

Adirondack Mountain Club Trails Department 2024 Field Season Work Report

October 16, 2024

The summer of 2024 was another successful year for ADK's professional and volunteer trail crews. ADK's professional trail crew (Pro Crew) was comprised of 15 members this season. The volunteer crews were led by one crew leader and a professional crew member who rotated each week. Throughout the summer, we ran two professional crews and one volunteer crew per week. Then, in September, a handful of Pro Crew members stayed on to finish up the season.

This summer, ADK also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the completion of the Northville-Placid Trail (NPT), a 135-mile trail from Northville, NY to Lake Placid, NY. The Trails Department focused much of its efforts on maintaining this important and iconic trail in 2024.

The professional and volunteer crews worked in 17 locations within the Adirondack Park. The Pro Crew worked a total of 5,117 people-hours, 3,058 of which were on the Forest Preserve. The volunteer trail crew program hosted a total of 96 volunteers this summer. Volunteers and their crew leaders dedicated a total of 2,062 people-hours to Adirondack trails, 792 of which were worked on the Forest Preserve, on the Northville-Placid Trail.

ADK Heart Lake Program Center

The Pro Crew began the summer with skills training, where crew leaders and trails program alumni taught newer crew members the basics of rock and wood working, techniques for efficient use of hand tools and how to set up and use high-line systems. Returning crew members got the chance to hone the skills they had acquired over previous years. The crew spent four days on Mt. Jo learning how to build rock staircases, rock turnpikes and retaining walls, and how to fell trees for native bog bridging. By the end, they installed 45 ft of turnpiking, 18 ft of retaining wall, 5 rock steps and a bog bridge; they also dug 35 ft of new tread.

Mt. Jo also saw four teen volunteer crews this summer, one of which was ADK's first ever all-girls crew advertised as such to the public. The four week-long crews installed a total of 23.5 ft of rock turnpiking, 8 stepping stones, 2 rock steps and 2 rock check steps on various parts of the Long Trail. The crews also patrolled 3.4 miles of trail around the Heart Lake Program Center—including the Short and Long trails up Mt. Jo, and Easyside Drive and Rimrock trails along Adirondack Loj Rd—removing blowdown, side cutting, and clearing drainages.



An all-girls crew of volunteers works together to move a large rock.

ADK Johns Brook Property trails

Johns Brook Lodge also hosted a crew of 11 volunteers and two crew leaders for a weekend of work this summer. This crew put in 6 rock stepping stones as well as a bog bridge constructed from native lumber, which was felled by the volunteers on-site.

High Peaks Wilderness

After a week of training, the Professional Trail crew started its season with two days of patrols in the High Peaks Wilderness totaling 10.7 miles. Crews cleared blowdown and drainages between the Loj and the summit of Algonquin, between the Loj and Rocky Falls Lean-to, and between Bushnell Falls and Marcy Dam via the Hopkins and Van Hoevenberg Trails. The crew also spent 7 weeks of the summer between Marcy Dam and Avalanche Lake, where they installed and replaced 27 bog bridges totaling 285 feet, one 10-foot span bridge, dug 205 drainages, installed four rock waterbars, installed a rock turnpike, and sidecut 265 feet of trail. In September, the crew also worked for two weeks under Tahawus Trails LP, on the new trail up Cascade Mountain. Working with Tahawus gave the crew the opportunity to learn from seasoned trail builders who have made trail construction and maintenance their career. During these two weeks, the Pro Crew dug 3980 ft of new tread on the trail.



A finished, native-lumber bog bridge on Johns Brook Property

On September 14th, ADK hosted a day-long volunteer crew project on the NPT in the High Peaks Wilderness, about a mile in from the Averyville Rd. trailhead. Four large stepping stones were placed in a muddy section of trail that was causing hikers to walk off-trail to get across.

Silver Lake Wilderness

The Silver Lake Wilderness saw 8 volunteer crew projects on the NPT over the summer. During National Trails Day celebrations on June 1st, 7 volunteer crews were based out of Northville. Crews installed 3 new thunderbox privies at the Mud Lake and Woods Lake #3 and #4 campsites; relocated 1 privy at Woods Lake campsites #1 and #2, cleaned up trash from the campsites; and patrolled 17.5 miles of the NPT, from Collins-Gifford Valley Road to the Godfrey Road Spur Trail.

Another volunteer crew spent a week of the summer on the NPT, where they hiked in about 6 miles to sidecut and remove blowdown from 0.9 miles of the trail, just south of Silver Lake.



Volunteers dig a new privy hole in the Silver Lake Wilderness

Hoffman Notch Wilderness

The Pro Crew spent 3 weeks working on a section of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) on Jones Hill in the Hoffman Notch Wilderness. Here, the crew dug 3006 ft of new tread, and installed 25 ft of retaining wall, 11 rock steps, and 37 new drainages. The crew also sidecut a mile of the trail.



Members of the Pro Crew work on Jones Hill in the Hoffman Notch Wilderness

Blue Mountain Wild Forest

The Blue Mountain Wild Forest had one week-long volunteer crew project this summer on another section of the NPT. This crew put in 79 feet of bog bridging over a swampy section of trail where previous bog bridges needed replacing.

West Canada Lake Wilderness

In June, the Pro Crew spent one week in West Canada Lake Wilderness on the NPT, sidecutting a mile of overgrown trail, and removing 12 blowdown.

Pigeon Lakes Wilderness

In August, the Pro Crew spent a week working with Tahawus Trails LP in the Pigeon Lakes Wilderness, near Cascade Lake. Here, the crew learned new techniques for rock work from professional trail builders. Over one week the crew installed 50 ft of rock turnpiking, 2 rock water bars and 2 drainages.

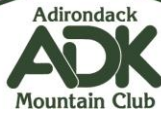
Open Space Institute at Upper Works

The Pro Crew spent 6 weeks working with the Open Space Institute on trails just outside the Upper Works trailhead. The crew installed 10 new span bridges, 25 rock steps, 38 ft of rock turnpiking and 18 ft of retaining wall. They also patrolled 1 mile of trail, sidecutting and removing 8 blowdown along the way.

Elk Lake

This year's volunteer week on Elk Lake property included installing 10 bog bridges, 4 stepping stones, and an 800 ft reroute of a steep and eroding trail.

The Pro Crew also spent two weeks at Elk Lake, where they patrolled 19 miles of trails, removing 101 blowdown, as well as installed 130 ft of bog bridging.



Conclusion

Below is a breakdown of the total work completed by ADK's professional and volunteer crews in 2024.

	Total Crew Members	Total Man-Hours Worked	Rocks Set	Bridge Feet Built	Feet of New Trail Built
Pro Crew	15	5,117	286	600	7,096
Volunteer Crews	65	2,062	27	79	0

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

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

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

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the volunteers who took time out of their summers to work with us out on the trails, as well as our generous donors, sponsors, and partners who supported our work. A special thank you goes to the Adirondack 46ers, the Common Roots Foundation, the Miller Family Charitable Trust, Elk Lake Lodge, the Open Space Institute, the North Country Trail Association, the Schenectady Chapter of ADK, Mary Coffin, Norm Kuchar, an anonymous donor, and to the NYS DEC. We would not have been able to do the work described above without your help and support.

The Adirondack Park stands as a unique national treasure, offering unparalleled wilderness experiences and recreational opportunities. It is an honor for us to contribute to the building of sustainable trails that both protect these pristine landscapes and facilitate meaningful connections between people and the natural world, now and into the future.

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