



# « 2014 LOOK BACK 2015 LOOK AHEAD » REGION BY REGION REPORT

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## NEW JERSEY

Under the direction of David and Monica Day, the West Jersey Trail Crew worked in Stokes State Forest, improving the Appalachian Trail, Tillman's Ravine, and several water crossings. Bollards were erected in Brookdale Park to mark the route of the Lenape Trail and to educate the public in this busy, urban area. Over 1,000 hours of Trail University volunteer learning and service have resulted in improved access to the Highlands Trail along the Burnt Meadow Trail. Ramapo College students completed over 400 hours of volunteer service, including work on invasives, and they contributed to the completion of a new trail loop around the MacMillan Reservoir in Ramapo Valley County Reservation. New Trails Chair Howie Liebman and the Northwest Jersey Trails Committee adopted the Lusscroft Farms trail system in Sussex County. In the south, the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge trail network—the very first of our trails that are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System—was adopted.

In 2015, we plan to install the Long Pond Ironworks Bridge and continue the expansion of our presence in the region.



## WEST HUDSON

In Harriman State Park, Chris Ezzo and the West Hudson South Trail Crew rebuilt a washed-out bridge across a stream on the 1779 Trail and made repairs to the 1777 and Ramapo-Dunderberg Trails. Our Palisades Conservation Corps Trail Crew finished the second section of the Doris Duke Trail in Sterling Forest, and the Long Distance Trails Crew relocated a portion of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in Harriman State Park. In the north, trail crews restored the Mossy Glen Trail and completed a complex staircase on the Rainbow Falls Trail in Minnewaska State Park. Staff and volunteers have been facilitating the layout and design of a new trail that connects the Hudson Highlands Museum and Black Rock Forest properties. On the Long Path (LP), the Treason Trail was relocated in Rockland County and sections of the LP were moved off roads in the Shawangunks. On the Highlands Trail (HT), a relocation in the Chester area moved the LP onto recently purchased land, taking miles of trail off dangerous roads. Staff and volunteers, together with partner agencies, led several public awareness hikes along the Shawangunk Ridge, showcasing the important land preservation work of the Trail Conference and its Conservation Committee.

In 2015, we plan to seek new trail supervisors for the HT and recruit a roaming clipper crew leader for the West Hudson North area. We anticipate purchasing more land parcels along the HT in order to move sections of trail off roads and into the woods.

## EAST HUDSON

The 2014 Breakneck Ridge Trail Stewards Program aided an estimated 50,000 hikers between Memorial Day Weekend and Columbus Day, significantly reducing the number of rescues necessary. Our newly formed Westchester Trails Committee, chaired by Jane Daniels, adopted 12 miles of trails. In Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands State Parks, our Taconic AmeriCorps Crew trained over 100 volunteers as they rebuilt three different trails, including a side trail that provides park visitors with a new loop hike from Canopus Lake on the AT. In the South Taconics, we have made great progress with the proposed 6-mile trail extension to Rudd Pond, having built two of the three miles of new trail approved in 2013. In the Metro area, we have cleared overgrowth, reblazed trails, and trained volunteers in the Greenbelt, Clay Pit Ponds, and Wolfe's Pond Parks of Staten Island.

In 2015, we plan to expand the Taconic Conservation Corps Trail Crew by beginning work on the first sections of the Highlands Trail in Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands State Parks, recruit a dedicated Hudson Highlands roving trail crew, continue to build the South Taconic Trail extension to Rudd Pond near Millerton, NY, and collaborate with NYC Parks and Park Conservancies to recruit volunteers, offer technical assistance with trail maintenance projects, and make use of new technologies to report and document trail maintenance projects.

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**The Trail Conference ranks continue to grow in 2014. Trail University hosted 145 workshops that delivered expert training to 886 people, while 400 new volunteers have signed up. Our volunteer force is now 1,750 strong.**



## BEAR MOUNTAIN

The Bear Mountain Trails Project continued in its eighth year of construction with heavy work on the Upper East Face portion of the Appalachian Trail. Over one-third of the Upper East Face has been completed. In 2014 alone, 148 individuals volunteered over 6,459 hours on this project while learning advanced trail building skills.

In 2015, we plan to complete sixty percent of the Upper East Face as well as the Trails for People Interpretive Exhibit near the Bear Mountain Inn. The Exhibit will provide the history of the Appalachian Trail and Bear Mountain as well as information about the Bear Mountain Trails Project partners, trail building techniques, and the volunteers who build and maintain trails.



## INVASIVES MANAGEMENT

In 2014, over 90 volunteers participated in our Invasives Strike Force (ISF) program to survey hiking trails for invasive plants. As the program ends its fourth year, our volunteers have surveyed 870 miles of the original 1,340-mile goal, or 65% of our target. Using our survey data, the ISF trail crew removed invasive plants in eight parks with 81 volunteers over 14 work days. An AmeriCorps crew learned specialized techniques to deal with invasives, removing plants at 14 different sites. They ran eight volunteer work days and two volunteer surveyor training sessions. As coordinator of the NYS-funded Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management (PRISM), the Trail Conference led 30 partner organizations in forming a 5-year strategic plan, developing a 2014 work plan addressing the group's priority goals, constructing a website, coordinating multiple workshops and seminars, and participating in the state's first Invasive Species Awareness week.



In 2015, we plan to finish a complete survey of our trails and utilize a summer crew to support our volunteers and develop future environmental professionals. ISF crew work days will continue to protect our region from invasives. PRISM will begin working on strategic management of invasive species and targeted education to help prevent their spread.



## CATSKILLS

With the assistance of the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, more than 100 Trail Conference volunteers worked over 10,000 hours to open a new 9-mile section of the Long Path (LP) that connects the Village of Phoenicia to the Catskills High Peaks. The NYS DEC funded the Catskill Conservation Corps, enabling the Trail Conference to expand our efforts to recruit and mobilize volunteers region-wide. Over the summer, we celebrated the groundbreaking of the long-awaited Catskill Interpretive Center. Our staff continues to work on increasing access to the Forest Preserve and ensuring that communities can use outdoor recreation as an economic development tool.

In 2015, we plan to complete a trail network at the Catskill Interpretive Center site, establish a Catskills regional office to expand support to area volunteers, begin construction on 10 miles of new trail to relocate the LP in the southern Catskills, engage volunteers through the Catskill Conservation Corps, and secure additional long-term funding to support regional efforts.

## PUBLICATIONS

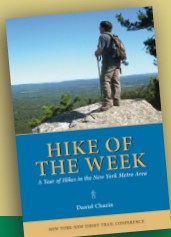
Three map sets—North Jersey, Hudson Palisades, and East Hudson—were revised, resulting in a total of over 600,000 map sets printed since the mid-1970s. Two revised guidebooks were produced—*Walkable Westchester* (2nd ed.) and *Hiking Long Island* (4th ed.)—and the guidebooks *50 Hikes in New Jersey* and *50 Hikes in the Lower Hudson Valley* were also updated. The Trail Conference expanded our selection of digital maps and exceeded 35,000 map app downloads. Our selection of e-books was expanded.

In 2015, we plan to publish a new and much-improved South Taconic map and revised editions of the Harriman-Bear Mountain, Catskill, West Hudson, and Jersey Highlands map sets. A new book/e-book, *Circuit Hikes in Harriman*, will be produced, and we will complete publication of handout maps for 15 northern New Jersey state parks. We will continue to develop ways to reach more park visitors through concepts such as trailhead kiosk maps and QR code links.

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\*See insert for details.