

SEEDS EcoCorps Improves more than 80 miles of North Country Trail

From Staff Reports Published 1:01 am EST, Wednesday, December 2, 2020



TRAVERSE CITY -- The SEEDS EcoCorps improved over 80 miles of the North Country Trail during the 2020 season. Crew members constructed new trail sections and improved existing sections as far south as White Cloud and as far north as Lake Superior.

This work was made possible in part with funding from the National Forest Foundation and the National Park Foundation, as well as a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, North Country Trail Association (NCTA) and its volunteer chapters.

Kenny Wawsczyk, the NCTA's Regional Trail Coordinator for Michigan, emphasized that the North Country Trail is more important than ever given that trail traffic was high, presumably related to the increased interest in outdoor activities due to COVID-19.

"We've always stressed how important the trail is," said Wawsczyk. "But this year especially we learned how crucial it is for everyone to be able to get outside and enjoy nature."

In White Cloud, crew members completed trail work that was begun in 2019. In addition to the new boardwalk built through a wetland, crew members rerouted sections of the trail away from busy roads.

In the Huron-Manistee National Forest, EcoCorps crews worked alongside members of the NCTA Spirit of the Woods Chapter to improve a large section of trail popular for mountain biking. In this section, they focused on correcting erosion caused by heavy traffic, as well as ensuring that there was an overhead clearance of eight feet for cyclist safety.

In the Upper Peninsula, EcoCorps crews performed trail maintenance on a 15-mile section near the mouth of the Two Hearted River.

"We at the NCTA loved the help of the EcoCorps on these projects. We are very appreciative of any young help we can get because we want future generations to be familiar with and invested in the North Country Trail in the future," said Wawsczyk.

EcoCorps Senior Crew Leader, Andy Berger, said that EcoCorps crew members really enjoyed projects on the North Country Trail.

"Trail-building was a favorite activity this summer, especially when we got to travel to new sections we hadn't visited before," he said.

SEEDS EcoCorps is a green collar career exploration program launched in 2009. The program provides an earn-while-you-learn format to support skill, leadership, and career development. Crew members gain valuable work experience while serving their local communities.

EcoCorps Program Director Jennifer Flynn adds, "Maintaining access to public lands through trail maintenance and trail development is critical to supporting individual and community health."

Northern Michigan residents, especially young adults, interested in outdoor jobs next summer are encouraged to look for employment opportunities posted on its website, www.ecoseeds.org, or contact the SEEDS office in Traverse City by phone for more information at (231) 947-0312.