

Finger Lakes Trail

NEWS

Winter 2024



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-  *FLT Award Recipients*
-  *Rattlesnake Hill Gets A Lean-to*

Winter 2024

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!



Ron Heerkens Jr / Goat Factory Media

Finger Lakes Trail News

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Hikers assemble at Birdseye Hollow for the 2024 Steuben County Hike Series. Photo by Ron Heerkens Jr / Goat Factory Media

President's Message

Chris Proulx

As I write my first President's column for the *FLT News*, allow me to start with an introduction. I first got involved with the Trail in 2000 as a volunteer trail maintainer for the Buttermilk Spur on Map M17 in Tompkins County. Shortly thereafter, I joined the Cayuga Trails Club (CTC), where I served on the Board, led hikes, and maintained the Van Lone Loop trail in Schuyler County, Map M16. After several years of hiatus with the FLTC and CTC, my friends and I started maintaining a section of trail in Danby State Forest (M17) during the pandemic. I also started volunteering with the County Hike Series and enjoyed that service for three years. In 2022, I responded to Pat Monahan's call in the *Finger Lakes Trail News*, joined the FLTC board, and have seen firsthand the amazing effort put forth by volunteers all across the trail. I am now honored to follow in the footsteps of the incredibly committed volunteers who have provided leadership to the Finger Lakes Trail over the past 60 years. I am grateful for the support and mentorship of Pat Monahan, who served as President for 15 years until September 2024.

This has been a year of transition for the organization. We hired Nathan Hayes in March to replace Deb Nero as our Executive Director and he has hit the ground (or should we say the trail?) running. His leadership is already making a difference in how we communicate, collaborate, and work together across the trail system. In addition to Pat's transition in September, several other board members and officers completed their terms. We owe a debt of gratitude to the outgoing board members and officers from the 2024 class: Lisa Barrett, Terry Meacham, Ann Bayley, Chris Degolyer, and Lisette Brennan. At the Annual Members Meeting, we voted to approve Dave Newman, Lori Chiarilli, and Diane Fulkerson to the Board. Harold Kyle was appointed earlier in the year to fill a vacancy. I am confident this leadership team will continue to steward and advance our mission in the year ahead.

From October 25-27, we held our annual Finger Lakes Trail leadership retreat at the Y at Watson Woods retreat center in Painted Post. Board members, officers, as well as several Regional Trail Coordinators (RTCs) and Club Presidents, came together to share, discuss, and align on key plans and priorities for 2025. We also began a process to consider and document a set of core values for the organization. A draft set of statements was developed which will be further refined by the Board's Strategy and Talent Committee for additional board consideration at our December meeting. More to come from that work. These values will inform our next Strategic Plan, which will be developed in 2025.

Soon, you will receive in your mailbox (and in your inbox) our 2024 Fall Appeal messaging. This organization thrives on thousands of hours of volunteer labor each year. And yet, we also need to invest financially to ensure that these volunteer efforts are making the most difference on the trail that we all love. The board and staff are amazing stewards of our financial resources so you can be assured your financial support has an immediate impact on the Trail. However, our growing community of trail users, severe and unexpected storms, and the rising costs of nearly all supplies stretch our budget. Please consider making a generous contribution this year to support our work. It is vital that we continue to ensure the financial foundation of the FLTC, so it is as strong as the people who use and maintain it. Thank you for your generosity and spirit of community. 🍁



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2025 COUNTY HIKE SERIES
IS HEADING TO ALLEGANY COUNTY!

Stay tuned for next year's hike dates, event sponsors, and more.
We'll see you next summer!



Rattlesnake Hill Lean-to

Story and Photos by Peter Wybron

After 2 ½ years of delays, I'm glad to report that the construction of the Rattlesnake Hill Lean-to was started on Thursday afternoon October 3, 2024, and completed on Sunday morning October 6, 2024. The lean-to is located on Map M8 on an orange spur trail west of England Hill Road. To quote Rob Hughes, "This build was perfect in every way, great folks, great weather, great finished product. Gonna be tough to top this one." Rob, from Big Beams Timber Frames, designed and prepared the lean-to before it was delivered to the site. The Alley Cat Crew consisted of 20 volunteers. Some worked one or two days while others worked all 4 days. The crew was housed at The Mountainside Inn located at the Swain Ski Resort in Swain NY.

On Thursday afternoon the crew hauled in the pressure-treated lumber for the base and floor of the lean-to. The picnic table frame and lumber, along with the privy lumber and a large (heavy) fire ring, were also hauled into the site.

By the end of the day on Friday, the base and floor were built, the picnic table was assembled, the fire ring was placed, and the privy was almost completed. At the same time, all of the lean-to timbers were hauled into the site. There was also a crew working to clear the spur trail to the lean-to and a trail leading to a pond located nearby.

On Saturday the crew, with directions from Rob, raised the timber frame and installed the siding and roof boards. At the same time, the privy was completed and another crew completed clearing and blazing the orange spur trail along with blazing some of the main trail nearby. Due to the large crew size, another three-woman



crew split off to clear a section of the main trail off of Isaman Hill Rd.

On Sunday morning the crew installed the trim boards and a metal roof. The site was cleaned up and all the tools were loaded into the trailer to be returned to Mt Morris. So, by 12 pm Sunday the Alley Cat lean-to project was completed.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who worked on the Alley Cat lean-to project: Rob Hughes, Mike Ogden, Mike TenKate, Dave & Laurel Newman, Michele McCall, Todd Beverly, Terry Meacham, April Miller, Celeste Schoonover, Ann Bayley, Howie Fetes, Erin Potter, Mike Kramer, Clyde Morrison, John Schmitt, Marty Butler, Paul Penner, Deborah Borie, and Carol Mahl. Thank you all.

Two of the Alley Cat crew members that did not work on the lean-to-build but were an important part of the project are Ann Bayley and her friend Howie Fetes, our cooks for the weekend. They spent many hours in the kitchen preparing meals for the crew. They were the first ones up in the morning and the last to go to bed. They did all the shopping and prepared food before and during the Alley Cat weekend. I couldn't have done this without their help. Thank you!

The Rattlesnake Hill Lean-to is located on Allegany County Forest property. I want to thank Brooke Harris, Chairman of the Allegany County Board of Legislators, for all his help. He was instrumental in attaining approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County of Allegany and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, which allowed the FLTC to construct the Rattlesnake Hill Lean-to on Allegany County property. Thank you, Brooke!

So, the next time you're near Allegany County, stop and check out Map M8, hike up England Hill Road (and I mean up), and check out the newest lean-to on the Finger Lakes Trail. Again, to quote Rob Hughes "Of the six different lean-tos I have built for the FLT, this one is my favorite. The frame is unique, and the site is perfect." 🍁



End-to-End Update

Jacqui Wensich, End-to-End Coordinator



Main:

#558 Cindy Ripple, Hornell
#559 Mary Ruth Merkel, Rochester
#560 Kurt Behrenfeld, Cortland
#561 Quinn Wright, 2nd (#245), Buffalo
#562 Jill E Wilson, Scipio Center
#563 Randall Roberts, Strongville, OH
#564 Maia Pritchard, Corning
#565 Serena Cooke, Attica
#566 Lisa D'Angelo, Leicester

Branch:

#147 Amy Lopata (#500), Rochester
#148 April R Miller, Wayland
#149 Diane Lebo Wallace (#526), Ithaca

Comments:

There have been several hikers who have not sent in their report of finishing the branch/main trails. This means they do not have the correct finisher number, and this affects other hikers. Please let me know on the same day or the next day when you finish. Then, you can send in your documentation. It will not be official until I receive the documentation, but the number will be correct. (Ed Sidone was very firm on that.) It is also good to send in your application ahead of time. I will update the finish on the application.

Available for hikers: M3 AP7 Cabin. The cabin is locked; contact owner #475 John Kiczek by email cabin6809@gmail.com for access instructions prior to visiting. Thank you for your generous support.

Car Spotters:

Welcome to Jessica Kerns of Ithaca. She is willing to spot M17-19. She is currently hiking the trail with the help of her husband. Please let me know if you cannot contact a spotter. Just like the maps, things change. Email jwensich@rochester.rr.com for the application. You are a vital part of hiking our trails. Your information is not on the website.

We have lost over 14 car spotters in the last several years. Please consider being a spotter most importantly in M1-5, M27-34, and the Branch Trails. 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' (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 the 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. 🍁



John Wallace

Diane Lebo Wallace (#526) at the Rainbow Bridge terminus of the Conservation Trail, completing her Branch Trail end-to-end as finisher #149.

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Executive Director Report

Nathan Hayes

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, I hope a thick blanket of snow covers the ground, and our snowshoes and skis are stacked by the door and have seen plenty of use. As I write this, I can't predict the winter weather, but I can predict an exciting year of protecting and maintaining miles of trail and growing our community of trail enthusiasts. Collaboration is a key part of our strategy for 2025.

It's been a real pleasure getting to know the groups and hiking clubs that play such a crucial role in maintaining and promoting our trails, especially the personal touches they bring to the trail. During a recent visit to the Bullthistle Hiking Club near Norwich, NY, I discovered a charming lean-to where I could have easily spent hours enjoying a stash of Halloween candy while relaxing in a rocking chair. I also admired the famous Bullthistle Bridge, complete with built-in seating and the engraved names of those who helped construct it.

I've also been collaborating with the Foothills Trail Club as we prepare for this year's County Hike Series in Allegany County. They are pre-hiking sections, recruiting hike leaders and sag wagon support, and sharing their local knowledge and advice. I attended a business meeting of the Adirondack Mountain Club-Onondaga Chapter at the beautiful Highland

Forest County Park near Fabius. It was a great opportunity to discuss the future plans of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and the importance of better understanding local issues so we can preserve our trails for future generations.

With each visit and conversation, I feel encouraged by the prospect of a stronger trail community. In this new year, I invite you to support not only the work of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference but also our partner organizations. Consider participating in our new programs like the Women's Trail Weekend or Hike Yoga, volunteering your time, renewing your memberships, or becoming members of our partner organizations. No matter how you choose to contribute or participate, I look forward to seeing you out on the trail! 🍁



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In Memory of Mary Coffin

Mary Crittenden Coffin, 81, from Chittenango died peacefully on October 25 under Crouse Hospital life-ending palliative care. She had multiple sudden strokes.

Growing up in a rural family setting she finished high school in LeRoy, NY, college at SUNY Potsdam, and her graduate work in science education at Syracuse University. Her 34 years of teaching included East Syracuse Minoa Central School, Syracuse University, and on assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Burma. She was cited repeatedly for being an excellent teacher.

She was most active in the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, North Country Trail Association, and the Adirondack Mountain Club. Her crowning achievement was leading a scouting team to connect the 4800-mile North Country National Scenic Trail across the entire Adirondacks. She is remembered for

her conservation work and teaching at the Canastota Great Swamp.

Mary led many extended hiking trips across the nation and overseas. She loved scuba diving, hiking, rock climbing and skiing. She was the most considerate and caring person and which was the reason why so many people loved her.

Surviving is her husband, William Coffin, sisters Margerie Martin and Alice Crittenden, nephew, Eric Crittenden and step-family, William Coffin Jr., Benjamin Coffin, Douglas Coffin, Thomas Coffin and Laura Coffin Bauer. This descends to 8 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Mary's choice for contributions would have included the Crouse Hospital, Francis House, Great Swamp and long-distance hiking trail perpetuity.

My End-to-End Journey

Cindy Ripple #558

My end-to-end journey was an incredibly fulfilling and rewarding experience. I had been a sporadic hiker exploring some National Parks, thirteen Adirondack high peaks, and local Finger Lakes Trails.

Gratefully, I have been physically active all my life. In my mid-50s, I started running and over the next ten years, I ran a lot of races including two marathons. Meanwhile, my friend, Mary Nichols, invited me to hike nearby Finger Lakes Trails periodically. Our friend, Chris Kernan, started joining us. We hiked some branch trails and main trails in Steuben County. Then my adult son, Mike Ripple, discovered the enjoyment of hiking together and relished the opportunity to explore new places.

With the COVID pandemic in 2020, running races stopped and hiking became my passion. Hiking with Mary, Chris, or Mike, we would drive two cars, leaving one at each trailhead. In 2022, Mike became very influential and encouraged me to hike the entire main trail. We started filling in the gaps and organized the process. The further distant hikes we drove separately, stayed overnight, did a long hike, and drove home.

I love hiking and challenging myself, but Mike, Mary, or Chris sometimes were not available, so I started hiking solo. I would drop my bike at the end of the trailhead, drive my truck back to the beginning trailhead, hike, and then bike back to the truck. After a few times with my old Schwinn bike in the Cortland hills, I switched to an e-bike - much better!

I have had many adventures; some amazing and some not so much, as with any outdoor activity. I got completely turned around in Hoxie Gorge State Forest and had to backtrack. I misjudged a Spring snowstorm and slogged my way through Otselic State Forest, periodically losing blazes. I will forever remember the sting of running through patches of stinging nettles.

I danced in the rain, sang to the bears, saw beautiful waterfalls and gorgeous countryside, met wonderful people, enjoyed the quiet of the woods, and experienced the diversity of the forests and trails all while embracing the challenge.

The camaraderie of hiking with my friends and sons has been invaluable. My son, Nick Ripple, also joined me to hike/bike all of



Nate Ripple

Map M26. My daughter, Kirsten Payan, hiked Map M1 with me. I have certainly learned a lot about hiking, finding blazes, using maps, timing hikes, navigating blowdowns, crossing streams, attempting to drive on “seasonal roads”, being prepared, and avoiding dogs and bears. Chris no longer believes me when I say we are only hiking ten miles, as she knows it’s probably closer to 12-13!

In self-reflection, I recognize my resilience, tenacity, sense of adventure, and confidence that have grown all while seeking the beauty of nature.

The climax of my journey ended on Slide Mountain on August 26, 2024, with my four adult children Nate, Nick, Mike, and Kirsten, and my friend, Chris. They drove from Rochester to hike and celebrate my

accomplishment. I could not have been more grateful for their support, enthusiasm, and effort to participate in my ending hike. My goal was to finish at age 70 and I did!

I want to acknowledge my partner, Bill Berry, who was glad when I came out of the woods and returned home after each hike. The FLT is a terrific organization, and I am thankful to the volunteers who help maintain the footpath. I’ve become such a supporter; I am now a Trail Steward on Map M11. Next up, Branch Trails here I come! 🍁

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



Awards Ceremony, Fall Weekend Festival

Article by Deb Nero and Photos by Colin Parrish

Saturday, September 21, 2024

The evening began with a few introductory words from Pat Monahan the President of the Board of Managers. Pat introduced Nathan Hayes, the newish Executive Director of the FLTC.

The first heartfelt recognition and thanks was to Pat Monahan, the outgoing President of the Board. Pat has held this somewhat thankless position for 15 years, working with 4 different Executive Directors and running several meetings each year with the Board of Managers to keep the organization moving forward. Pat is also the Regional Trail Coordinator for the Crystal Hills Branch Trail and an FLTC-certified sawyer. Pat's contributions as President of the Board of the FLTC were acknowledged with brief tributes from Roger Hopkins, Dave Newman, Terry Meacham, and Deb Nero followed by the presentation of an engraved crystal plaque.



◀ Deb Nero & Jill Wilson



Pat Monahan & Lori Chiarilli

Next, the hikers who had completed all 6 of the Steuben County Hike series were recognized. These hikers had hiked all 65 miles of the FLT in Steuben County in order to receive their completion certificate and patch.

For five of these hikers who had completed the Steuben County Hike series, this meant completing their End-to-End (E2E) of the main FLT. These five hikers received their E2E patches from Deb Nero. They will be awarded their completion numbers and name badges once Jacqui Wensich, the E2E Hike Coordinator, finalizes their completion times. These hikers are:

Jill Wilson
Maia Pritchard
Serena Cooke

Randall Roberts
Lisa D'Angelo

▶ Deb Nero, Lisa D'Angelo & Serena Cooke

▶ Deb Nero & Randall Roberts



◀ Deb Nero & Maia Pritchard



Recipients of FLTC awards were recognized for their contributions to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

Wally Wood Distinguished Service Award – **Sigi Schwinge**
Irene Szabo Benefactor Award – **Roger and Whitney Bagnall**
Clar-Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award – **Warren Johnson**
Erv Markert Distinguished Contribution Award – members of **Cargill Salt of Watkins Glen**
Gerry Benedict Alley Cat Award – **Rob Hughes**
Bill and Ellen Garrison Landowner Recognition Award – **Carl States**

Wally Wood Distinguished Service 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 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 founding President of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

The 2024 recipient of the Wally Wood Distinguished Service Award is **Sigi Schwinge**.



Sigi Schwinge & Pat Monahan

Siglinda (Sigi) Schwinge and her late husband, Horst, are end-to-enders of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) and all branch trails, with Sigi having completed the main trail three times. Sigi has been instrumental in coordinating, organizing, and pre-hiking the popular FLTC Cross County Hikes for several seasons. This event demands a major coordinating job. She has been known to perform a bit of trail clearing while pre-hiking.

Sigi is a trail steward for two FLT/NCT sections, one on Map O1 and another on Map O2. After her husband, Horst, passed, Sigi donated funds to build a lean-to with a picnic table in his memory above the Cheningo Day Use area on M21. Sigi also served several terms on the FLTC Board of Managers.

As an active member of Adirondack Mountain Club, Onondaga Chapter (ADK-ON) Sigi is a frequent hike leader, leading hikes every Monday for ADK ON and friends, and a coordinator of

ADK ON Walking Wednesdays. She is a past Chapter Chair of ADK-ON and frequent trail worker.

As part of ADK’s former Conservation Committee’s Adopt-a-Wild Land Program, ADK-ON adopted Pigeon Lake Wilderness and Sigi is the chapter coordinator, scheduling work trips to clear various trails in this special place.

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.

2024 recipients of the Irene Szabo Benefactor Award are **Roger and Whitney Bagnall**

It takes a certain kind of person to open up and just plain give for the greater good of the community. Giving takes many forms such as sharing your time, talent, and treasures. We have many people who volunteer their time to help maintain the trail, lead hikes, and even serve on the Board. There are others who use their talents as volunteers for the Finger Lakes Trail. It could be someone who understands mapping or maybe someone who is able to be a project manager for an Alleycat crew.

This year the FLTC is giving the Szabo Award to two people who have been generous with their treasure. This couple has provided generous financial support for the mission of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference for years and years (since 2016). This support has helped the FLTC to do all the things that need to be done in order to offer any user a great experience in nature. The Bagnalls do this because there is something good that comes out of giving from the heart. Roger and Whitney Bagnall Award are true models of benefactors. We are very proud to give them the Irene Szabo Benefactor Award for their generous financial support of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

Clar-Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award

This award is given to an individual or pair of individuals who have made a significant contribution over a period of time as trail workers. Harry Clar and Edward Willis are two outstanding examples of great dedication and long-time service in building and maintaining many miles of the Finger Lakes Trail System.

The 2024 recipient of the Clar-Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award is **Warren Johnson**.



Deb Nero & Warren Johnson ...continued on page 10

Warren Johnson joined the FLTC in 2001. He is a charter member of the Bullthistle Hiking Club (BHC) and has been a trail maintainer for over 20 years. Over the years he was a trail maintainer for Campbell Mountain in Catskills, then Oquaga Creek spur from FLT, then his BHC section Johnson St. to Church Hill including Perkins Lean-to and blue spur trail.

He never hesitates to join in bigger workday projects. Notably, he helped build the Bullthistle Bridge on Map 23 off Rt. 23 as well as the reroute that resulted in taking that section off the road and back into the woods. Over the years he has helped with trail and puncheon building along the FLT as well as Round Pond in Plymouth where the BHC maintains trails.

Warren has hiked the FLTC and is End-to-End # 141, completed June 30, 2002. Among his favorite stories is finishing his E2E with Ed Sidote following him on road walk portions slowing and yelling to people that “this man is finishing the Finger Lakes Trail”. He has also completed the New York Fire Tower Challenge. He’s a longtime member of the Forest Fire Lookout Association, New York Chapter, spent several weekends over the years stewarding at Catskill Fire towers, and has been a volunteer and early supporter of the Berry Hill Fire Tower group. He has also led many hikes across central NY for the hiking club over the years. He is proud of his Norwegian heritage and has done much winter hiking and climbing in temperatures in the negative 20 degrees.

His photography should be noted. Warren has had many of his photos published in the FLT News magazine as well as cover photos. He is also a regular contributor to the Facebook page: FLT Hikers & Friends.

In his honor, the BHC named a small bridge (puncheon) the “Johnson Bridge” in the section he has maintained for years. Warren is known by many in the hiking community for his sense of humor and good nature. In the words of Tom Bryden, BHC RTC, “Warren is a character.” His other interests are early railroads, and he is a volunteer in such groups and has piloted rehabilitated locomotives. He is a United States Air Force veteran and served honorably in Alaska as an air mechanic.

Ervin Markert Distinguished Contribution Award

This award is given 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 2024 recipient of Erv Markert Distinguished Contribution Award – members of **Cargill Salt of Watkins Glen**

The Cargill Salt plant employees are a family. When they volunteer for a project on the Finger Lakes Trail, whether it’s building bridges, digging a new section of trail, or cutting back brush and painting blazes, you will feel like you are part of their

family. And if it is a weekend project, you will literally meet all of their family. They will bring spouses, children, aunts, and uncles, and the project will be finished in a few short hours. All it takes to get the family together is an email to Betsy Suits, one of the Cargill managers and the point person for trail volunteers.

The Cargill volunteers maintain a section of the FLT outside of Watkins Glen. Just last month 5 Cargill employees helped relocate the Buck Settlement Wegmans Passport rubbing station to a new location on the FLT. This involved some serious work – removing the post and lugging it another mile over hill and dale then digging a new hole and planting the post. It was all done in a couple of hours, and everyone had a great time!

Cargill Salt also has a grants program available to local nonprofit organizations with the focus areas of nourishing our world, protecting our planet, and enriching our communities. The FLTC was awarded one of their grants in 2022.

Gerry Benedict Alley Cat Award

The Gerry Benedict Award honors Alley Cat participants who have demonstrated special dedication over the years by repeatedly working on week-long projects across the trail system, whether doing trail reconstruction, building new structures such as shelters or bridges, or supporting those projects by planning, material preparation, or housing and feeding crews.

The 2024 recipient of the Gerry Benedict Alley Cat Award is **Rob Hughes.**

Rob is a master wood worker, co-owner of Big Beams Timber Frames, a member of the Timber Framing Guild, and one of two science teachers at the Wayland-Cohocton Central School who teach a class in timber framing.

In 2018 Rob offered to build a timber frame lean-to for the FLTC. He worked with Mahlen Hurst to procure the lumber needed to build a lean-to. Rob designed and pre-built the lean-to at his shop with the help of his students. This lean-to was then disassembled and reassembled in just a few hours at the International Hiking Society Expo in Syracuse in 2019 as part of the FLTC exhibit. After the Expo was over the lean-to was taken apart and Rob delivered the lean-to materials to the permanent site in Little Rock City in western NY. He then helped with the re-assembly on site. This is one of the most beautiful lean-tos you will ever see!

Since then, Rob has donated his time and materials to build a second lean-to which is intended for a site on the FLT on Rattlesnake Hill outside of Swain, NY. Construction of this lean-to has been delayed for over 2 years and Rob has stored materials at his shop during this delay. This second lean-to is scheduled to finally be assembled in the next 2 weeks.

Bill and Ellen Garrison Landowner Recognition Award

Since the very existence of the trail depends on generous private landowners who permit hikers to walk on their land, 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 recognizes those special landowners who enhance the trail and the trail experience.

The 2024 recipient of the Garrison Landowner Award is **Carl States.**



Deb Nero & Carl States

The Class of 1971 at Odessa Montour High School is apparently tight, as they continue to get together for annual events. One of the members, well known to many in the room, is Bristol Hills Branch Regional Trail Coordinator Donna Noteware. One of the others is tonight's award recipient, Carl States. Both have played big roles for the FLT for decades, but Carl's accomplishments have, until now, not received much recognition.

On map M15 in Schuyler County, the FLT goes from NY228 at the Schuyler County Veterans Memorial north, past the Rogers Hill Lean-to, to Carley Road, a distance of a couple of miles. When I first met Carl, around a decade ago, he owned many of the dozen or so parcels the trail crosses. There were places the trail was on the neighbors' property and Carl did not control it. Over the last decade, it seems like every time I talk to him, he is in the process of buying another one of them and adding it to his collection. About a year ago he finished the purchases, and he now owns the entire section. And he's still buying, adding parcels that he indicates may offer an off-road route from the Rogers Hill Lean-to over to Texas Hollow State Forest.

The location doesn't ring a bell? Well, it's the place on the trail where the organizers of last year's County Hike Series discovered to their surprise, on the day of the hike, that a 24-hour motocross race was in progress, with the motorcycle course crossing the FLT in multiple locations. It's a pretty sure bet the hikers could hear the motorcycles coming, but to be sure, the organizers decided they needed to find some crossing guards at the last minute.

Of all the landowners I've spoken with, it's possible that Carl is having the most fun. Nobody else has ever answered my call from a dump truck. Carl used to run an excavating company. His son Kevin is running it now, but Carl volunteers to make gravel deliveries because he thinks it's fun.

Hikers on this section of trail may not find the quiet woods experience they expect. Carl enthusiastically permits several different groups to hold organized campout events on his property, including motocross events in June and July. World War II re-enactments are held in the spring and in September. Muzzleloader competitions are in August, and campouts for neighbors and friends are held on Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day weekends. Snowmobiles use the property in the winter and Carl grants specific hunting permissions in hunting seasons. Carl reports that there is very little conflict with any of the user groups and the public hikers on the FLT (and just to note, the shooting sports do not aim toward or across the trail). Carl's aim is that long after he is gone it will still be accessible as a place for these various outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy their sports.

We've discussed a permanent easement for the trail for years. It has not quite happened, because the properties were still being acquired. At the moment, it is on hold as Carl investigates possibly leasing part of the fields on the property for solar use, which might necessitate us rerouting the trail around the property on a different trajectory.

Carl has committed to Donna that it will happen, and he'll arrange permanent permission. After 65 or so years, I think he knows that Donna Noteware is not going to let him off the hook until the hard work he has done putting this all together is protected by an easement that guarantees the trail can stay forever.

It's a great story! I can only think of a couple other cases where anyone has intentionally gone out and purchased property, on their nickel, to enable a permanent trail corridor. Thank you, Carl. 🍁





Trail Topography in New York

William Coffin

This article was featured in the Fall 2024 issue of the North Country Trail Association's *North Star* magazine.

“The contiguous United States are divided into physiographic provinces according to their geomorphology. Geomorphology refers to the physical features and processes of landforms, and their relation to geologic structures. The climate, underlying geology, and the geologic history of an area affect the modern topography. Some areas have been scraped flat by glaciers, others are dominated by towering mountains, and still others are subject to changing sea levels and coastal processes. Every province has its own beauty, and its own cultural and geologic heritage highlighted by the National Park System.” (National Park Service)

Hiking the North Country National Scenic Trail through New York State will lead you across six major physiographic provinces. Take a closer look with an armchair hike - no blisters, guaranteed!

Allegheny Plateau, 450 trail miles: From the Pennsylvania-New York state line at the beautifully spacious Allegheny State Park to the scenic Finger Lakes, the trail traverses a broad plateau. It is part of the Appalachian Mountain Range, though only in New York have these ancient peaks been shaved down to hills by glaciation. This is wine country. This stretch of trail includes Watkins Glen State Park and a spectacular waterfall town at the south end of Seneca Lake. Seneca is one of the 11 famous Finger Lakes that all flow north to Lake Ontario.

Ontario Lowlands, 20 trail miles: Near Canastota, the trail descends steeply. These flat, sandy lowlands are where the easiest digging of the Erie Canal first began, and the historic towpath here is followed by North Country Trail hikers to connect with the Adirondack foothills. This region is known locally as the Rome Sand Plains. It was once the floor of a huge glacial lake.

Tug Hill Plateau, 20 trail miles: Hiking north to Boonville brings you to the eastern Tug Hill Plateau boundary. It is marked by steep glacial terrain versus the ancient lake bottom earth seen at Rome. Tug Hill is not a real geologic plateau, but a ground-down, glaciated area.

Highland Western Hills, 60 trail miles: Around 500 miles into New York's North Country Trail (coming from Pennsylvania), you will cross what is called the Blue Line. This is the Adirondack Park boundary. The park is six million acres in size; half is state-protected forest and half is state-zoned private lands. The elevation approaches 1,000 feet with glacial till blocking natural drainage. Regrowth hardwood forest has replaced spruce that was removed during the logging boom.

Highland Low Mountains, 50 trail miles: The North Country Trail is the only trail through the Adirondacks that crosses both the east and west Blue Line boundaries, then travels the more remote climbs at lower altitudes. This is an advantage for those seeking mountain viewing while aiming to avoid the heavily traveled and impacted High Peak trails. Here is an ecosystem of mountains, streams, ponds, and much more. Mixed tree species of hardwoods and conifers change abruptly with altitude.

Highland Mountain Peaks, 65 trail miles: The Adirondacks are the southern tip of the Canadian Shield. This bedrock is ancient, but the uplift is recent, and instead of an uplifted ridge series, it is a dome of peaks. One central Adirondack peak, named The Dome, is geologically unique and not part of Vermont's Green Mountains, which are Appalachians. The Lake Champlain Valley descends at Crown Point, abruptly ending this province. Lake Champlain is the remains of a longer, collapsed valley bottom, and a former (and much larger) body of water.

Learn more about physiographic provinces across the U.S. and National Trails System with an interactive map at [nps.gov/subjects/geology/physiographic-provinces.htm](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/geology/physiographic-provinces.htm).

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.

Thank You!

Quinn Wright #561

My decades of hiking, mostly alone, began by blazing my own trail or accidentally finding a trail and following it. Certainly, I traveled established trails in National and State Parks at times, but until I found the orange blazes of the Conservation Trail near my home, I had no idea that there were hiking organizations such as the Foothills Trail Club or the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

As with many of you, my involvement in the hiking community grew as I became more informed about the complexity of creating and maintaining such a glorious trail system as the FLTC and its branch trails. Over the years I have hiked all the branch trails and now the entirety of the FLT for a second time. Early on, out of respect for the quality of the trail, I felt an obligation to participate in the effort to ensure the continuity of the trail system and participated in various levels of the administration of the trail system.

I have immense respect and appreciation for the partnerships that exist between the FLTC and private landowners, the Seneca Nation, NYS DEC, NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Finger Lakes National Forest, and various community and county parks, forests, and roads. As with any relationship each of the relationships above varied in effectiveness as the partners or their management changed. But, despite those ebbs and flows, there has been one constant, the effort of the maintainers to deal with Mother Nature and the variable relationships in partnerships to provide such a high-quality trail system.

Early on people would describe me as a fast hiker. Now, after several surgeries and a knee replacement this past April, and just past 80 years of age, I could still comfortably hike nine miles through Sugar Hill SF, and seven miles through Oquaga SF on September 17 and 18. Years ago I could have averaged 25 – 28-minute miles. Now because of my physical changes, I averaged 32 – 35-minute miles. Were my physical capabilities still as they were I could have kept the same pace because of the quality of the trail as provided by the volunteer trail maintainers. The hikes these past two days were absolutely delightful because of the quality of the trail, the views, and the company of two hiking partners, Roy Dando and Dave Newman.



Heith Pochant

Because I cannot help myself, I keep track of some odd details:

- My first E2E occurred in every month except February. This effort occurred from April through October, the bulk between May and September
- This E2E had one hike on M1 with the County Hike Series, one on a Fall Campout (2016) and spotters or hiking partners: Marty Ruszaj (10 times), Lori Chiarilli (6 times), Mike Schlicht (30 times), Marty Howden (once), Terry Meacham (once), John Anderson (once), Dave Drum (once), Roy Dando (twice), Dave Newman (once), and Joe Vierra (twice).
- I hiked each day of a month on all but four days (14, 16, 19, 22) and hiked on my birthday twice.
- I did 57 hikes over 580 miles, so an average of a little more than 10 miles per hike.
- I ended my first E2E, which was intentional, in 2008. I began my second E2E, unintentionally, in October 2014 and by October 2016 had completed all but 16 miles of the total. While on an NCT hike with Roy Dando in 2021 and talking about our E2E experiences I mentioned that I only had that many miles left for my second. Earlier this year he called me and asked if I wanted to finish. I replied, “No, my knees hurt too much, and I’m getting my knee replaced in April.” He called again in August and asked if I still felt the same way. “I replied, “No, maybe I should test out the knee.” So, we scheduled two hikes, one with Roy and Dave Newman, and the second with each other. Glory be, and thanks to the marvelous work of the trail maintainers I had comfortable hikes up and down the hills of Sugar Hill and Oquaga State Forests (total elevation changes over the two days of 2050 feet)

Thank you to the FLTC for building and managing this fantastic trail system, with maps that are rivaled by NO other organization. A louder “Thank You” goes to the FLT founders, all volunteers, who envisioned the FLT 63 years ago, and then to the volunteers who have built and sustained the FLT to this point in time! But, even more, the loudest “THANK YOU” must go to the trail maintainers without whom the trail would be returned to Mother Nature! 🍁



Frozen Fabric: A Winter Hike in New York

Joe Schrader

Somewhere I had heard something about “starting the new year off hiking.” Someone I knew was planning to hike on New Year’s Day. They wanted to spend the first day of January in the forest. I couldn’t think of any reason why not, but as it turns out, there was one major reason. New Year’s Day on the Finger Lakes Trail is cold.

As the hike began, what used to be snow crunched under my boots. The snow was no longer light and fluffy, it was frozen almost solid. Every step that should have been easy was a threatened slip. The trees were coated in a thin layer of frost that sounded entirely different while in motion than the sound of the summer woods. The rest of the world was silent and still. It seemed that everything had turned to ice.

The temperature was cold enough that I had every inch of my skin covered with several layers in some places. A base layer of heavy wool was covered by a second layer of fleece and flannel. On the outside, I wore a thick coat that would not only keep me warm but protect me from any precipitation as well. Working in tandem with a wool hat, I even had on a fleece mask.

The only thing uncovered were my eyes. They were free to view the glinting, frozen world around me. As the sun slanted through the trees, it revealed that the ice didn’t just cover them. Everything around me was wrapped in it including the underbrush, the forest floor, rocks, trees, and even the trail markers.

It was a unique kind of beauty that I was walking in. The entire wilderness around me appeared to be tinted blue. As the plants interacted with each other, the ice cracked and grinded. Every breeze spilled snow from above and sent creaks echoing through the forest.

I walked in awe up a long hill, taking careful steps. The ascent was covered with frozen snow and several sections of ice. It was slow going and more than once, I wished I had snow grips for my boots. Despite this, I managed to make it to the top and I hiked into High Tor.

Reaching the lean-to, I went straight to the opening that overlooks Canandaigua Lake. Upon reaching the lookout, I saw that the entire valley was frozen in the same way it was all around me. There was frozen forest stretching out below as far as I could see. It all looked like it had been painted with a layer of white.

Even the surface of Canandaigua Lake appeared to have ice on it in some places. The cottages all around the lake were snow-covered as well, with the occasional plume of smoke rising up as the inhabitants fought their own battles with the temperature.

Turning away from the view, I made my way back to the lean-to and pulled out my camp stove. Because of the cold, it took a few attempts for the spark to catch a flame. Once it was going,

though, I poured water into the pot and extracted several packets of oatmeal from my food store.

In just a few minutes, I had warmed my hands and was ready to warm my insides. Spooning hot cereal into my mouth, I felt the warmth go down through my body as I ate. It was some of the best-tasting heat I had ever experienced. The warm food clashed with the cold world around me in a perfect contradiction.

Cleaning up my snack, I repacked my bag and cast one last look around the campsite for garbage. Zipping it away, I strapped my pack back up and prepared to hike on. I dug clumsily around the front of me until I managed to grab the mask I was wearing with my gloved hand. As I pulled it up over my face, a surprising cold struck my skin. Glancing down, I couldn’t help but laugh. While I hiked, my breath had put moisture into the fleece. Now, after snacking, the cold had frozen it solid.

Shaking my head, I pulled it up over my face anyway and continued on with my hike. As I walked and continued to breathe into it, the ice began to melt until, finally, it was warm against my face again. Even that close to my body, the winter chill had been able to reach it.

I had hiked through this area several times during the summer and yet, I almost didn’t recognize it. Just a simple change in season had made it appear as though I had never been there before. That combined with the ice and the several layers of extra gear I hiked with made it quite a different adventure. The adventure, though, was well worth the struggle. 🍁

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.

Trail Topics: Trail Preservation Report



David Newman, VP of Trail Preservation

The FLTC Board accepted an easement in Steuben County, Town of Wheeler Tax Parcel 116.00-01-031.300 from Christopher S. Todd. This easement was negotiated by Steve Catherman. The location shown in the red oval is just south of the “Peaceweavers” property on Map M12 and just SW of the southern end of our recently acquired easement over the Bryson property, shown in blue dashes on the map. Thank you, Mr. Todd.

time for the spring trail construction season, the property will be ours.

The Sidote Trail Preservation Fund pays for easements, acquisitions such as this, and any necessary legal work to enforce our ownership rights. With this acquisition, we will have approximately a \$700,000 balance available for future projects, with approximately \$570,000 tied up in properties that we will most likely resell while retaining rights for a permanent trail corridor. It seems like a lot of money, but the kinds of projects we may need to do to protect the trail are going for \$250,000 or \$300,000 or more. To reach our long-term preservation goals we are going to need a larger Sidote Trail Preservation Fund. 🍁



Blue Dashes = Easement, trail has not been built yet but we have permission

Red Oval = Todd Easement

Unfortunately, a ways south of the new easement shown on this map, the trail is now permanently closed by two separate landowners. The first because hikers ignored “Trail Closed for Hunting Season” signage and our online trail closure notices, causing the landowner to revoke permission, and the second by a property being sold to a developer who notified us that a solar installation is planned and that, at least during the construction phase, the trail will be closed. Whether a trail around the outside of the solar farm fence line would be permitted once the construction is complete is unclear. Steve Catherman and the Regional Trail Coordinator will be looking for alternative off-road routes for the trail. A hopefully non-permanent bypass using some county highway and an existing easement via the Hickory Hills Campground has been identified.

We have made an offer, which has been accepted by the landowner, for a major land purchase which will help us get around a permanent trail closure. This just shy of \$300,000 purchase is moving slowly as after some legal review we determined that new survey maps were required. Hopefully by the next issue of *FLT News*, and in

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



Is Hiking A Job?

Jill Wilson #562

Is hiking the Finger Lakes Trail starting to feel like a job?

This is the thought I contemplated when I really started to “get serious” about completing the end-to-end of the main trail. All the maps were in front of me, the Excel spreadsheet, and a list of names of those who expressed interest in hiking some portions with me. The logistics seemed worse than the uphill climbs in front of me. What if no one wants to really hike it with me after all? Is it hard to get a car spotter? Where ARE all these places? What makes me think I can finish a nearly 600-mile trail across the entire state? It felt overwhelming, to say the least once I decided that the end-to-end was a goal I wanted to accomplish. Was I taking the fun out of it? I sure hoped not.

Like most FLT hikers in recent years, the trail drew me in after COVID left many of us stranded in our homes and away from loved ones. I was in a particularly tough spot in my life, personally, and all I kept wanting to do was escape to the woods. During lockdowns and masking, it felt like hiking was one of the only safe things to do. I recalled several years ago my husband and I were hiking around Tinker Falls in Onondaga County, so I returned there to get out and explore. While driving the back roads of Morgan Hill State Forest, I noticed blue blazes and markers designating a trail. Where does that go...I pondered. I needed to find out.

Going home and digging into the rabbit holes of the internet, I soon discovered not just the blue Onondaga Trail system that I discovered earlier, but how it connected to a larger trail system called the Finger Lakes Trail (and THAT, in turn, was part of the North Country Trail!) I had heard of the FLT before, but never gave it more attention than that. Before the day’s end, I was starting to understand the entire map system on the official FLT website, along with some secondary sources, and I was eager to get out and hike.

Little by little through the COVID days of 2020 and 2021, I started hiking portions of the Onondaga Trail and FLT. I started small, only 4-5 miles at a time, sometimes with friends, oftentimes alone with my thoughts. Hiking was soon becoming a healing and cathartic therapy that I needed so very much.

The more I hiked, the more I explored the FLT website, eagerly reading pages of the site and learning everything I could about



Bill McGovern

it. I happened upon the page about the County Hike Series and immediately knew I wanted to do Tompkins County in the spring of 2022. In fact, as soon as I saw registration had opened, I dropped everything and signed up. I still wonder if I was the first registrant that year! I was so excited: hiking an entire county of the FLT? Can’t wait! I even knew a couple people from other hiking groups I recently joined who were going to participate, easing my introverted hesitation to do big group hikes.

Soon, it was to be the first day of the county hike series. I received my .pdf packet of all the hikes and immediate panic filled me. I have to hike 10 miles? On the first hike?

Oh no! What did I get myself into? But I still showed up on that April day, in the cold rain and snow, knowing only one or two people and leaving feeling like I had just made ten more friends. By the end of the series, I felt like a “real hiker,” and part of a truly wonderful community.

At the awards ceremony for Fall Weekend 2022, the main trail end-to-enders of that year were recognized. I had heard people talking about the end-to-end throughout the series and it kept piquing my interest. But it wasn’t until the awards ceremony that evening when I thought to myself “I want that to be me, someday!”

I knew I could have kept with the county hike series for 8-9 years and finished naturally with the program. Yet, I wanted more hiking, and I wanted it now (if you know me, you may have observed that patience is not something I possess).

So, this is where the work began. I purchased paper maps as I needed them and got so excited when I finished my first map – Map M19. I completed another county hike series (Schuyler). I kept putting a call out for hikers to join me on other FLT escapades, some eager and willing, others unable to due to various circumstances. I started piecing sections together, texting people random GPS coordinates to meet me there at a certain time and reassuring them that, yes, those funky numbers and symbols WILL get you to where you need to meet me... Suddenly, I felt like a project manager for this lofty goal – but as I soon learned, this *was* all part of the fun.

On one hike on Map M28, my friend Randall Roberts, also working on his end-to-end, asked me how I envisioned finishing the trail. I hadn’t thought about it, I just figured it would be complete when it was complete. He told me he’d planned on finishing at the next year’s county hike series (Stueben) and after some thought,

I loved the idea for myself as well. (Thanks, Randall!) I could actually *be* one of those other amazing hikers who were awarded at the fall weekend celebration!

Finishing my end-to-end in September of 2024 would mean that over 50% of the main trail had to be completed in less than a year. Oof! That seemed quite aggressive, perhaps I was biting off more than I could chew. A job, indeed! When I sat down to really map it all out, arranging weekends with fellow end-to-end hikers, I decided I wanted to at least try. The trail would always be there, even if I didn't complete it in September, I told myself.

The challenge now was that all the maps close to where I live were getting crossed off my list, and the real work ahead lay in simply getting to the destinations further away. I arranged Airbnbs and eventually campsites, and sometimes a trail angel to help drop me off so I could hike back to my car. More logistics, more crafting the puzzle pieces together to eventually make one whole picture. I started joking with people that the hard part wasn't the hiking anymore – it was driving hours on end to hike 10+ miles.

And then...I had the hills left, as my trail angel Teresa Blenis said: the Alleghenies and the Catskills. More work! Even the maps were starting to be different colors and lines to designate the higher elevation. It seemed so out of reach at first. Again, I wondered, what nerve do I have to think I could do this? Fortunately, finding people to hike with was becoming easier. The FLT community of hikers is like a big spider web, connecting hikers across the board. Soon, I was making friends not only within the FLT community, but from other states entirely who were also interested in hiking the FLT or NCT portions in New York State.

With careful planning, and consideration among many types of hikers and groups, I not only completed both ends, but I even backpacked my way through Maps M1 and part of M2, a first for me on the FLT. I climbed Slide with "my friend Bill" (inside joke), marveling at how stunningly underrated the Catskill Mountain range is. The fact that I had seen both ends of the trail within a month's time amazed me.

My last hard hike before the final push at the Steuben County series was Map 30 in the Catskills, on a warm and humid July day. I had been warned about Mary Smith Hill, but apparently not enough. As someone who climbs well, and prefers a climb over a downhill, even I was stopping to catch my breath more often than I'd care to admit. It was by far my toughest stretch on the trail, and once it was over, I felt I had a huge load behind me. And it was true. I was now over 90% complete!

As my final hike with the county hike series approached, I started to feel a huge sense of accomplishment but also melancholy. What started as a personal healing journey coming out of the darkness of COVID lockdown became a true part of my identity. Not only did I challenge my mind and body

to do something remarkable, but I also found great friends and community along the way. I knew I would miss the trail – from the deep pine and deciduous woods, sunny farm fields, dirt roads and paved shoulders, towns I never knew existed in this state I have lived all my life, homes with...let's just say "interesting" lawn decorations, car spotters with inspirational end-to-end stories of their own, peaks and valleys, lakes and streams, lean-tos seemingly in the middle of nowhere to offer respite from a long day's work, the continuous dotted line of white blazes that I have been eagerly following for months on end. It has all changed me for the better.

Sure enough, at Fall Weekend this year, I became one of the five who were recognized as end-to-end finishers at the awards ceremony, just like I said I wanted to be that fall night in 2022. Along with many congratulations, I was asked "What's next?" Branch trails? Certainly, and I have a growing list: Long Path, NPT, NCT-NY, Catskills 3500, ADK fire challenge, Vermont Long Trail... The list grows, but no matter what, I'll always have another job to do.

I want to thank several people who helped see me to this goal – and I am inadvertently leaving people out, I can imagine, but please realize it is not intentional! Jennifer Bieniek, Julie Chapman, Mike Cunningham, Rhett Dial, Ariel DuChene, Jackie Gerding, Mary Howard, Sarah Lane-Ayers, Kat LoGrande, Gary Mallow, Bill McGovern, Tom McGraw, Pilar McKay, Randall Roberts, Lisa Robertson, Varya Siegel, Amy StJohn, Eve Vavagiakis, Matt Patterson, Jon Martin, Lisa Bertolasio, Yvette Jester and all hikers from the Ohio NCT crew, all those who were part of the County Hike series, either as hikers, volunteers, or coordinators, any and all who followed my journey virtually on Instagram (Sue Wilkins, especially!), and of course my trail angels/car spotters Teresa Blenis and Donna Coon! 🍁

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.

Pathfinder Memberships:

Student/Youth	\$30
Limited Income	\$30
Adult	\$50
Family	\$75
Youth Organization	\$30

Sustaining Memberships:

Trail Blazer	\$100-\$249
Trail Builder	\$250-\$499
Trail Guide	\$500-\$999
Trail Patron	\$1000 +
Lifetime (Individual)	\$750



Steuben County Hike Series 2024

Deb Nero

This year the FLTC County Hike Series had 158 people register to hike across the beautiful and scenic Steuben County! The hikes covered approximately 65 miles of hills, deep valleys, ravines, and gorges in Steuben County. In these miles hikers passed through four State Forests, two different County Parks, near Hammondsport and Keuka Lake, and through North Hornell.

The six group hikes were held on the third Saturday of the month from April through September. The hikes varied in length from 7.9 miles to 12.4 miles and hikers could join groups of varying hiking speeds, ranging from trail runners to those who stopped to smell the flowers. Between 60 and 90 hikers attended each hike and despite a couple of threats of rain, they enjoyed great weather for all six hikes! The Where's Waldo donations totaled \$1,270 to be used for future County Hike Series and trail projects.

The independent hikers do the same hikes on their schedule and then report their results to the County Hike Series Coordinator. By the end of October, 78 hikers had completed the Steuben County Hike series and received their patch and certificate. All hikers have until the end of December 2024 to complete the hikes.

After 3 years and 3 counties (Tompkins, Schuyler, and Steuben) I am stepping down as the Coordinator of the County Hike Series. It has been delightful – it's so much fun to organize and attend an event where all the participants have a great time and finish with a big smile! I would like to give my deepest thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the process of organizing and carrying out the group hikes. This list begins with the Regional Trail Coordinators who encourage their local trail maintainers to make sure the trail is in great shape. Next are the people who pre-hike the route with me during the week of the group hike to do last-minute trail maintenance and refresh blazes. The volunteers who arrive extra early on the mornings of the hikes to direct hiker parking, sign in the hikers and help get everyone onto the buses, and all the people who act as hike leaders and sweeps for the different hiking groups. And perhaps most importantly, everyone

who helps set up and stock the snacks, fruit, and drinks at the SAG wagon! Special shout out to Events Committee Chair Peg Fuller who organized the buses for the hikes, Steuben County RTCs Bill Meehan and Peter Wybron, pre-hike regulars Tony Compese and Colin Parrish,



Wendy Robertson



Beth Renzetti



Wendy Robertson



Theresa Evans

Kitty greeter at Smith Rd.

parking guru Chris Proulx, and SAG wagon Coordinator Eva Capobianco! The Steuben County Hike Series would not have been possible without you!

Please join the Allegany County Hike series in 2025. Registration will open in February. 🍁

Hiking The Finger Lakes Trail End-to-End



Randall Roberts #563

What a blast this adventure has been! For me, it started as a continuation of hiking the North Country National Scenic Trail after completing that trail in Ohio and Pennsylvania. My first hike on the FLT was an overnight backpack trip through Allegany State Park on Map M1 with a dear friend Kat in November 2019, starting from the PA border and finishing at the Casino in Salamanca. I took advantage of the car spotter list and found a ride from a generous trail angel. In hindsight, that was a long trip for her and I'm very appreciative. There was a light dusting of snow on the ground with a bit of cumulation. We figured we would have the shelter to ourselves, especially since we saw no footprints. As we reached the shelter just after dark, we found it fully occupied by a troop of Boy Scouts doing a winter hike. Not only was the shelter full, but every flat spot nearby was also occupied by tents. We were thankful they had already started a fire and even offered boiling water for our meals. They showed us exactly where the spring was so we didn't have to explore in the dark. I didn't enjoy sleeping on a slope, but we did enjoy their company, and they were curious about what had brought us all the way from Ohio.

My quest to hike in New York was soon sidelined by COVID and travel bans. My next hike didn't come until February 2021 as I took advantage of a long weekend because of MLK day. I had a different friend hike with me this time. Bill had just moved to New Paltz, and it was nice meeting him halfway. For this hike, I got advice about the trail which included letting me know that the first bit would be on the road, sidewalk and bike path to be precise. I was no stranger to road walks and generally, depending on the traffic, road walks don't bother me. The advice went on to explain that we could stash our snowshoes where the trail went into the woods. Snowshoes? I had been looking at the weather and there hadn't been much snow lately and there were plenty of days which, although the temperatures were below freezing at night they were above freezing during the day. Surely the snow would have melted. Not so. The sidewalks and roads were clear, but when we headed up into the woods, we found ourselves postholing in 12-inch-deep snow. We managed. Then on the reverse slope, the north face, now that I think about it, the snow was 18 inches deep. We were struggling. We had planned on a 15-mile hike, but we smartly looked at the map and called Bill's wife to pick us up at the 10-mile point.

Later that year, I signed up for the County Hike series for the Summer. It was a long way for me to drive just to hike 10 miles; so, I planned three-day weekends and scheduled hikes on Friday and Sunday, as well as one day doing two of the county hikes on the same day. I used the FLT Google group to organize car-to-car hikes and found some other hikers who were willing to join me - Mary, Lisa, Susan, Robert, and my friend Cheryl.

Also that year, my wife, a volunteer official for the US Figure Skating Association, was working a competition in Skaneateles December 2-3, and didn't want to drive alone. After I looked

up the distance from Skaneateles to the trail, I agreed to go with her. She went to the rink and I hiked for a couple days with some folks - David, Pete, and Karen. We did the same thing the following year at the same time, this time with Miranda and Kate.

In 2022, I tried to backpack the county hike series with not so good results, first in July when the heat got to me and I had to cut it short, then again in September with better results but still falling short of my goal. I was able to finally complete it in October with the help of some friends.

In 2023, I focused my attention on completing the eastern end, taking advantage of the long holiday weekends in January and February. Remarkably, the weather cooperated, and I hiked with some others working on the goal of end-to-end - Bill, Patty, Ryan, Jim, Karen, and Louis. In the summer, I joined friends hiking the North Country Trail around Watkins Glen - Matt, Cheryl, Sarah, Susanne, and Ron. I worked it to my advantage to complete the County Hike series that year, returning to the eastern end in the fall and into November, hiking with Patty, Sarah, Bill, Kat, and Jill.

That brings me to 2024. Early in the year, I joined other North Country Trail hikers Matt, Linda, Lisa, Gates, Yvette, Jon and Tina to knock out some miles in addition to joining the County Hike series on their Saturday hikes and scheduling gap hikes on Sundays, carefully plotting it out so that I completed my end-to-end on the final hike in September. I did so with another hiker, Jill Wilson. It was exciting to complete this goal alongside her.

Trails not only connect places, but they also connect people. I want to thank all of those who have helped me out along the way even if it was just to hike with me to enjoy the trail or to work toward their own goal. It's been a wonderful five-year journey!

Where do I go from here? In October, I'll start the goal of reaching New York City along the NY/NJ Long Path over the next couple of years. I'll also join those other NCT hikers as we work our way through the Adirondacks. I may be finished with the Finger Lakes Main Trail, but this Ohioan isn't finished with New York just yet. 🍁



Send **address changes** to:

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



Stuff You Didn't Know You REALLY Need (for backpacking)

Bob Kremens

Once in a while you may look in your pack, pull something out, and say, “I don’t know how I managed without this thing!” So, I looked in my backpack (by the way, a Sierra Designs Flex Capacitor pack, recommended by the legendary Andrew Skurka, and my favorite small volume pack) and pulled out three things that I will tell you about that I have had on every backpacking trip I’ve been on for the last bunch of years. Not only do I take these items backpacking, but I also pop them into the car for car camping!

As usual, I receive no remuneration for my endorsements nor do I have any special expertise other than my opinion.

A Failproof Fire Starter

My favorite fire starter is the Light My Fire Swedish Fire Steel (yes, it’s made in Sweden!). It’s a very simple device that generates a shower of sparks by rubbing a piece of steel against another piece of metal (of unknown, but special, alloy). The sparks are hot, large, and quite spectacular, especially in the evening! I’ve used this tool to ignite all manner of stoves and campfires, including the three stoves I mentioned in my last review. It works even when both parts, the striker and the flint, are soaking wet. To ignite solid fuel (like Esbit fuel tablets or twigs for a campfire) it’s helpful to have a little volatile hydrocarbon around – like methyl alcohol or white gas stove fuel (more on how to carry these liquids later). The round metal components do wear, but I have used this fire starter for years. It is still useful and works as well as when it was bought.

Little Nalgene Leakproof Bottles and Jars

What? Bottles and jars? These containers are the little children of the 32 oz (1l) wide-mouth “Nalgene” that everyone has too many of. Why Nalgene? They never leak and the bottles are indestructible. The bottles come in polyethylene and polycarbonate plastics, depending on the type of the bottle and your preference.



A wide variety of bottles from 1 oz to 8 oz. Some have easy open squeeze tops. Markers easily label bottles and caps.

Polycarbonate does not absorb smells as readily as polyethylene but is not as flexible and may crack if you really smash it. Some of the most useful things I have in my pack, these small bottles can carry spices, cooking oil, wash soap, hand sanitizer, fuel, medicines...the list goes on. They range in size from 1 oz (30ml) up to 16 oz (480ml), the smallest sizes useful for spices, hot sauce and the like, and the largest useful for water on short hikes or, perhaps, adult beverages! I like to cook decent food for my buddies on backpack trips and clever use of these little bottles can put anything you need for a nice recipe in a convenient, leakproof form.

A couple of my little Nalgene bottles have easy-open squirt tops and an ounce or so of white gas stove fuel which is SO handy, for starting fires. It should be noted that these smaller containers have interchangeable caps – dropper caps, squirt caps, and regular solid caps. It should also be noted that Thermo-Fisher Nalgene-Nunc is a local western New York company headquartered in Rochester, NY. Buy USA/ local!

A Microfiber Rag

Ok, Bob has gone nuts. A rag? Yes! I bought a six-pack of microfiber rags that are about 18” square (45cm) at Home Depot for a few bucks and they’ve become indispensable for car camping, backpacking, and wiping spills in my home kitchen and garage. These cloths hold an inordinate quantity of liquid, wash easily, and are even nice to the touch. I use them in camp to clean out pots (in lieu of washing) and to clean off my hands and utensils while cooking. I then toss the rag in my bear can (or car trunk if car camping). After the rags dry, miraculously whatever you have wiped on the rag seems to shake off...a wonder of modern science! Don’t leave home without one! A rag?!

A ‘Fitting’ Camera Bag

You still carry a camera, don’t you? Well, if you carry either a camera or a cell phone, you need to put it somewhere so you can capture the moment. Some packs (like my beloved Sierra



My camera bag

Designs Flex Capacitor) have a convenient pocket on the strap to pop in your cell phone or camera, but most packs need an auxiliary pocket to perform the same function. I carry a small digital point and shoot everywhere (Canon PowerShot ELPH 180) and attach it to my other packs with a TimBuk2 camera bag attached to my left shoulder strap (I am right-handed, and I can pull the camera out of the left side more easily). There are many variations of this camera bag but the *only* important feature that you need (aside from the bag fitting your camera!) is a Velcro attachment that places the camera lengthwise along your strap and allows you to easily remove the camera bag without taking the pack strap apart.



My camera bag attaches to a pack strap. Make sure your camera bag opens this way (the long way) so the camera can be attached easily to a pack strap.

That's it for this quarter's gear review. I'm sure you all have gadgets that you always have with you; I'd like to hear about them! Write me care of the editor. 🍁



Answers to the Fall 2024 "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:



J Brophy

Boyce Hill State Forest shelter loo sign on Map M4; the shelter was built as part of a 2017 Alley Cat project.

Correctly ID:

Zach Barber
Jen Bieniek
Jen Lapham

New Picture:



Amy Lopata



FLT Connect is a FREE series of workshops and presentations designed to educate, inspire, and connect trail users. Unless otherwise noted, all FLT Connect events are conducted via ZOOM. Check out the schedule of topics:

- December: Founders Hikes History
- January: Backpacking 101 – Part 1
- February: Backpacking 101 – Part 2
- March: History of Canal-Letchworth
- April: Map and Compass

All FLT Connect events are recorded and made available through the FLTC's YouTube Learning Library.



Carry these essentials on all hikes for a safe and enjoyable experience.



Department of Environmental Conservation



IN AN EMERGENCY CALL: **911**

1-833-NYS-RANGERS (1-833-697-7264)

Finger Lakes Trail 2024 / 2025 Calendar of Events



December 31	Complete your FLT 50/100 miles
February 1	FLT News Spring issue submission deadline
May 1	FLT News Summer issue submission deadline
Spring/Summer	2025 County Hike Series: Allegany County
August 1	FLT News Fall issue submission deadline
November 1	FLT News Winter issue submission deadline



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Moody views on a road walk in Steuben County. By Lisa Lyons

