- The Bill and Ellen Garrison Landowner Recognition Award to Mark Costello
- The Clar-Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award to Peter Wybron
- The Ervin Markert Distinguished Contribution Award to Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. and the Hit the Trail Passport Program.

- The newly created Irene Szabo Benefactor Award to Irene Szabo.

The awards ceremony wrapped up with recognition of the recipients of two of the North Country Trail Association awards:

- The Leadership Award to Deb Nero
- Trail Blazer Award to Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. and the Hit the Trail Passport Program.

[See articles elsewhere in this issue for more on the FLTC (pg. 18) and North Country Trail Association (pg. 22) awards.]



Deb Nero

▲ Saturday's dessert. Yum!

▼ New end-to-end hikers celebrating.



Colin Parrish

The weekend ended on Sunday morning with a few more guided hikes before the weather turned to rain. Based on feedback from those who attended, Fall Weekend is an annual event that folks look forward to, and planning for next year's Fall Weekend has already begun! The 2024 Fall Weekend will be held in Hammondsport, NY, and will include more social events and presentations or workshops on top of our regularly attended guided hikes.

Finally, tremendous thanks to all the volunteers who made this fun, convivial weekend possible! These include the members of the FLTC Events Committee, especially Ann Bayley and Deb Nero; Erin Potter for coordinating everything during the weekend; everyone who led hikes on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as well as the volunteers who helped out with all sorts of tasks before and during the weekend – setting up the registration on the website, finding hike leaders and hikes, creating sign-up lists, sign-in, answering questions, and so much more. 🍁

Hikers getting ready to head out on the trail from the Seneca Lake Events Center.

Seneca Lake views.



Deb Nero

Catching up and relaxing at Saturday's happy hour.



Deb Nero



Deb Nero



End-to-Enders #546 and #547

Lisa Weismiller and Janice Miller

We first set foot on the Finger Lakes Trail in Steuben County in 2014. Our friends, Jennifer Reidy and Sue Perciasepe, had completed Schuyler County the year before and suggested that we might like to join them. This sounded like a great way to get away for a few weekends each season and have some fun hiking. Jennifer was always looking for new projects and friends she could sucker into doing them with her. We should have known...

Coming from Connecticut and the Mid-Hudson Valley, respectively, we quickly discovered how big our state is. It didn't take long for us to figure out that we would need to double up on many of the hikes. The drives were sooooo long. We often hiked with the club on Saturday and then hiked on our own on Sunday.

Janice: Being familiar with the Catskills and Adirondacks, I had thought the rest of the state was pretty flat. Boy, do I know better, now! I really enjoyed getting a chance to visit Letchworth State Park, Little Rock City, Watkins Glen, and all the beautiful scenery along the way. I loved meeting so many new people on the trail and getting a chance to be a hike leader. I am forever grateful for meeting Gail Tremblay who has become a good friend. If not for her, I would not be a Winter 46er! An added bonus was that my daughter moved to Binghamton, and I was often able to visit her as I traveled back and forth.

Lisa: I think the biggest takeaway was that we met fellow hikers who will be forever friends. The camaraderie out there really creates lasting friendships. I am always excited to see and go to new places. Little Rock City and Letchworth State Park are very interesting, and to finish in Watkins Glen was a bonus. For me, the most memorable hike was in Cortland County in 2021 when we came around a corner to an open meadow that was filled with foxglove wildflowers at peak. It literally took our breath away.



Trish Johnson

This was a nine-year commitment, and we are proud to be end-to-enders. At the award ceremony in September, we were reminded that "it takes a village" and the Finger Lakes Trail community is really an amazing collection of passionate people who make this endeavor such a great possibility for so many. 🍁



Subscribe to FLT Footnotes, our monthly e-newsletter - stay up to date with the latest news, events, and more!

Visit <https://bit.ly/3zIfW1k>, fill out our short sign-up form, and never miss another moment on the trail.

Puncheon Mania

Mary Coffin

Once again, our Adirondack Mountain Club-Onondaga Chapter (ADK-ON) made up for long overdue puncheon placement. Our Trail Chair and RTC, Harold Kyle, organized these projects and is to be commended for the progress made. We have several trail sections in New York that have unavoidable wet spots where relocation or drainage is not feasible. Puncheons protect the resource; they help keep the hikers on the trail and prevent trail widening and braiding. One such location is the Onondaga section of the Finger Lakes Trail in the Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area (TiWMA). Because it is a Wildlife Management Area, we were permitted to only build the trail along the boundary to not disturb or fragment game populations or disturb vernal pools so important to the food web. As a result, relocation was not an option. One section goes along a field that is a bit higher and it all drains down toward the trail. Another section is parallel to an eroded old road. So, our solution to these perpetual wet spots was to install puncheons.

In Spring 2023 the DEC Wildlife Manager permitted our volunteer crew to install 20 puncheons. We are able to purchase rough-cut larch, which does not become slippery and lasts a very long time, from another trail landowner. Also, there are no preservatives leach out into the environment to poison soil critters. It was a long day, but the result is such an improvement.

Thanks go to ADK-ON Trail Chair Harold Kyle the North Country Trail Team co-leader Bob Rosati who obtained and transported materials and their busy crew who carried lumber into the woods and assembled them. We were also assisted by FLTC's Erin Potter.

But this is only part of the story. The same leaders and crew continued the 2022 "Puncheon Punch Out" on private land near Morgan Hill State Forest. There is a very wet flat spot that is difficult to drain and the ~60 4-foot puncheons they constructed worked so well at improving the trail condition the crew continued by constructing 35 more. The shorter



Harold Kyle



Harold Kyle



Harold Kyle

4-footers were easier to level and are light enough that they can be moved at the landowner's request more easily if they decide to log that area again.

Puncheon work and relocations will continue in 2024 to address wet spots along the trail. 🍁



Branch Trail End-to-Enders

Terri and Bill Dempski #140 and #141

We completed the FLT system on 2 Aug 2023. We finished the main branch in Sept 2022 as end-to-enders #522 and #523. We've now completed all of the Branch Trails: Conservation, Letchworth, Crystal Hills, Bristol Hills, Interloken, and Onondaga. However, our adventure was not limited to just the branches; we also hiked the FLT spurs and loops (except for spurs to parking lots and a few Lean-tos). Sometimes the hikes would become spurs and loops off of other spurs and branches. Crazy right? There are over 50 loops and spurs. We hiked the additional trails of the Queen Catherine Marsh Loop, the Montour Falls Historic Loop, PMHL, and the Cayuga Trail. Loops included those such as Cobb 45, Abbott, Bob Cameron, Spanish, Irvin, Swedish, Irish, English, Lithuanian, Dabes Diversion, Van Lone, the 3 Robinson Loops, Texas Hollow, Virgil Mountain, and Grimes Glen Loop in Naples (just to name a few). Spurs (those little blue and orange lines on the maps) include trails that take you to the Buttermilk Falls SP, Woodchuck Hollow Lean-To, Irish Hollow, West Branch of the Delaware River, Lick Brook, Sugar Hill Fire Tower, Balsam Lake Fire Tower, Birdseye Hollow Connector, June Bug and Triad Trails, High Tor WMA, a very large Cherry Tree, waterfalls, creeks, spurs off Letchworth to view the gorge, and what was a spur until recently to Chippewa Falls. Again, these are just a few.

Our tally of miles of the entire system (branches, main, loops, spurs) is almost 1100.

We highly recommend hiking more than the main trail. There are just as many miles and discoveries to be found on the rest of the FLT system. Each trail was unique. Each day on the trail had its own surprise and special memory.

In 2019, we completed our first branch, the **Interloken**. Memories include a wet and muddy trail that included large pastures with wonderful views, grape vines, snakes, Bobolinks, Towhees, Osprey, cows, and donkeys. It goes through the ONLY National Forest in New York, the Finger Lakes National Forest. We enjoyed eating Black Caps and Blueberries along the way. With this trail going between Cayuga and Seneca lakes, it was nice to finish the day with a cool glass of wine at a winery like Wagner's.

Onondaga in 2019 was next. It went through various state forests. We started the trail in winter with deep snow. It was our first winter hike. We saw so many tracks of animals that you don't get to see while hiking at other times of the year. The trail took us to Tinker Falls (which you can go behind) and Hang Glider Jump-off, plus great views of the valley at Highland Forest County Park. We met butterflies, porcupines, fluffy cows, horses, frogs, and newts. We found the amazing Labrador Hollow Unique Area. In order to hike this trail, we camped at Green Lake State Park which gave us a chance to go to neighboring waterfalls such as Delphi. We crossed over DeRuyter Dam with the end of the trail taking us to the North Country and Link Trails. We find that



Selfie

most trails don't end. They instead join another trail. My first FLT Facebook posting was of the Onondaga trail.

We learned of other trails in the FLT, such as the **Montour Falls Historic Loop**. Who knew there were so many waterfalls around Watkins Glen and Montour Falls? My favorite waterfall (Eagle Cliff Falls) was found here in Havana Glen Park. We had the falls all to ourselves. We could go in the water right up to the falls with our dog, Zorro. We enjoyed the **Queen Catherine Marsh Loop**. It had waterfalls, went around a marsh, and through Watkins Glen. This trail continues south on a wonderful path called the State Park Catherine Valley Trail that goes south and ends in Horseheads.

With **Crystal Hills** having a large amount of road walk, we hiked it in the winter of 2021 except for a small portion that was closed due to logging. Winter hikes on the roads were a bit chilly. We remember quite a few snow drifts along the way. We started the trail by posting a picture of Zorro at the Moss Hill Lean-to. Zorro is now on its memorial plaque. We learned that the Great Eastern Trail starts here too. It goes south all the way to Georgia. We had our longest road walk of 11 miles that ended at Pennsylvania's Cowanesque State Park. The hike around Allison, NY was

gorgeous with many stream crossings, a secluded waterfall called Little Niagara (a spur), and grand old homes. We hiked in the abandoned Pinnacle State Park Golf Course on the PHML map. In the spring, we made it to Meads Creek, the Watson (think IBM) Homestead, and enjoyed viewing the beaver homes and dams.

On the FLT website, we discovered that there was a **Cayuga Trail** in Ithaca. The trail was so close to home, that we didn't know it existed. We hiked the rim of the gorge that goes through Cornell University, past Beebe Lake, and up Fall Creek. It includes wonderful waterfalls, an Arboretum, and Natural Areas too. The spring flowers were beginning to bloom when we went. While there we checked out Ithaca Falls, which is just below this trail.

We traveled the **Bristol Hills** Trail in 2021 and 2022. We found the intertwined trees in Huckleberry Bog. This was the summer of the gypsy moths! You're walking through what feels like spider webs but are instead the gypsy moths (now called "spongy moths"). Not so pleasant. We relaxed and enjoyed the view of Italy Valley! Here we heard our first Black-Billed Cuckoo bird. The FLT started its sponsorship with Steuben Brewing Company at about this time. Since the brewery was close to our campground, we stopped in to get the Trail Town Hazy Pale Ale (part of the sale goes to the FLT) and a T-shirt. We enjoyed finding Eastern Phoebes at a lean-to. During a rain, the trail took us onto side trails in the High Tor Wildlife Management Area (WMA) where we found a turtle laying her eggs. It also took us to the Grimes Glen Loop that goes right through the Hazlitt Winery and to a large waterfall in Naples.

We hiked the **Letchworth** branch in 2022 with Lisa Barret and Annie. The spur trails offer majestic views of the main falls. This trail would be Zorro's last FLT hike. The trail was filled with so many chipmunks, smaller waterfalls, and rainbows. It is full of gullies/ravines, ups/downs, back/forth. I lost my key fob here, oops. We enjoyed visiting the FLT office at the Mt. Morris Dam area. I managed to capture a Barred Owl in a nice pic. Note: Letchworth joins the Genesee Valley Greenway at both ends - one direction goes north to Rochester and the other south to Hinsdale.

Our last branch was the **Conservation Trail (CT)** in 2022 and 2023 with Lisa Barrett and Annie. The CT is unique in that maps CT1 – 3 are the same as the main trail maps M1 – M3. The CT starts at the PA/NY border, but you need to park in Pennsylvania on the North Country Trail (NCT) in order to gain access to CT1. The CT then branches off the main FLT trail on M4/CT4 north of Ellicottville. We finished CT1 – CT3 in 2022. The CT heads north around the west side of Buffalo. The trail joins the Empire State, the Greenway Shoreline, and the Great Lake Seaway Trails. The CT ends at the Rainbow Bridge Turnstile in Niagara Falls on the border of Canada. Finishing at Niagara Falls was a fantastic way to finish the FLT! The falls were beautiful, majestic, loud, and powerful! We can say that we hiked from PA through NY to Canada. How many can say that? This trail was our last... last passport, last FLT50, last blaze, and last lean-to. Always check the trail conditions, we came across real-time trail closures and workarounds. This branch is so diverse and it's the longest of all the branches. The south has mountains, and the north has large, paved bike trails. It takes you past many rivers, the Erie Canal,

and the large Niagara River going past many towns. As the trail went North it opened up allowing for great pictures of so many birds! The trail continues onward too... to the south is the North Country trail that takes you to North Dakota and north is the Bruce Trail that takes you to Northern Canada.

We loved the FLT! Bill would find the animals/items and I loved taking the pictures. We enjoyed sharing our adventures with you on the FLT Facebook site. Thank you all for all of your wonderful comments. We found so many birds such as the: Indigo Bunting, Grosbeaks, Vireos, Bluebirds, Bobolinks, swallows, sparrows, flycatchers, Kingbirds, martins, Kestrels, hawks, Catbirds, herons, Waxwings, turkeys, wrens, and warblers. Lots of wildlife like... deer, turtles, frogs, snakes, muskrats, millipedes, insects, etc. So many delicious treats... plums, apples, raspberries, black caps, blackberries, blueberries (low and high bush), strawberries, and even mulberry. Diverse flowers, plants, grasses, and trees. Too many to mention. I've learned so much along the way about hiking, trails, nature, apps, and NY. We had amazing bridge crossings both large and small, plus railroad crossings too. We traveled through NY towns, state/county parks (Watkins, Buttermilk, Treman, Darien Lake, Bowman, and Oquaga Creek), and national/state/county forests, too. All of this was off the main trail on the branches, spurs, and loops.

Thank you everyone for your hard work! Thank you to the landowners for allowing us to cross your land!! Thank you to the maintainers, the hiking clubs, the DEC, and the FLT! Everyone's love and dedication to the trails is truly evident. THANK YOU! We truly enjoyed our adventures and sharing them with you. Our next adventure takes us to all 63 National Parks. We're 1/2 way through this goal. It's been a pleasure. 🍁

THANKS TO OUR TRAIL LANDOWNERS

Please accept the appreciation of the Board of Managers of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and hundreds of hikers for your continuing permission to route the path through your property. Even if your trail's caretaker didn't say so directly yet this year, know that we all are grateful for the privilege of enjoying your back woods, streams, and fields. On behalf of all hikers and FLTC members, we acknowledge that, without your generosity, we would simply never have a continuous trail across upstate New York.

If you would like a copy of our trail map in your property's neighborhood, please ask the FLTC Service Center: info@fingerlakestrail.org or 585/658-9320.

Also, the trail is CLOSED on private land on the first Monday in February, just to reassure you that we do not establish a permanent right-of-way on your land by walking there every single day of the year.



2023 FLTC Awards

The following awardees were honored at the Awards Ceremony at our Fall Weekend Festival on Saturday, September 16 at the Schuyler County Events Center in Watkins Glen, NY. After pausing many of the awards since 2019 due to the pandemic, we had many worthy award winners this year.

The **Wally Wood Distinguished Achievement Award**: This award is presented each year to the person or persons who have made outstanding long-term contributions to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. The award consists of a hiking stick with an engraved plate or a wall plaque, winner's choice. The award honors the memory of Wallace "Wally" D. Wood. Wally Wood came up with the idea of a long-distance footpath across New York State and was the founding President of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

This year there were two awardees!

David Priester was recognized for his leadership and diligence as a Regional Trail Coordinator.

David possesses the essence of what it means to be a great Regional Trail Coordinator. He is thoughtful, willing to listen to others' ideas, a hard worker, a non-procrastinator, and an outstanding worker with wooden trail structures, and he is consistently quick to respond to a trail section's needed attention. He is friendly, easy to talk to, and always takes his role very seriously, as all RTCs should.



Colin Parrish

FLTC President Pat Monahan, Wally Wood award winner David Priester, and FLTC Executive Director Deb Nero.

For instance, where the FLT crosses Rowland Creek at Daisy Hollow Road (M19), a wooden step put in decades ago to ease the drop into the creek bed had rotted to the point of being unsafe. David was asked if he had any ideas about how to install a new step—and what he provided in short order was a whole small staircase! It is now better than just passable at that spot. It is now excellent.

David works hard and does great work with anything that he puts his mind to. Creative ideas are his forte.

Recently, it was noticed that retaining logs on a switchback had almost completely rotted away, leaving the rebar used to secure the logs exposed and dangerous to any hiker who might not be paying attention. Once notified, David immediately got on it. We cut down a nearby medium-sized hardwood, cut it into three carryable sections, and installed them. Then David used a sledgehammer to bang in the offending rebar so that the rebar's tops were flush with the logs. Now, not only is the section no longer dangerous, but it also looks great.

David has also assisted a number of times, removing large or complicated blowdowns from the trail, and he is always ready to assist me at a moment's notice.

The second Wally Wood awardee is **Terry Meacham**. Terry was recognized for his many years of service to the FLTC in numerous roles, which include the following achievements:

- FLTC member for more than 25 years
- FLTC Board member for more than 18 years
- Trail Sponsor for 20 years
- Assisted in building the Crystal Hills Branch Trail
- Secured a permanent easement that guaranteed permanent access to Burnt Hills State Forest
- Chair of Human Resources and Compliance Officer for the Board, multiple top-level employee Search Team member
- County hike leader for the Steuben County hike series
- E2E on the Main Trail (2) and Branch trails
- Instrumental in writing MOUs with the North Country Trail Association



Colin Parrish

Pat Monahan, Wally Wood award winner Terry Meacham, and Deb Nero.

The **Clar Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award** is made to an individual or pair of individuals who have made a significant contribution over a period of time as trail workers. These individuals may be individual members of the Conference or members of one of our Trail Sponsor organizations. Harry Clar and Edward Willis are two outstanding examples of great dedication and longtime service in building and maintaining many miles of the Finger Lakes Trail System.

The 2023 awardee is **Peter Wybron**. Peter has served in a variety of trail capacities for many years including Regional Trail Coordinator, trail sponsor, and trail maintainer. Peter has also been deeply involved with a major trail reroute in and around Steuben County's Kanakadea Park. It required acquiring private landowner permission, county park permission and all of the steps to put a trail on the ground from an idea to exploration, flagging, construction, and now maintenance. Peter has also been involved in many trail reroutes as a result of losing permission from a landowner. Peter has also successfully negotiated permanent trail easements. In addition to his trail work, Peter has served in various capacities on the Board of Managers including Treasurer, and several terms as a Board member.



Pat Monahan, Clar-Willis award winner Peter Wybron, and Deb Nero.

The **Ervin Markert Distinguished Contribution Award** is made to an individual, group, or organization in the public or private sector that has made a significant contribution toward the improvement of hiking and/or trails in New York State. Erv Markert served as the Trail Committee Chair for nearly twenty years. During that time, he also served on several state and national committees and organizations involved with trails and hiking. He interfaced extremely well with many public employees in the State and Federal governments who were involved with trails.



The 2023 honoree is **Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. for the Passport Hike Program**. Wegmans grocery stores are found throughout New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia, Delaware, North Carolina, and Maryland. Wegmans is actively involved in the communities they serve, working with local organizations to help their neighbors and their employees live healthier, better lives.

One community outreach program is their "Hit the Trail Passport" program. This program works with local trail organizations to encourage everyone to hike and explore the trails in these seven states. Short, family-friendly hikes along a longer trail are described in booklets published by Wegmans. For each hike, the booklet has general information about preparing for a hike, instructions on how to reach each hike, information on the trail, and sights to see along the way. Each hike has a rubbing station with an embossed plate. Participants make a rubbing of the plate in their Passport booklet. When participants have finished a certain number of these hikes, collected the rubbings, and sent them to the address listed, they receive a patch or other prize for their hikes.

For the past 15 years, the Finger Lakes Trail Conference has partnered with Wegmans to create 36 Passport hikes along the 1,000-mile-long Finger Lakes Trail system. Each year many families with children of all ages and new hikers complete the Passport hikes on the NCT/FLT, send their rubbings to the FLTC, and receive a patch.

Wegmans donates the embossed plates for the rubbing stations and provides funds to FLTC to print and re-print the FLTC Passport booklets. These Passport booklets fly off the table at wellness events, are a big hit with the scout leaders and troops in New York, and are available at all Wegmans stores. The Passport booklets can be downloaded from both the FLTC and Wegmans websites. Co-marketing has been beneficial for all the member clubs of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and the North Country Trail Association.

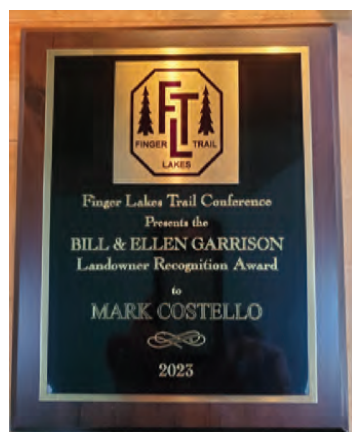
The **Bill and Ellen Garrison Landowner Recognition Award**:

The very existence of the trail depends on generous private landowners who permit hikers to walk on their land, and the Conference is very grateful to each and every one. Furthermore, some landowners embrace the trail in ways that go far beyond hosting the footpath; they assist hikers with water or other needs, do trail work, allow camping, or donate easements to protect the trail corridor forever. Some even donate property to the conference. This award, to be given as deserving candidates are nominated, will recognize those special landowners who go beyond permitting the trail to enhancing the trail and the trail experience.

The Bill and Ellen Garrison Award, named for our first landowners to INVITE the trail onto their property from adjacent land, to OFFER an easement without even being asked, and then to build one of the nicest shelters imaginable, the Evangeline shelter on

...continued on page 12

Map B3 between Prattsburgh and Hammondsport. Even after a neighborhood child burned it down, they used their insurance to fund a new one, bigger and better than ever. This is the welcoming spirit that defines this award's intended recipient.



The 2023 awardee is **Mark Costello**, Landowner, Rt 12, Lincklaen, Chenango County. In May 2021, DEC Region 7 Supervising Forester Christopher Sprague alerted his contacts at the Bullthistle Hiking Club to a parcel coming up for sale, adjacent to State Forest lands, which might provide an off-road FLT link around a long road walk.

The FLTC purchased the property in February 2022 from owner Mark Costello, who has been extremely helpful and cooperative toward the FLTC. Right from the start we knew that we didn't want to purchase his two barns, house, tillable fields, and scenic pastureland. We proposed that he subdivide the property and sell us his wood lot, adjacent to the State Forest, and grant us an easement along the edge of his fields on the part of the property we were not purchasing outright. He agreed, which no doubt caused him to have a more complicated set of sales transactions and brought the price to FLTC down into the \$250,000 range that we could imagine investing in this one single project.

Once we had closed on the property, Mark continued to help. For instance, on the first official "workday" that Harold Kyle scheduled, Mark offered parking in his barnyard. He was no doubt blown away when over 40 FLT volunteers assembled in front of his barn. He was already excited about creating a trail across his beloved valley but that seemed to just supercharge him.

Mark and his buddy Ed Ludwig made and installed two scenic overlook benches for the trail. When it was time for the bridge construction project, he granted us permission to use his farm rock piles and he helped transport materials with his tractor. The idea of a parking area on our 50' driveway to the woods was mentioned, and he came back and proposed a deal where he and his local buddies did the job for us pretty much just for the cost of having the gravel delivered.

For his assistance in selling his woods and donating an easement across his fields, as well as his help to our trail building crews, Mark Costello is the recipient of our Garrison Award.

Irene Szabo Benefactor Award

This award is presented to an individual or household demonstrating vision and generosity through significant monetary or in-kind contribution(s) to the Finger Lakes Trail or the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

This is a new award. The first awardee is **Irene Szabo**. In 1984, Irene Szabo first became a member of the FLTC. In 1987 Howard Beye asked Irene "to maintain a neglected piece of the Bristol Hills Branch." Irene started with the southernmost 7 miles on map M3. This expanded over time until it included 20.7 miles of trail!

Irene served on the Board of Managers of the FLTC. She also served 2 terms as President of the Board of Managers – 1991 through 1994 and 2000 – 2006. Irene had been the Regional Trail Coordinator for maps M7-M11 in the early 2000's, and most recently the RTC for the Letchworth Branch Trail.

She became end-to-end #30 in 1994, the 7th woman to complete the FLT.



Irene Szabo accepts her award at home.

Irene has received just about every award the FLTC has to give, including the Wally Wood Distinguished Service Award in 1999 and the Clar-Willis Award in 2006. In 2008 she was awarded the American Hiking Society's Advocate Award at the AHS National Symposium in Arkansas, and in 2012 the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2013 she received the FLTC Howard Beye Lifetime Achievement Award. Irene was given the NCTA Distinguished Service Award in 2004, and then the NCTA Communicator Award in 2010 for her work editing and writing for the NCTA North Star and for promoting the NCTA in the FLT News.

Irene has also had a long relationship with the *FLT News* magazine, beginning in 2003 or earlier when she began writing an occasional column called "Walking Through Time." This was written in turns with Tim Wilbur, a fellow train and railroad fanatic, about all things railroad in NY. Irene was editor of the magazine from 2012 – 2023. During that time, she wrote more than 125 credited articles for *FLT News*. She wrote many more uncredited short pieces, notes, and reminders during that same time.

In 2023, Irene retired as RTC of Letchworth Branch Trail and as editor of *FLT News*.

Irene has had a decades-long passion for the Finger Lakes Trail and the North Country Trail. Thank you, Irene, for all you have done for the Finger Lakes Trail, we are very happy to award you the first Irene Szabo Benefactor Award. 🍁

End-to-End Update

Jacqui Wensich, End-to-End Coordinator

Main:

#538 Cassandra Vaughn, Endwell
#539 Robert Miller, Endwell
#540 Amanda Pritchard, Corning
#541 Kimberly Lewis, Gillett, PA
#542 Colin (the stud) Prichard, Corning
#543 Christopher Luley, Naples
#544 Donna Ruszaj*, E. Amherst
#545 Marty Ruszaj*, Amherst
#546 Janice Miller*, Hyde Park
#547 Lisa Weismiller*, Stamford, CT
#548 Tom "Gumby" Gorman, Elmira, Backpacker
#549 Tim Holahan, Marion, Continuous
*Completed the main trail with all county hikes!

Branch:

#140 Terri Dempski (#522) Apalachin
#141 William Dempski (#523) Apalachin

Updates:

Karen Sewell and Kelly Ireland have completed almost half of their End-to-End hikes.

Comments:

The County Hike Series was implemented by Ed Sidote to increase the number of main trail end-to-end hikers. It is a wonderful way to complete the main trail, meet other hikers, and follow established leaders and hikes. Many hikers combine the county hikes with other day hikes once they have their taste of the trail.

Check out #493 Dennis Permoda's journal: www.trailjournals.com/loneranger2023.

Car Spotters:

Long-time car spotter Gary Brouse (#379) is no longer on the list. Thanks to him for his help (M13-16).

Please let me know if you cannot contact a spotter. Just like the maps, things change.

We need more car spotters for the Branch Trails and **M1-5, M27-34**. Please consider signing on as a car spotter. Just email at jwensich@rochester.rr.com for the application. You are a vital part of hiking our trails. Your information is not on the website.

TIPS for aspiring end-to-enders:

1. Review the End-to-End Hiking section on the FLT website.
2. Join the FLT e-group, hiking@fingerlakestrail.org; you'll often find more

spotters and specific location hints.

3. Purchase new MAPS (remember FLT members receive a 20% discount for all purchases). Waypoints are also available.
4. *Check trail conditions online frequently.*
5. If you are not already a member, join the FLTC. Membership supports this wonderful trail.
6. Let me know "about" when you plan to complete the main/branch trails to receive the correct number.
7. Email captioned photos in high resolution as you hike and keep trail notes, so you can write your end-to-end article.
8. Car spotters "spot" for designated areas. It is not a shuttle. Longer rides must be arranged on your own.

HIKERS-PLEASE ASK FOR THE MOST RECENT CAR SPOTTER LIST TO AVOID PROBLEMS. (Just like our maps - things change). Let me know if phone numbers/emails are incorrect or no longer working. Do not ask spotters to take long trips. Ask other spotters according to the maps listed on the car spotter list. If you need a longer ride, join the discussion group to see if someone is willing, if you do not have a friend or family member available. 🍁

Contact: Jacqui Wensich
jwensich@rochester.rr.com
585/385-2265

FLT MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
County _____ Phone (____) _____
Email _____

Make check payable to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference
Mail to 6111 Visitor Center Rd., Mt. Morris, NY 14510 along with this form.
Annual dues (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31. Dues paid after Dec. 31 will be applied to the next membership year.)

Pathfinder Memberships:

Youth (under 17)	\$15
Student (under 24)	\$15
Limited Income	\$30
Adult	\$40
Family	\$60
Youth Organization	\$30

Sustaining Memberships:

Trail Blazer	\$100-\$249
Trail Builder	\$250-\$499
Trail Guide	\$500-\$999
Trail Patron	\$1000 +
Lifetime (Individual)	\$600
Lifetime (Family)	\$900



The following awardees were honored at the Awards Ceremony at the North Country Trail Association's annual Celebration. This year, Celebration was held at Forest Lake Camp in Chestertown, NY, in the Adirondacks.

Leadership Award

This award is for a volunteer who has demonstrated exceptional leadership over a three-year period or more leading to significant local achievements or highly successful events.

This year the awardee is **Deb Nero**, Interim Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.



The world of National Scenic Trails revolves around robust partnership and selfless volunteerism. Deb Nero, the Acting Interim Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) has embodied these revered values through conscientious efforts to build strong working relationships and freely giving of her time and resources to

elevate the profile of the North Country National Scenic Trail within New York State, as well as cultivate a vital working relationship with the North Country Trail Association resulting in meaningful outcomes for both the FLTC and NCTA.

The Finger Lakes Trail is the premier state hiking trail in New York which has graciously worked with the NCTA for many years to create a co-aligned trail experience for trail users for the over 400 miles the trails share. With Deb Nero taking the helm at FLTC in recent years, this relationship has been greatly strengthened by her can-do attitude and venerable leadership. The importance of this cannot be overstated as Deb's love of trails transcends any vestigial remnants of divisive territorialism from years gone by, instead lifting up both trails to die-hard trail lovers and burgeoning hikers alike while delicately preserving and enhancing each trail's unique identity.

Since becoming involved with the Finger Lakes Trail in the early 2000s as a hiker, Deb has been involved in all aspects of the FLTC and has overseen a large number of activities that have been key to strengthening the trail in New York State. After catching the hiking bug as a trail user and completing her first end-to-end hike (she's now working on her fifth), she began volunteering her time as an FLTC board member, then served in other roles, including organizing many activities for hikers, as well as helping to coordinate the strategic planning process that led to a revitalization of the organization and set it on its current path. When the former FLTC Executive Director stepped down, she was appointed to the role of Acting Interim Executive Director and has carried out those duties for two and half years, most

2023 NCTA Awards

notably through the substantial difficulties of the pandemic. Upon stepping into her current leadership role, she immediately began leading a reorganization of the FLTC as an organization to make it more efficient and effective, as well as appointing and supervising new staff members in trail development and maintenance, as well as in marketing and communications. The growth of a volunteer-led organization into a staff-led organization is an incredibly challenging task that Deb stepped up to with thoughtfulness and determination. Through her efforts to improve the FLTC and FLTC's partnership with NCTA, she has taken meaningful steps toward improving NCTA's presence and reach in New York State, setting the stage for improved support from the public and state government alike. Her contribution to many individual projects is notable, and highlights are featured below.

Not just leading from on high as an Executive Director, Deb has personally organized and led countless hikes on the FLT/NCT. Last year she led the first three hikes across many miles and counties for NCTA's New York State Advisory Council's Five Notable Hikes Series. Deb ensured that FLTC supported the hike series, which highlights five of the most scenic and interesting locations along the NCT across the state, through devoting staff time to administrate the registrations as well as promote the series to FLTC's supporters. Over the years she has led Hiking 101 hikes for beginners as well as hikes for the FLTC Trail Days and NCTA Annual Celebration. One of her major efforts in the past three years was organizing the FLTC New York County Hike Series for two counties (Tompkins and Schuyler) and co-organizing the hikes in Cortland County. The County Hike Series involved almost 200 hikers of all levels of fitness and experience ranging from 5 to 7 hikes over the summer. Her duties were considerable and included intensive administration, logistical planning, and many other activities. Additionally, she has taken the initiative to plan a pre-event in Ithaca to kick us off for the 2023 NCTA Celebration. All this is on top of her FLTC Executive Director duties.

Deb has been a pivotal influence in nurturing a burgeoning relationship with the Seneca Nation of Indians (SNI) through collaboratively managing a trail reroute consultation project between SNI, FLTC, and NCTA. The project will result in a section of the NCT/FLT trail being moved out from under a utility corridor and into the woods. The trail will feature indigenous interpretation and provide recreation for the SNI people.

Through her incisive intellect and direct manner, tempered by a commitment to collaboration and teamwork, Deb Nero embodies the expansive leadership and vision necessary to balance the mission of the FLTC with that of the NCTA. Her vibrant devotion to the FLT and NCT, effusively straightforward brand of kindness, and boundless energy for taking on any task set before her are apparent to all she works with and leads. We look forward to seeing her previous and continuing contributions to the world of trails bear fruit for years to come. The best leaders lead by example, and we are lucky to have Deb Nero lighting the way for

us here in New York State. Deb Nero is a true NCTA leader, and she is richly deserving of this recognition.

Trailblazer Award



This award is presented to a business or foundation for far-sighted vision and support, demonstrated by significant contributions to the Trail or the NCTA.

This year the awardee is **Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. and the Hit the Trail Passport Program**. [See the “2023 FLTC Awards” article on page 18 for information about this award recipient.]



Colin Parrish

Awards committee chair Mel Baughman, Deb Nero, and NCTA Executive Director Andrea Ketchmark.



Our hiking journey started on a cold, rainy April morning on the Interloken trail. It was an eventful hike with lots of mud, cows, and more mud. The sun did come out eventually, we only lost the trail once and had to do some road walk. By the time we reached the car at the end, I was wondering why we had done the trail and planned never to do any hiking again. Then.....

When I got home and researched the Finger Lakes Trail, I found the County Hike series. We signed up the following year, starting in Steuben County with Jet. We have since met many hiking companions and hiked in all types of weather in all kinds of woods. My favorite hike is the section in Little Rock City, the size of the rocks is amazing, and it seems like walking in another world there. Kim Lewis and I have done many hikes alone as well as with the County Hike group. We were joined by my husband, Colin, and eventually our daughter, Maia, on our hikes. We have even brought a few friends along for day hikes. Walking in the woods is very restorative and the stress melts away. The Japanese have a term for this: *Shinrin-yoku*, forest bathing, also provides a defense against the pangs of anxiety, stress, depression, and other afflictions on one's mind. No matter the weather, hiking is always a great stress relief and good exercise any time we are out.

- Amanda Pritchard

Hiking the FLT footpath was such an experience and full of its own natural wonders. Each section had its own beauty. We climbed hills that seemed like mountains only to find remarkable views from the top, fields of flowers, tall woods that smelled heavenly of pine scent, rolling brooks and streams, gushing waterfalls, state parks with gorges and rivers, big huge rocks in Little Rock City, bear sightings (that was fun), farmland, vineyards, hundreds of newts and toads and pocket fulls of acorns, a steam engine out in the middle of nowhere (great picture op), and Balsam Lake Mountain fire tower, where I really felt on top of the world that day. It was a clear day, and you could see over yonder for miles, an awe moment for sure. I could go on and on...

The journey was truly better than the destination and just think, there are still more trails out there to hike and explore!

- Kimberly Lewis

End-to-End Hiking Journey

Amanda Pritchard, Kimberly Lewis, Colin Pritchard

I did quite a bit of hiking when I was younger. I backpacked and hiked in the Cascade Mountains, the Olympic Mountains, the Adirondacks, and the Smokey Mountains. Then life happened and I had not hiked for several years until my wife and her friend Kim came home from a hike on the Interloken trail. They were soaked, muddy, and very tired. It was the first time I had ever heard of the FLT but now I was intrigued. Once I heard about the summer hike series, I knew I had to do it. I started with the Steuben County hike on a rainy chilly day. It rained, it hailed, and the sun came out at times, but some of the views made it all worthwhile. At the end of that first hike, I was cold, wet, hungry, and tired, but I was hooked. Since then, I have hiked and backpacked the entire FLT and I hope to continue hiking it.

- Colin Pritchard



Colin Pritchard

Amanda Pritchard #540, Kimberly Lewis #541, and Colin Pritchard

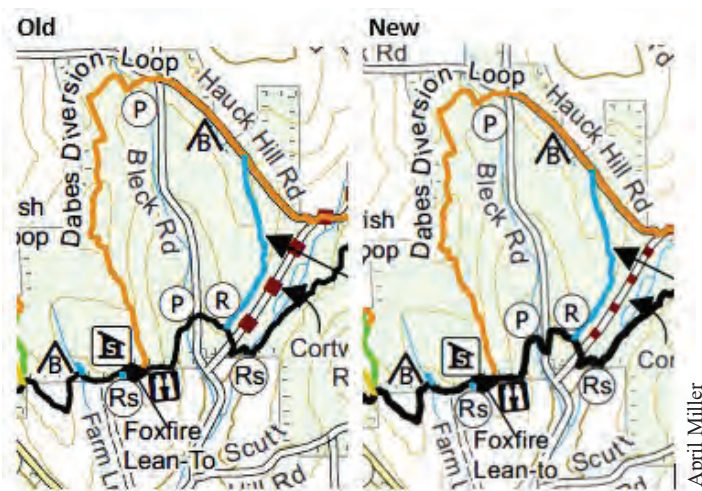
#542



Trail Topics: Updated Maps

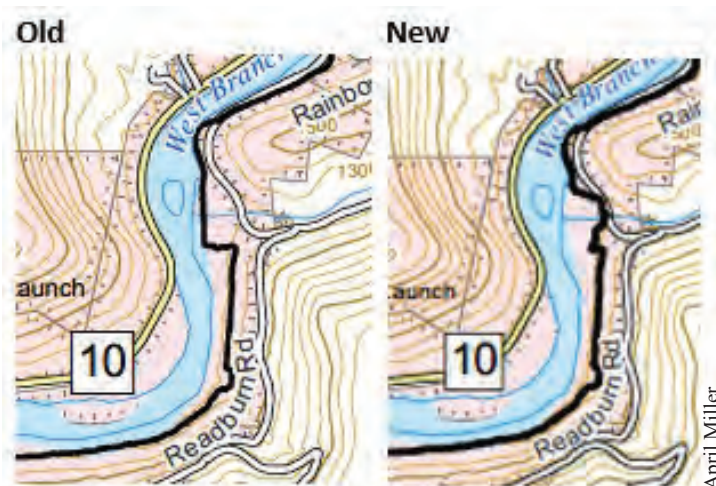
Jo Taylor and April Miller

M19 and VML (Virgil Mountain Loop) maps have been updated to reflect a minor reroute at mile 10.9 of the main trail near Bleck Rd, to access a new bridge with the added benefit of making the road crossing easier. The maps have also been updated to use the new hunting closure standards.



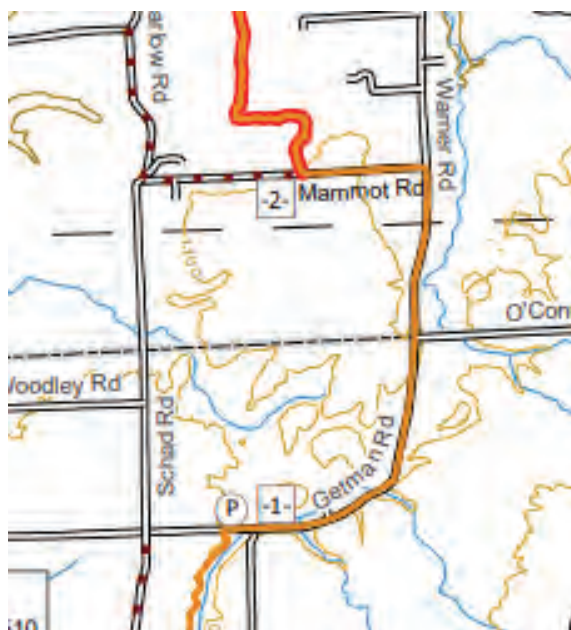
April Miller

M28 has been updated to show a minor reroute near mile 17.4 to avoid some Japanese knotweed. The map has also been updated to use the new hunting closure standards.



April Miller

Map CT8 has been updated to better describe the location of Access 1 and to reflect the relocation of Access 2 to the Mammoth Rd trailhead. The map has also been updated to use the new hunting closure standards and to improve consistency between the PDF and interactive versions. Both the PDF and GPX files have been updated.



Jo Taylor



End-to-Ender #548

Tom Gorman

In September of 2019, shortly after I turned 60, I developed an interest in backpacking. Since then, I have hiked over 5,000 miles with my backpack and all my gear.

In 2020 I hiked from Springer Mountain, Georgia to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Later that same year I hiked the Long Trail from the Massachusetts border north through Vermont to Canada. In 2021 I planned to finish my AT adventure but contracted Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS) after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and I lost the ability to walk and the use of my hands. After spending 3 months of treatment in the hospital followed by lots of physical and occupational therapy, I slowly began to recover. As soon as I was able to, I went back hiking the local trails with my backpack. In 2022 I returned to the AT and picked up where I left off at Harpers Ferry and hiked to Bennington, Vermont. In June of this year, I resumed my AT hike making my way from Bennington to Franconia Notch, New Hampshire leaving the trail because it became more like rock climbing and less like hiking.

It was then that I decided to explore the main Finger Lakes Trail (FLT). I had originally planned a continuous end-to-end hike from East to West, but those plans changed. I ordered a map set and after receiving the maps and looking them over I decided to start in the West and head East because it would be easier to follow the trail directions and descriptions as they were written. On July 7th, my wife Betsy dropped me off at the trailhead on PA Route 346 with the intention of seeing her about six weeks later in the Catskills. After only 4 days on the trail, I changed my plans again. I decided that rather than a continuous hike, I would take advantage of the location of the FLT being in my own backyard and hike the trail in sections over the entire summer. I called Betsy and told her the new plan and she came to pick me up and brought me back home.

Over the next 3 months, I backpacked the trail in nine 2-to-9-day sections, completing my end-to-end hike at Slide Mountain on September 25th. During the entire course of my backpacking adventure on the FLT, I encountered less than twenty people on the trail, most of whom were out for a day hike. Near Portageville, I met a young woman who was hiking the North Country Trail from Vermont to Michigan, and at a lean-to near Howard, I met a family of five who were out for a hike with their goal of completing one map section each year.

For the most part, I found the FLT to be well blazed, although I did encounter a few places, usually where the trail entered a field, where it took me upwards of half an hour to find the direction of the trail. The combination of the low number of trail users, along with heavily overgrown sections, made it hard to negotiate the trail at times. But overall, the trail is well marked and maintained. When I started hiking the FLT, I was not a fan of the road walks, but I have come to appreciate them. The FLT is a mix of trails on state land and private land where landowners have given their



Betsy Gorman

permission to hike, connected by roads. The road walk is an essential component of the trail. And it helps to give a bit more variety to the hike as well.

The first time that I saw an open-air privy was on the FLT, but I wasn't sure what to think. I have since become a big fan. You never know what you will find when you open the door of a traditional outhouse privy, which tends to be dark, somewhat dirty, and smelly. The open-air privy is cleaner, brighter, and pretty much odor free. And the usual addition of a fence gives it plenty of privacy.

I certainly saw a lot of deer, along with turkeys, grouse, and squirrels. I saw one bear near Split Rock Outlook. And there were the usual mice at about half of the lean-tos that I stayed in, but they didn't get into any of my gear.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Finger Lakes Trail, and I highly recommend it. Whether you are out for a day hike, section hike, or end-to-end hike, the Finger Lakes Trail is a great way to explore the beautiful State of New York and all that it has to offer. 🍁



M27 Cold Springs Creek Tributary Bridge Expansion

Matt Rose

A group of six folks completed a repair job on the Cold Springs Creek Tributary Bridge in July 2023 on the Finger Lakes Trail on Map M27 in Delaware County, just off Route NY-8 between Masonville and Deposit. The 16-foot-long bridge had been swept up by high water onto the stream bank in the spring, so it needed to be set back in place, raised up higher over the stream, and extended to guard against future mishaps.

A cat has nine lives, thus far this bridge has had three lives. It was “born” about 20 years ago as part of an Eagle Scout Service Project -- two 2x12x16’ planks placed across the stream. Repeated and worsening flooding through the years caused the planks to wash downstream almost every year. A team rebuilt the bridge a few years ago, raising it up higher by adding stringers and a frame underneath the planks to keep planks from sagging and adding a handrail. But even that was no match for this spring’s rain, leading to what is now the third life for this bridge. But, yes, those original planks from 20 years ago are still being used on the center part of the bridge today!

Matt Rose, a Triple Cities Hiking Club member and trail steward for this section of FLT, led the efforts for the rebuild, consisting of constructing a 7-foot extension appended to each end of the bridge. This increased the overall span length from 16 to 30 feet. The bridge width remained 24”.

The below photos document the project.



Larry Blumberg

The decking (original planks) was removed, which made the bridge lighter and easier to move back into place, such that we could begin the bridge expansion.



Larry Blumberg

The 16’ bridge washed up on the streambank of the 14’ wide tributary.



Larry Blumberg

This shows the attachment of the extension stringers, the replacement of the bridge decking, and finally, the addition of new decking for the extensions at each end of the bridge. Team members left to right are Chris Rounds, Luciana D’Alessandro, Mike Clifford, Karen Goodman, and Matt Rose, with Larry Blumberg as the photographer.



Matt Rose

The final product with extended handrails and a runaway prevention chain affixed to a 3/4" x 3' long steel stake driven into the ground on one end. It's a great place to enjoy a snack and take in the peaceful setting!



Meet Mary Ellen Gorczynski, seen here presenting a check to John Schmitt, our VP Trail of Maintenance.

David and Mary Ellen Gorczynski funded a bridge project in Darien State Park a few years back in memory of David's brother Don Gorgzinski. Mary called the office earlier this year wanting to make a similar dedication to Mary's mother Dale I. Eilerman. A number of projects were floated, with a mind toward opportunities close to their home in Orchard Park.

One of those projects - a footbridge on the Letchworth Branch - caught Mary Ellen's imagination. Her mother had visited Letchworth, and Mary Ellen relayed a number of fond memories during her brief visit to the office before John led them on a hike to the bridge site. This project will be complete by the time this issue of FLT News is published. Mike TenKate pre-assembled the bridge at his home in Virgil, and a work party was held on November 3-4.

It isn't often that we can actualize a donor's intentions so quickly. The FLTC family should be very proud that we could bring such satisfaction to the Eilerman and Gorczynski families! 🍁

From The Office

Willa Powell





Letchworth Bridge Project

Mike TenKate

On September 1st we received a trail report of a collapsed bridge on the Northern part of the Letchworth trail between access C and D, with the closest Access being access C at 1.8 miles away. This is a highly trafficked section of trail that we felt was imperative that we get repaired ASAP. With the support of the park, we were able to repurpose an existing bridge design to get this project on the fast track.

We held an offsite workday on Wednesday, November 1st to prep materials and preassemble those things that we could. We met with a small crew to lay out the foundations and haul materials in on Friday, November 3rd. We were lucky that the site was ATV accessible, and we were able to haul materials directly to the site without having to hand-carry them. The main push was Saturday, November 4th with an additional day planned for Sunday the 5th. We had an absolutely outstanding turnout of volunteers Saturday morning, and the bridge went together unbelievably fast. Construction was completed by 2 pm, and we were cleaned up and done putting tools away by 4 pm. The additional workday on Sunday was canceled.

I would like to thank all of those who assisted: Todd Beverly (Construction Forman and huge help!), Laura Steves, Cate Concannon, David Mathews, Dick Hightower, Jason Hightower, Roman Kanda, Marie Davis, Matt Steiner, Steven Johnson, Mare Steinger, John Schmitt, Erin Potter, JP Rheault, John Oschle, Matt C., Michele McCall, and I think I missed a few of you which I apologize for.

I think this is probably a record from the time of the report to repair for a project of this magnitude, and it could not have been done without the support of Letchworth State Park and so many volunteers. Thank You! 🍁



John Schmitt



Jason Hightower



John Schmitt

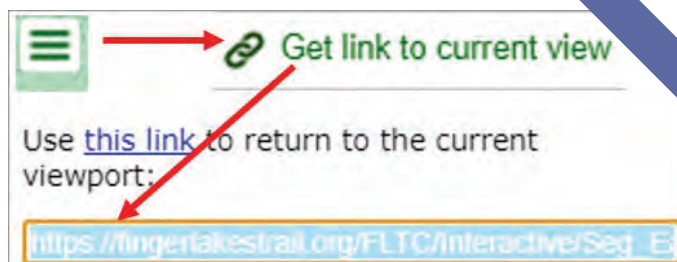



Jason Hightower

Trail Topics: Interactive Map Tricks


Roger Hopkins, IT/Mapping Committees

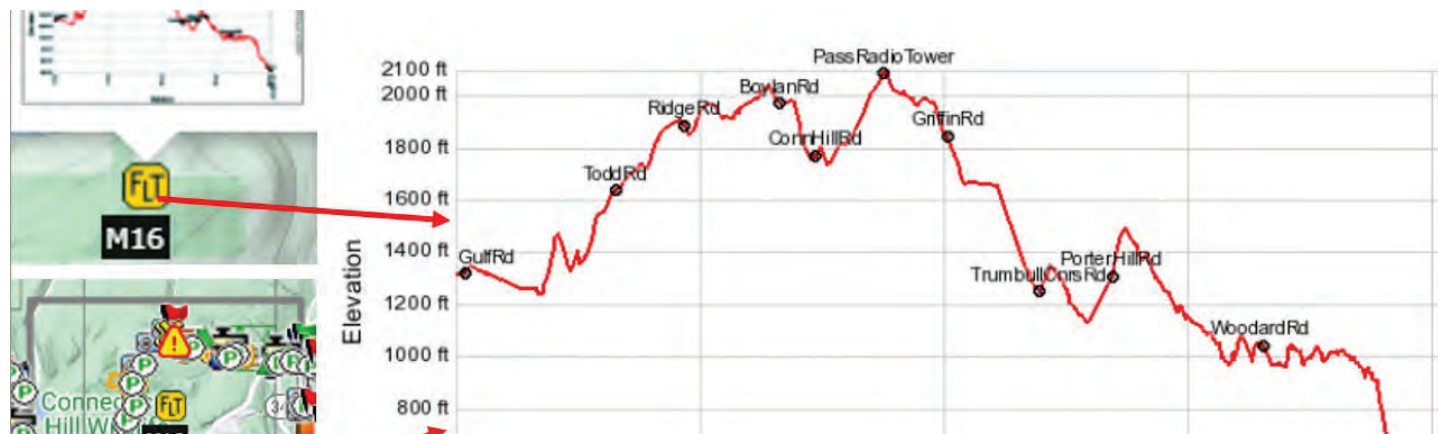
Here is a handy feature we added to our interactive map recently. If you click on the menu in the upper right corner of the map, you can use the “Get link” command to get a link to the current view of the map. Copy and save the link and you can use it to return to the view later, or email it to a friend to arrange a meeting place. You can also send the link to TrailReport@fingerlakesrail.org to report a problem on the trail.




Look in the center of the map to find the  crosshair symbol. If it is not visible, click on the word “Center” in the bottom left corner of the screen to show or hide it. Then drag the map so the symbol is on your point of interest. Double click on the latitude and longitude and you can copy that also. Emailing the latitude and longitude is another great way to report the location of a problem.

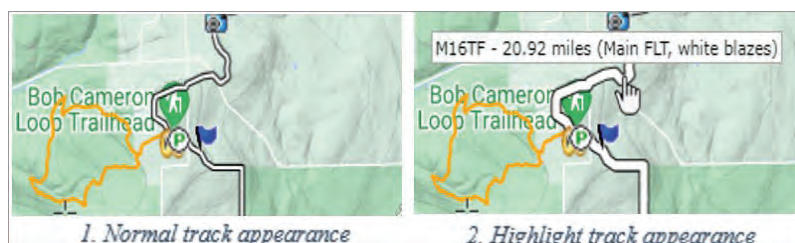


We have had elevation profiles on the interactive map for several years, but we plan to update them to fix formatting and account for significant reroutes. To view a profile, click on the  symbol near the center of the map or on the gray map border. Then click the thumbnail image to see a full-size view.



If you use the elevation profiles, remember that some of them are out of date. The total distance, elevation, and the location of the highs and lows may be off a bit. But for most maps, you can still get a general idea of the elevation gain and loss of your planned hike. We will be working first on profiles for the maps with significant changes. See more about profiles here: <http://fingerlakesrail.org/elevation-profiles>.

Did you know that you can also click on a track to get more information about the track? When you hover over a track (#2 below) you can see the name, overall length, track type, and blaze color. In addition, the track is highlighted so you can more easily distinguish it from the map background. On some tracks (the Main FLT, branch trails, and major loops) you can click on the track to see if there is also an elevation profile available. 





Thru-Hiking the FLT

Tim Holahan #549



With a 22-pound base-weight pack, I stepped onto the FLT Main Trail on August 20th at the Pennsylvania line, continued eastbound, and hiked continuously to reach Slide Mountain on October 5th. Base weight includes a pack, tent, sleep system, clothes, and gear – everything needed for about two months except food, water, and the day's clothes. My trek included 34 full days of hiking, 5 partials, 6 “Zeros” (no miles), and 2 “NearOs” (few miles). The Zeros enabled rest, shower, laundry, and resupply – and divided the experience into distinct phases.

Phase 1 – Starting

Maps M01-M05

State Line to Bush Hill

86 miles, 9 days

6 Full, 1 Partial, 1 NearO, 1 Zero

Hospitality Highlight: Burger, beer, & battery charge at Madigan's (Ellicottville)

My wife Annette enabled my trek in many ways: backpacking for the first night in August, the last two nights in October, and managing logistics for resupply and rest. On Day 1, Mark Valites – a guy that is seemingly everywhere – joined us for a few miles after completing trail work and installing the new sign at the state line marking the western terminus. In this phase, I kept daily mileage limited to avoid any early injuries. Before departing, I told FLTC Trail Specialist Erin Potter that I'd join a trail work crew at Little Rock City for Day 4 – if she fed me something. She surprised me with Room Service by hiking a hot breakfast to the Rock City Lean-to before a day with a super crew of volunteers building puncheons. That day became my first NearO as I tacked on 3 miles to the old CCC Camp. Hiking a few extra miles when it made sense to stretch the day was a practice that stayed with me.

Phase 2 – Blistering

Maps M05 to M10

Bush Hill to North Hornell

78 miles, 5 days

5 Full, 1 Zero

Hospitality Highlight: Wing night + burger, beer, & battery charge at the Sierra Inn (Swain)

I hike with a proven footwear combination: Altra Lone Peak trail runners, Injini toe-socks, and Darn Toughs. I rarely get blisters yet several days of steady rain brought trench-foot symptoms and painful underfoot blisters. The long, steady downhill into Swain angered those blisters, changed my stride, stiffened my toes, and strained my calf muscles. A room that I'd booked at Swain Ski Center made for a good place to treat my blisters. While I considered staying an extra night to allow my feet to recover, I pushed on and found the former railbed made for an easy, gentle trail and was able to heal while I hiked.

Phase 3 – Strolling

Maps M10 to M14

North Hornell to Sugar Hill

73 miles, 5 days

4 Full, 1 Partial, 1 Zero

Hospitality Highlight: Ice cream at Campers Haven (Bath)

This section got underway in the company of fellow FLTC Board member Chris Proulx who set a brisk pace for the 10 miles from North Hornell to Burt Hill. I continued that nice pace for days as the trail rolled past windmills and hilltops, affording long views of where I had been and where I'd soon be. The hottest days on the trail came during the climb of picturesque yet exposed Cochrane Rd (M11) and up the switchbacks of Urbana's Mt Washington (M12). Sandwiched between those climbs was a pleasant overnight at Campers Haven for a shower, laundry, and a pre-arranged food resupply. A pop-up thunderstorm near Birdseye Hollow brought

an uncomfortably close lightning strike. I raced to get up and over the South Bradford hilltop (M13) before the next storm, made it into the valley before the lightning, and carefully descended in heavy rain to meet the Crystal Hills Branch. By now, full days on trail averaged about 16 miles, approximately one map each day.

Phase 4 – Fatiguing

M14 to M20

Sugar Hill to Hoxie Gorge

130 miles, 9 days

6 Full, 2 Partial, 1 NearO, 1 Zero

Hospitality Highlight: Breakfast at Tobey's Donut Shop
(Watkins Glen)

Hospitality Highlight: Family dinner @ home of friends Keith & Diane

Hospitality Highlight: Great company & dinner buffet @ FLTC Fall Weekend

This phase had a bit of everything: a fire tower, a state campground, a diner, an overnight in a home next to the Bock-Harvey Preserve, a car ride back to Watkins Glen, FLTC Fall Weekend, a hotel stay, and a night hike when I returned to the trail. Jim Rolfe of Ithaca Hikers earned good karma for his upcoming thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. He answered my plea for a ride so we connected as he led a group around the Dabes Diversion Loop (M19). The days now were in the 18-22 mile range and an odd fatigue emerged. Although sleep came easily, fatigue hovered each day. However, it didn't detract from a long run of wonderful days. The Zero at the end of this phase was planned so I could travel to attend a memorial service for my friend Mark. Decades ago he and I earned Eagle Scout together in Cazenovia Troop 18 and learned to camp in the woods alongside the FLT Onondaga Branch.

Phase 5 – Cruising

Maps M20 to M27

Hoxie Gorge to Masonville

104 miles, 6 days

6 Full, 1 Zero

Hospitality Highlight: Burger, beer, and battery charge at The Outpost (East McDonough)

Hospitality Highlight: Burger, beer, and battery charge at The Backdoor Bar (Bainbridge)

One day's food weighs about two pounds; six day's worth weighs a ton. FLTC Board Member Peg Fuller enabled a resupply that allowed me to start with a three-day food bag and then resupply midway for the next three days. Daylight was fading with the fall equinox at hand and some morning or evening hiking required a headlamp. On my way to visit The Outpost, I tripped on the road shoulder, tore my rain pants, and twisted an ankle. Let's be absolutely clear: on this hike, I stumbled INTO – not out of – a bar. A backpack, trekking poles, a thru-hiker's beard, and a friendly disposition make it easy to make friends when entering a bar at midday – I highly recommend it. The remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia joined my hike for a few days such that somewhere close to Bainbridge my feet slid on slippery, silty, sod. Ouch! That slide tore muscle tissue in my left shin. By the bottom of the sidewalk into Bainbridge, it was clear I needed a break so I stopped for a burger and beer at The Backdoor Bar. My plan



Erin Potter

Tim at Little Rock City

was to finish that day in Masonville – 7 miles ahead – where my son Nate would pick me up for a Zero. An Appalachian Trail thru-hiker himself, Nate made sure to arrive early so I could slack pack – his car carried my pack while I did the 5 road walk down into Masonville with just a headlamp and water bottle. Downhill hiking aggravated the muscle tear but with a slow pace, I managed to reach Masonville so that I could avoid having to start the next phase with that road walk.

Phase 6 – Grimacing

Maps M27 to M29

Masonville to Bear Spring Mtn

44 miles, 3 days

3 Full, 1 Zero

The Zero after Masonville was spent with rest, ice, compression, and elevation. I figured a second Zero would not help and if I was careful that I could avoid more damage. Wearing a tight wrap on the leg, I returned to the trail. Slowed by injury, each day now began and ended in the dark. I am very much at ease in the woods at night so just hiked carefully, relaxed, and found each night's campsite in the dark. The climb to the bivouac above Canonsville Reservoir (M28) was exciting with rugged terrain, darkness, swirling mist, and a top-of-the-world feeling. While upland bivouacs and shelters required that I carry three liters of water each night, I always found it worth that effort for cool campsites. Climbing the Houck Mountain Rd. confirmed that my leg preferred uphill over downhill – I began rooting for the climbs and grimaced at the thought of descents. This phase ended in the misty darkness high on Bear Spring Mountain. Annette had parked ahead of me and we hiked towards each other, meeting up by headlamp.

...continued on page 28

Phase 7 – Summitting

Maps M29 to M34

Bear Spring Mtn to Slide Mtn

69 miles, 5 days

4 Full, 1 Partial

Hospitality Highlight: Burger, beer, and battery charge at The Old Schoolhouse Inn (Downsville)

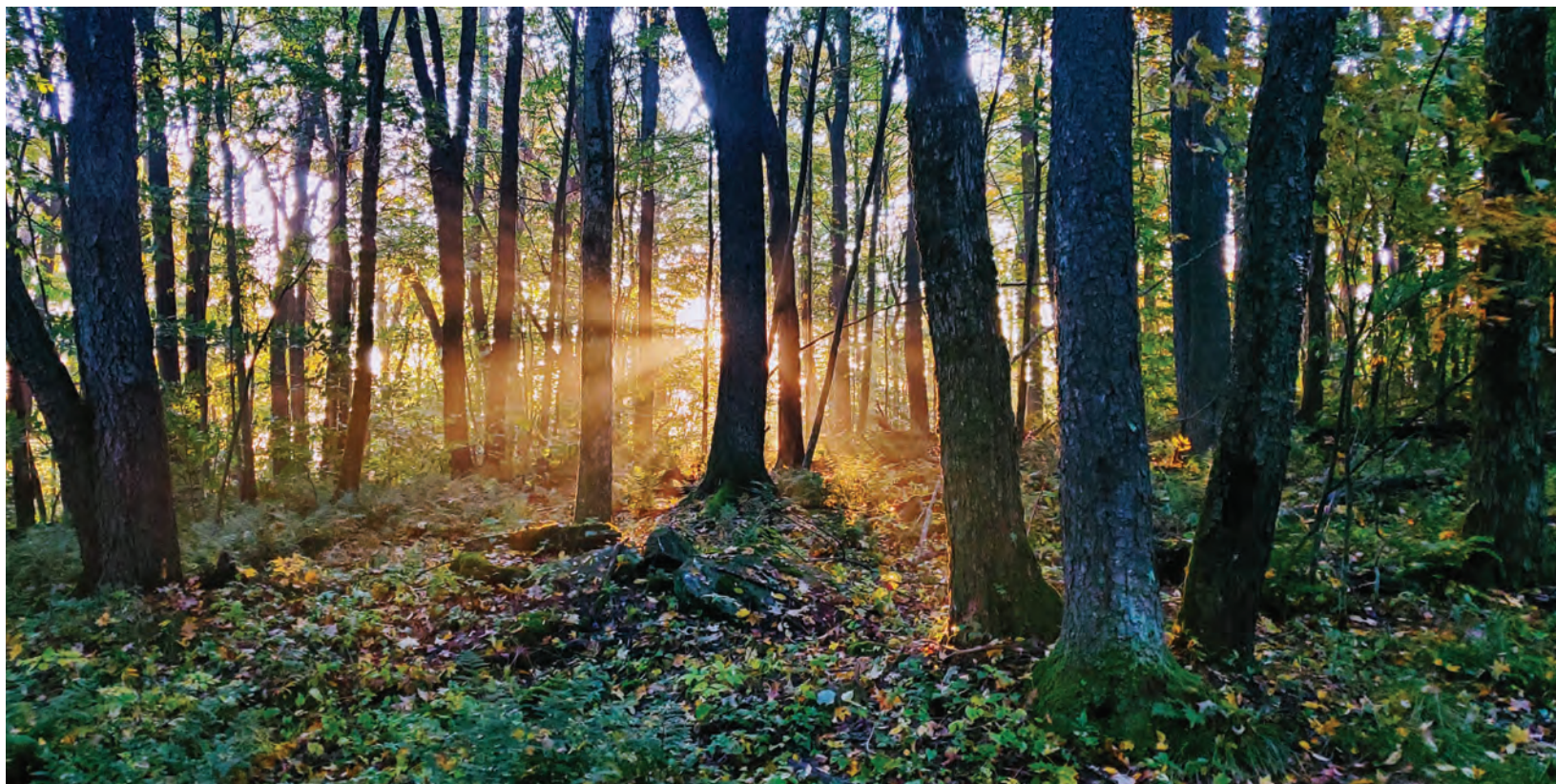
The climb out of Downsville brought another high ridgeline night-hike. My only near-crisis of the trek followed the next day when I failed to manage the day's hydration. Before leaving the Campbell Mountain lean-to, I had my typical breakfast and filtered just 2-liters of water. By mid-afternoon, I realized that I had been upland much of that hot day and water was a problem. Had I looked ahead, I would have taken in more water overnight, guzzled a liter at breakfast, carried 3 full liters from the last stream, and been aware of water sources along the way. I decided to end the day at the Mary Smith Hill Rd bivouac (M30) after less than 11 of the planned 18 miles for the day. The map was correct in that there was no nearby water. I opted against continuing 7 more miles over mountains, in the dark, and while dehydrated. I was about to turn in for an early sleep when good fortune struck - a bow-hunter stepped from the woods and offered a bottle of seltzer and 4 apples. That helped a lot. I started well before dawn the next morning to cross the mountains in cool air and made the 7 miles to water by mid-morning. That experience humbled me and it took about 48 hours to fully resolve the effects of dehydration.

Annette backpacked to meet me at Balsam Lake Mountain Leanto (M32) for the penultimate night on-trail and to slack-pack me for the long road walk through Claryville. I could only laugh about a bridge replacement detour that popped up on Denning Rd (M34). Who wouldn't want to replace two miles of flat road walk with 5.5 miles and 1000'+ of vertical? Fortunately, I knew the detour was coming since fellow FLT thru-hiker Tom "Gumby" Gorman had submitted a Trail Report after he encountered it. For the full length of the trail – from Alleghanies to Catskills – I had been rooting for his thru-hike, signing into each trail register about 10 days after him.

The final climb to Slide Mountain brought a view of fine fall foliage from 4000'. The return hike from the summit gave me a chance to reflect upon time spent on the trail: 45 days, 23 hours from end-to-end. Those days and hours are but a pittance compared to the tens of thousands of volunteer hours invested in the trail each year.

Thanks

Thank you to all sponsors, maintainers, volunteers, landowners, donors, and trail supporters. Your effort, dedication, and generosity make possible the special treasure that is the Finger Lakes Trail! 🍁



Morning on Bear Spring Mountain

Tim Holahan

Trail Topics: Trail Safety

Tim Holahan, VP of Membership and Marketing

Most hikers use some combination of these methods to navigate:

- A visible trail-track on the ground
- Blazes
- Map & compass
- Map & GPS app (E.g., Avenza)
- GPS & .gpx file (E.g., Gaia)

On a heavily traveled trail with pristine conditions, safe navigation may need just the trail track and blazes. Consider conditions where the direction of the next step is not obvious. Suppose you're visiting a park with a casual trail system that is lightly maintained or poorly mapped. Perhaps you're on the FLT or other well-maintained trail where there's some emerging circumstance you are the first to encounter, such as these:

- Fallen leaves
- Snow cover
- Logging debris
- Darkness or fog
- Sunshine or shadows look like blazes
- Blazes faded or fallen
- Trail track not yet worn or visible
- Many game trails or side trails
- Tall weeds or low-hanging branches
- Abandoned or re-routed trail

When the next step forward is unclear, here are a few safe techniques for following the trail - or finding clues to locate it:

- **Find a back-blaze:** When a blaze in the forward direction is not visible, turn around to locate behind you the blaze that a hiker from the opposite direction would see. When I see no such back-blaze, I take it as a wake-up call that I've daydreamed past a turn or followed something that was not my trail. It's time to retrace steps and figure out what happened.
- **Use that back-blaze:** Stand at that back-blaze and scan for places where an oncoming hiker would see it. That blaze was put there for a reason – so find where a hiker would have a clear view of that blaze.
- **Take steps:** If you still see no clues then move forward - carefully. Ensure you can still see your back-blaze and move ahead a few steps. If necessary, take a few more steps, crouch to lower your eyes, or step on higher ground to raise your view. With your eyes in a different place, scan again for clues.
- **Exposed roots:** Scan in all directions to find tree roots made visible by soil erosion or worn by boot traffic. Even when fallen leaves cover the ground, visible roots may stand out and suggest the trail's location.
- **Mud spots:** A muddy or wet spot in the woods that's wide or deep could be the result of hiker traffic. If it's the trail, there will likely be footprints.

- **Erosion:** Duff and soil washed away suggests trail traffic. Look around where the land rises or falls for exposed cutouts that may still be visible when there is leaf cover or light snow.
- **Saw work:** If a tree falls in the woods does anyone hear the Sawyer that responds? Look for fallen trees where a Sawyer has cut and removed a chunk. Even in deep snow, this clue may suggest that the trail passes through that cut.
- **Downed trees:** A storm may have knocked down a blazed tree or logging leftovers may obscure the trail track and blazes. Look carefully around and beyond these places.
- **Terrain features:** Narrow your clue search by consulting a map for terrain features. Does your map suggest the trail continues to follow a feature, such as a ridgeline, valley, or stream? Or does the map suggest the trail will engage some other feature?



Blowdown turn blaze.

It's likely some combination of these methods will connect you with the trail. If not, then it's time to determine whether to search further for the trail or find some Plan B, such as an alternate trail. Here are 3 steps to help evaluate that decision:

First, consider whether your current navigation practice depends completely upon the visibility of a well-worn trail track and blazes. Are you prepared to use other methods, such as map & compass or GPS?

Second, could you use a map & compass or GPS at this moment and in this place should you find yourself away from trails, unsure of your location, and must navigate a return to safety? For GPS tools, do you have: skill with the app, a reliable data file, capability without cell service, and sufficient battery power?

Finally, are you hiking land free of hazards, and where it's appropriate to explore to find the trail? Some state parks have areas with hazards where exploring is prohibited. For the FLT, permission to hike on private land is limited to just the trail itself

- so exploring off trail is not permitted.

These answers narrow when it's safe to explore to find the trail:

1. You can navigate with multiple methods.
2. You are prepared right now to use a map & compass or reliable GPS, and
3. Land use permissions allow it. Consider these questions carefully when determining if it's safe to move forward - or wise to turn back.

Happy - and safe - hiking! 🍁



Blowdown turn blaze.

Tim Holahan



Trail Projects: Trail Maintenance

John Schmitt, VP of Trail Maintenance

2023 has been a busy trail maintenance year. In addition to the basic trail maintenance (brushing, debris removal, grass and weed cutting, and blazing) many workdays were spent on other tasks. These included the building and repair of puncheons, cleaning and installing drainage, benching and berm removal, and removal of large down trees. Considerable emphasis was placed on bridges and their condition:

L1 Letchworth 16 ft bridge replacement
B2 Bristol Branch Bean Station Road bridge removals (8)
Planning for two new bridges in 2024
B3 Bristol Branch ladder/bridge repair.
M1 Allegany SP bridge repair planning for 2024.
M6 bridge leveling & anti-slip surface installation.
M16 Cayuta Creek Bridge removal
M19 Odell bridge - planning for 2024
M22 bridge - planning for 2024
M27 Cold Creek bridge extension
M27 Dry Brook bridge removal

Many other bridges were inspected.

I thank all of the regional trail coordinators, the seasonal trail specialist, section sponsors/maintainers, roving trail crew members, and other workday participants who have made 2023 a very productive year.

2024 looks to be another very busy trail maintenance year.

Do you know the difference between a Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) section Sponsor and a Maintainer?

A section Sponsor is an individual or organization/club that sponsors and maintains a section of the FLT. Individual Sponsors may have sections that range from approximately one mile to a few miles. Organization/Club Sponsors have sections that range from many miles to over 100 hundred miles and may be subdivided into subsections with Maintainers (in some cases also called Stewards).

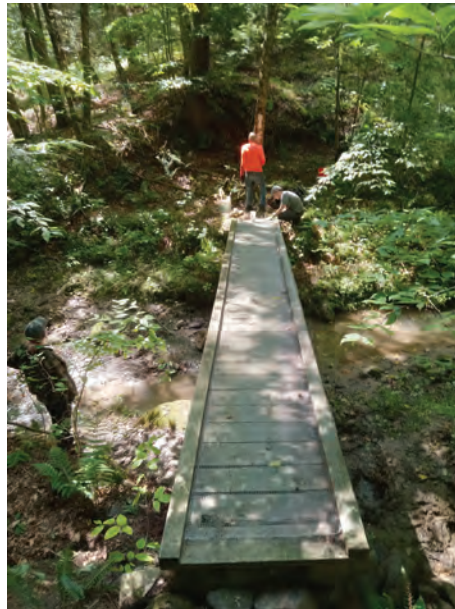
Maintainers are individuals who maintain a subsection within an Organization/Club sponsored section.

As an incentive to volunteers, Sponsors are offered free membership in the FLTC, and Maintainers are offered 50% off on



John Schmitt

The M6 bridge before it was repaired.



John Schmitt

Erin Potter, Barry Erickson, and Mare Steiniger put the finishing touches on the newly repaired M6 bridge.



John Schmitt

Beginning to demo the M16 Cayuta Creek Bridge. Amanda King is pictured.

the FLTC membership fee. Sponsors can also claim \$5/mile of trail maintained to help defray incidental expenses. This \$5/mile can be claimed when the annual volunteer census is submitted.

In 2022, volunteers donated more than 20,000 hours to the FLTC. Over 9,000 hours of the total were on public land.

The 2023 Volunteer Census will be coming up shortly. Please compile your volunteer hours if you have not already done so. Be specific as to map number and public land unit if possible. Be sure to include travel time, and both your trail work and non-trail work volunteer time.

A separate, specific notification and instructions will be made when the online census form is ready. Sponsors usually report hours directly to the online census form. Maintainers typically report hours to their Club, Organization, RTC, or Crew Leader who then input the combined hours into the Volunteer Census. The Maintainer may or may not need to separately input non-trail work hours into the Volunteer Census. Check with your Club/Organization/RTC if unsure.

Non-trail work (including travel time) is reported in several categories:

- **Administration (Admin)**– Club, Organization, or FLTC Board and Committee work: meetings, office work, writing, editing, accounting, etc.
- **Interpretation and Outreach (Interp)**– leading hikes, promotion, education, brochure development, etc.
- **General Resource Work (GRW)**– GIS/GPS mapping, planning, land protection/acquisition.
- **Training (Train)**– Training you have received or conducted: construction, maintenance, safety, sawyer, etc.

We thank David Malinowski for all of his work during his several years as Regional Trail Coordinator (RTC) for the Genesee West region (Maps M4, M5, and M6). David has decided to resign from the RTC position. We are now looking for a new RTC for the Genesee West Region. [See separate article (page 8)].

We are also looking for Landowner Relations volunteer(s), in particular, to assist the RTC for the Genesee West region. Volunteers are also welcome for other regions. This would be similar to landowner relations assistance to RTCs by club-sponsored regions.

Additional trail section volunteers are always in need.

2024 dates to note:

April 6, 2024, Trail Council meeting at Canandaigua, NY. This has not been held for the last several years.

April 26 & 27 and May 3 & 4 2024 – Two Sawyer classes. The final details are still being worked out. A third Sawyer class in June is being looked into as the April & May classes are full, with a waiting list.

June 9 to June 15, 2024- AlleyCat week in Allegany State Park in partnership with the American Hiking Society (AHS) Volunteer Vacation program. AHS participation pending application acceptance and volunteer interest. 🍁

Contact: John Schmitt
john.schmitt@fingerlakestrail.org



Trail Projects: Trail Construction Projects

Mike TenKate, Crews and Construction Coordinator

Hello! It has been a busy year for trail construction, some projects completed, some delayed to next year, and a couple of new ones added.

The 2024 Schedule is full as of press time we are still working out a lot of the details and dates. I will email updates to the email list and make sure they get posted on the FLT website. Here is what we have so far:

Allegany State Park Alley Cat (M-1) trail reconstruction. We are looking to continue our partnership with the American Hiking Society and their Volunteer Vacations. We will also have openings for local volunteers as well. This will be part of a multi-year project and have many pieces: lean-to staining and roofing, bridge staining and replacement, drainage, punchcoons, etc. etc. There is a lot to do here. I will be the project leader. Dates are June 10 through 14. For more information, contact me (mike_tenkate@yahoo.com).

Odell Road bridge (M-19). Construction of a new bridge to eliminate the need for a high-water bypass. Leaders will be Chuck and MJ Uttech. Dates are pending, contact Don (beaverhollow@frontiernet.net) for more information.

Route 219 Reroute Alley Cat (M-3). We are hoping to reroute an extremely steep section of trail above Route 219 north of

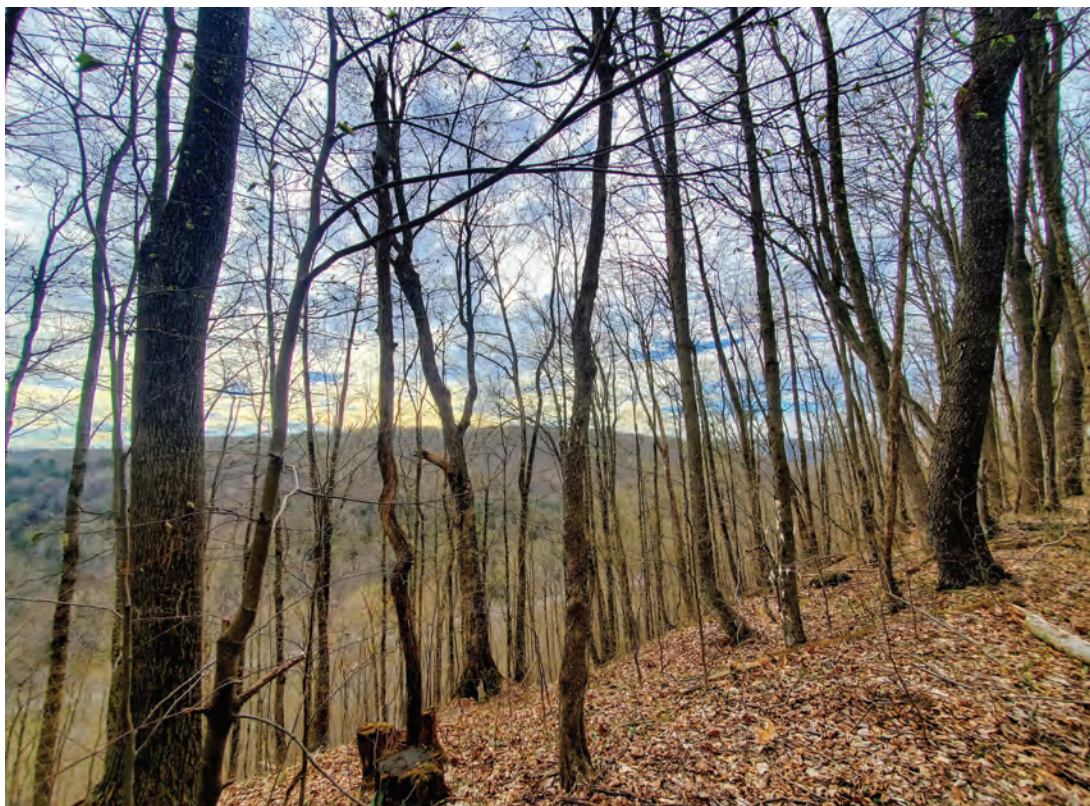
Ellicottville and construct a bridge. Lots of planning is still needed with this, but very hopefully we can get this all pulled together. Leaders will be Donna and Marty Ruszaj. Contact Donna or Marty for more information (dmruszaj@buffalo.edu and msruszaj@gmail.com).

Allegany County Lean-to Alley Cat (M-8). We will be constructing a new lean-to to close an existing gap between lean-tos. Leaders will be Peter Wybron and Mike Ogden. Contact Peter for more information (prwybron@rochester.rr.com).

Bristol Hills Branch replacement bridges (B1). Replacement of a series of ten bridges between Elbois Road and Bean Station Road. We will be removing the 10 old bridges this fall and replacing them with two new bridges in the spring. Leader will be Jeff Darling. Contact Jeff for more information (jdarling851@gmail.com).

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions about any of these projects or other concerns. 🍁

Contact: Mike TenKate
Mike_tenkate@yahoo.com
607/543-1803



Nicole Pane

Looking down the steep switchbacks from the trail, west of Route 219 in Ellicottville (M3).

Trail Projects: Little Rock City Project

Erin Potter, Trail Specialist

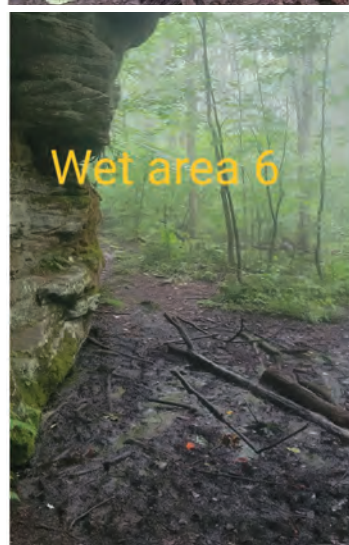
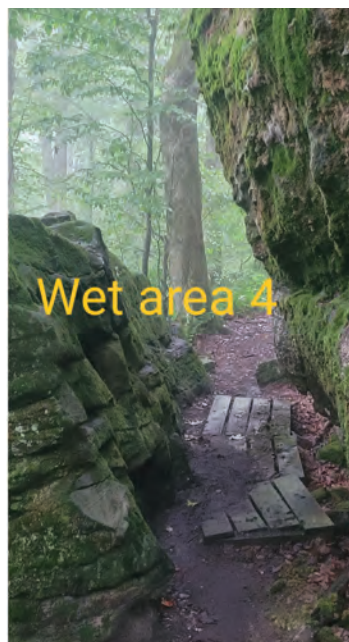
Little Rock City is a unique part of the FLT/NCT, located near Ellicottville, NY. The interesting geology and maze through boulders make this spot quite popular. The trails here are also notoriously wet. Old, broken puncheons, poor drainage, and hikers walking around, not through, the mud have created some problem areas. One spot is a stinky bog on either side of the heavy puncheon that proved difficult to remove. With so many families visiting this area, the section maintainers knew this had to be addressed.

John Schmitt, VP of Trail Maintenance, scouted out the area and provided detailed notes for the project. With tremendous help from Mike TenKate, Coordinator of Crews and Construction, the lumber for brand-new puncheons was prepped and delivered to the trailhead. On August 24th, our amazing volunteers worked hard to haul the dense lumber to the trouble spots, haul out old material, and assemble the new puncheons. Drainage work was done to allow the standing water to flow off the trail. The All-Star team included Renee and Dan Gietz, Sue Tomkins, Mare Steiniger, as well as thru-hiker Tim Holahan, and on a second workday, Cato Cannizzo joined.

It was a physically demanding day but so rewarding to see the finished product and have visitors thanking us as we worked. Anti-slip material was added to the puncheons later, on a very rainy day, showing that these volunteers are dedicated to improving the trail for hikers to enjoy. The popular trail is much safer and more sustainable due to the efforts of our amazing volunteers. 🍁



Erin Potter



Erin Potter



Erin Potter



Erin Potter



Trail Topics: Trail Preservation Report

David Newman, VP of Trail Preservation

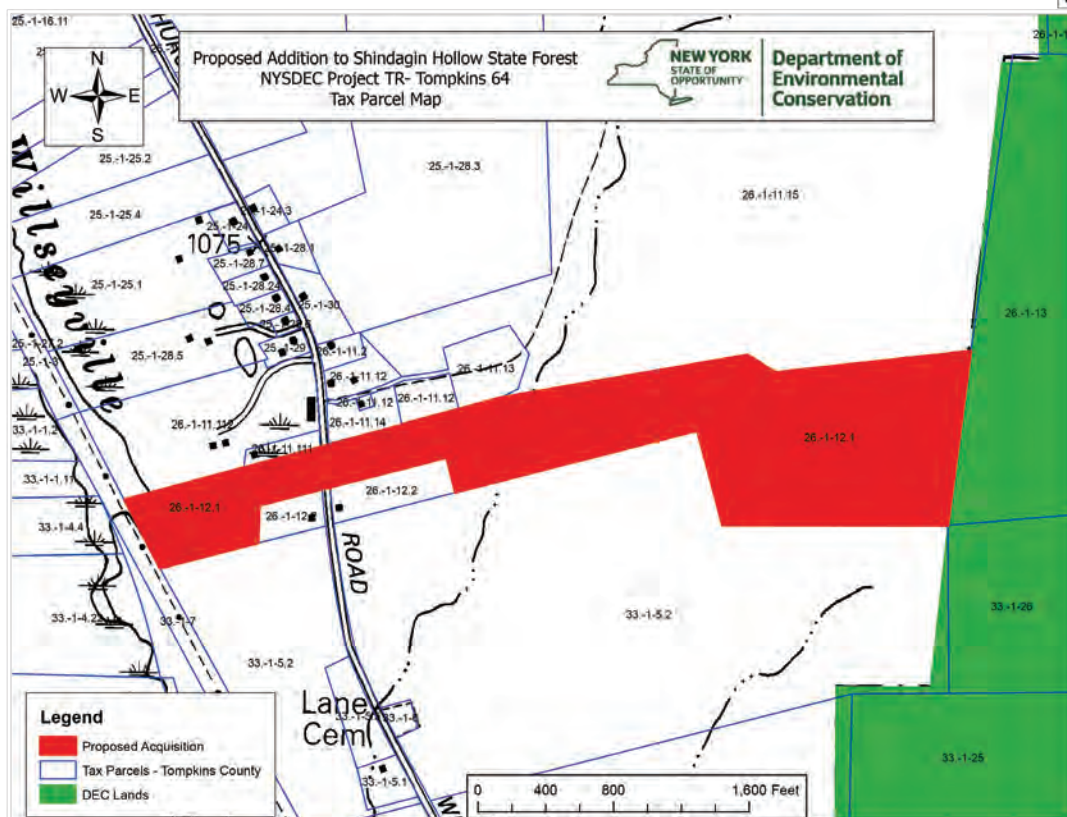
Sometimes good things take a while. It was back in May of 2017 when Regional Trail Coordinator David Priester alerted us to a pending sale of a “key” trail parcel just 10 miles south of Ithaca. Your FLT Board took a big step and agreed to purchase the property, which included a house and barn as well as about 65 acres, a process that took until November. With lots of assistance from members of the local Cayuga Trails Club, we had sold the house and barn and about 5 acres of the property by November 2017 and we had a verbal agreement with Region 7 DEC that they would put the 60-acre portion of the property into their acquisition plans. Based on what DEC told us, and advice from our good friends at the Finger Lakes Land Trust, we expected to have our Sidote Trail Preservation Funds tied up in the property for three to four years.

Well, it took six! I’m pleased to announce that on November 2, 2023, we finally closed on the sale and the protected trail is now a part of Shindagin Hollow State Forest. Along the way we installed a parking area at the White Church Road trail crossing, and David Priester and his team relocated the trail on the property (which we owned) to their preferred location before we sold it, with a deed restriction protecting the trail as a pedestrian foot trail. That was important, as Shindagin Hollow State Forest has extensive mountain bike trails, and if DEC wishes to extend those trails down to White Church Road, they’ll need to be on a separate path from the FLT/NCT foot trail.

This was a BIG DEAL project for FLTC. The map shows the new State lands, in red, and the pre-existing Shindagin Hollow State Forest in green. To the bottom left, you can also see the linear strip parcel where the railroad line used to run, which is now a utility corridor and the FLT route. The DEC folks were pretty excited about this project as it provides a protected wildlife corridor from the higher elevations at the east, down to the Wiltseyville Creek valley on the west, while of course, we were excited to get a permanently protected trail route, as well as improved trailhead parking at White Church Road.

Thanks for making this happen go to David Priester, Gary Mallow, and the other Cayuga Trails Club members who identified the possibility and helped with the house sale and the trail reroutes, and to our friends at DEC who shepherded the paperwork through a longer process than any of anticipated, to the FLTC Board who approved using our Sidote Trail Preservation Funds in this project, and to the many folks who have contributed to the Forever Society and the Sidote Trail Preservation Fund that allows us to have the resources to tackle a \$250,000 project like this. Now that we’ve closed on the DEC sale, the cash can go back to the Sidote Fund for use on the next project. 🍁

Contact: Dave Newman
danewman@rochester.rr.com
585/582-2725





Answers to the Fall 2023 "Name That Map!" Quiz

So, you hiked the FLT or parts of it. Let's see how observant you were!
Send your guess to: Jacqui at jwensich@rochester.rr.com

Previous Picture:



Jacqui Wmsich

**M22 Section 7,
Deruyter, NY**

Correctly Id:
Terry McConnell
Harold Kyle
Tessa Careaga
Lynne Fitzpatrick

New Picture:



Brad Benjamin

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*FLTC Executive Director Deb Nero and her canine companions on the Onondaga
Branch Trail in Highland Forest County Park.
Photo by Ruth Dorrough*

