



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

Better Outdoor Opportunities Through Stewardship (BOOTS)

Trail Conference Conservation Corps 2017 End of Season Summary

Sterling Forest State Park





The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference creates better outdoor opportunities through user education, public participation, and sustainable, on-the-ground solutions.

The Trail Conference Conservation Corps is an integral part of this effort.

Public trails and trail lands have a critical role to play in our communities and throughout the region—and the Trail Conference is committed to making sure these resources remain open, safe, and enjoyable for all. One approach we deploy is the Trail Conference Conservation Corps (TCCC).

The TCCC provides outdoor service-learning opportunities for youth and adults interested in acquiring skills and hands-on experience in:

- building and improving public trails;
- protecting native trail habitats;
- and recruiting and training volunteers for service on public lands.

The TCCC supports AmeriCorps members serving on four to six-person trail crews. Each member signs a 450 or 900-hour service commitment, serving 5 days per week from May through October. They receive a robust training program that provides a diversified set of technical trail-building skills, volunteer management techniques, and experiential knowledge through active service engagement. Members also receive a living allowance and may be eligible for an educational award through the AmeriCorps program. The TCCC develops new, conservation-minded leaders for our trail projects and stewardship activities.

The TCCC provides land managers with a cost-effective solution to improve trail and land quality by implementing sustainable building and restoration solutions. The program multiplies labor productivity by combining the efforts of a dedicated trail crew with a diverse group of volunteers, providing a unique environment to receive training and on-the-ground experience.

Our model enables individuals and groups to volunteer for a day and make a positive and meaningful contribution. Through their work, TCCC AmeriCorps members and volunteers have an immediate impact on the quality of trails and parklands in our region.



Better Outdoor Opportunities Through Stewardship





Making a Difference: The Back Country Trails Program

The Back Country Trails Program is designed to provide New York State's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) with a much-needed trail-building resource to implement trail plans and repair trails that have been damaged from decades of use.

The Trail Conference's professional trail builders and volunteer leaders coordinate with OPRHP regional and main office staff to identify priority trail projects, conduct assessments of these projects, develop a seasonal work plan, and implement the selected projects. Trail construction projects may include sidehilling, excavation, and trail tread definition; the creation of rock crib walls, bridges, and stairs; soil retention measures; and the construction of water control devices and other tread improvements.



The Back Country Trails Program fills four to six trail crew positions utilizing AmeriCorps members from our partner The Corps Network. The work performed by these crew members is supplemented with the recruitment and training of volunteers. This crew model allows the Trail Conference to both develop future outdoor recreation leaders through the AmeriCorps program, as well as grow a base of knowledgeable and motivated volunteers to assist with ongoing trail maintenance and construction needs.

Palisades Crew

As part of the Back Country Trails Program, the Palisades Trail Crew has served in OPRHP's Palisades region building and improving trails west of the Hudson River, beginning in 2013. Since then, the Trail Conference has been working down OPRHP's "to-do" list for trail building and restoration at Sterling Forest State Park. This has involved improving tread and wet crossings on existing trails, including Sterling Lake, Sterling Ridge, Pine Meadow connector, Allis, Wildcat, Warbler, and McKeags Meadow Connector; constructing the almost 4-mile Doris Duke Trail loop; and inventorying the entire trail system.

In 2016, the park asked the Trail Conference to set its sights on the next priority item: Build a multiuse trail system in the southeastern corner of the park—which also happens to be the most recently preserved section—to open it to public access. The Palisades Crew has focused on the construction of this multi-use trail ever since. In 2017, the crew worked on building the Munsee Eagle Trail south from the Caretaker Parking Lot off of Long Meadow Road.



Floworks Crew

For even the casual visitor to Harriman and Sterling Forest state parks, the changing face of the trail towns along Route 17 through Rockland and Orange counties is becoming obvious. The Tuxedo Hudson Company has fastidiously been renovating properties in Sloatsburg and Tuxedo, with plans to open a market, bed-and-breakfast, coffee house, juice bar, gym, and bicycle shop in buildings along this corridor. Just as these trail towns are receiving a modern facelift, the trails themselves are receiving the attention they deserve.

It is with our appreciation to Michael Bruno, founder of the Tuxedo Hudson Company, that the Trail Conference was able to launch the inaugural season of the Floworks Trail Crew in 2017. Michael and his company provided a 1:1 matching grant to fund the construction of this sustainable network of interconnecting loop trails in eastern Sterling Forest. In the future, the Tuxedo Trails Improvement Fund will allow us to reconstruct some of western Harriman's most historic trails. Emphasis will be placed on the first Trail Conference trail, the Ramapo-Dunderberg, completed in 1921.



In 2017, the Floworks Crew worked on building the Munsee Eagle Trail north from the trailhead at the South Gate Parking Lot, complementary to the work of the Palisades Crew.

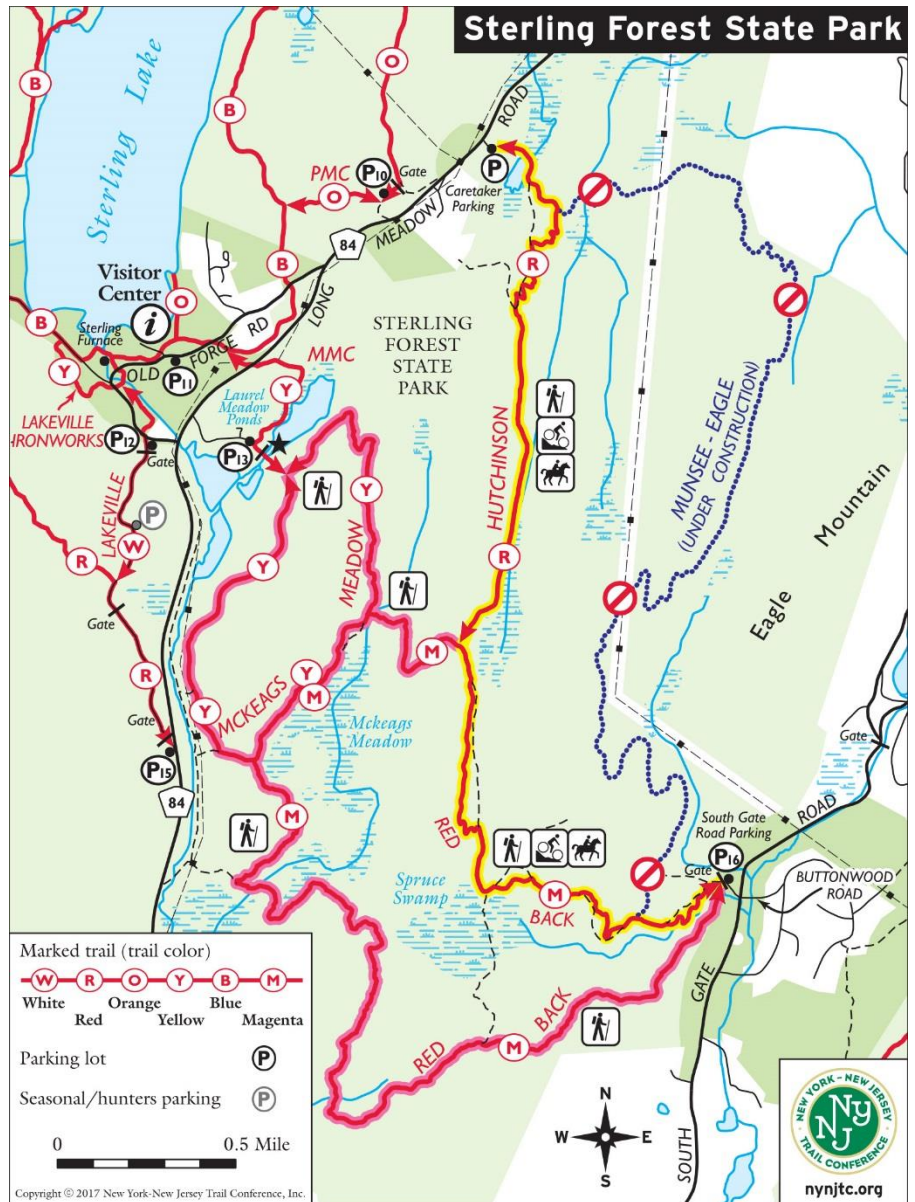


Sterling Forest State Park: The Issue

Funding for New York State parks, particularly the operating resources that keep trails open and safe, is inadequate to keep up with the increased usage of these resources. Insufficient staffing of maintenance crews and forest rangers affects park accessibility and visitor safety. With our Conservation Corps model, the Trail Conference is able to provide quality crews to build and maintain parks' trail systems.

In 2009, the State of New York finalized the Comprehensive Trails Plan for Sterling Forest State Park. This plan included a 7-mile, multi-use loop adjacent to Tuxedo Park. The Palisades Crew began construction and rehabilitation on the project in 2015. When finished, half of the loop will be open to

hikers, bikers, and equestrians. This section traverses the new Hutchinson Trail, opened in 2017, and parts of former woods roads on the Red Back Trail, including several sustainable reroutes built in 2016. The other half of the loop, the new Munsee Eagle Trail, will only accommodate hikers and bikers.





Sterling Forest State Park: The Corps Solution

In 2017, the Palisades and Floworks crews together constructed a total of 3.1 miles of the Munsee Eagle Trail, which will connect the Red Back and Hutchinson. The crews built six bridges to make the trail accessible for a variety of users. In addition, they built a 70-foot stepping stone bridge that remains accessible to mountain bikers. Throughout the season, 12 Conservation Corps members served alongside 228 volunteers.

The new trails incorporate several sustainability features like softer grades, pinches, and a general narrowness and turns to slow bikes down. They were built with multiple drains, open sight lines, and some banked curves and parallel trail features like small jumps and drops for bikers, trail runners, or adventurous hikers. The character is a little different than a pure hiking trail in sections, but it is equally enjoyable for boots and sneakers. It's a playful trail with a sense of adventure that showcases the unique beauty of Sterling Forest.

This project exemplifies the Trail Conference's efforts to promote appropriate and satisfying outdoor experiences to the widest possible non-motorized user groups. In 2017, volunteers from Palisades MTB, Campmor, Ridgewood Cycle, The Cosmic Wheel, Fats in the Cats, JORBA, and the Tenafly Bicycle Workshop made significant contributions to the project.



Sterling Forest: 2017 Totals	
3.1 MILES OF TRAIL BUILT	6 BRIDGES CONSTRUCTED
262 SQUARE FEET OF CRIB WALL	27 STEPPING STONES SET
207 VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED	1,098 VOLUNTEER HOURS
12 AMERICORPS MEMBERS	7,194 AMERICORPS HOURS



Sterling Forest State Park: Accomplishments



Parallel Trail Feature



Stone Bog "Bridge"



Stream and Floodplain Crossing



Narrow Corridor That Retains Sightlines



Stone Box Culvert



OPRHP Lesson on Snake Encounter Plan



Insloped Turn



A Fun and Sinuous Section



Stone Bridge



Crib Wall



Stacked Climbing Turns Below Cliff



Testing the Trail



Better Outdoor Opportunities Through Stewardship



Exploring the Trail



Enjoying the Trail



About the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is the region's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to building, maintaining, and protecting trails and the lands they traverse. Powered by volunteers, the Trail Conference connects outdoor-loving people with stewardship opportunities to preserve the integrity of trails and natural areas and inspire a deeper appreciation for the care that open space requires.

Since 1920, the Trail Conference has been partnering with land managers and mobilizing volunteers and advocates to care for the trails and parks that belong to us all. Every person who hikes, rides, or walks on a trail has an important role in keeping them safe and accessible. The Trail Conference educates and assists the public in upholding this shared responsibility.

More than 2,150 miles of trails in 140 parks across the region are cared for by Trail Conference volunteers. Over 2,400 Trail Conference volunteers donate more than 104,000 service hours annually. Approximately 9,000 Trail Conference members join their voices to speak up for issues affecting the protection of our parklands. The Trail Conference is a vigilant force in ensuring that the trails and natural areas we share are sustainable and accessible for all to enjoy for generations to come.



Tenafly Bicycle Workshop, Palisades MTB, and JORBA Mixer Event



Boy Scouts Event

Contact Us

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
600 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, NJ 07430

T 201.512.9348
F 201.512.9012
W nynjtc.org