

RIDGELINE

A publication of the Superior Hiking Trail Association



Vol 33, Issue 1



SHTA Launches Trail Renewal Program

We've developed what we call the SHT "*Trail Renewal Program*" that will enable us to plan for, manage and implement all the work that is essential to keeping the Superior Hiking Trail a superior outdoor experience.

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Trail Renewal Program

Continued from cover...

Essential elements of the Trail Renewal Program:

Trail Operations Director

By the end of April we will have hired, on staff, a full-time trail operations director to oversee all maintenance, building and renewal activities on the SHT. This person will ensure that trail work on the SHT adheres to national trail building standards; that volunteers are properly trained in safe practices and deployed in ways that optimize their time; and that the highest-priority projects get done first. (Those priorities are problems on the trail that endanger users, pollute water or degrade the land, and are concerns for landowners [either public or private]).

Volunteer Crew Leaders

These highly-trained volunteer trail workers will lead small groups of volunteers to take on small- and medium-scale projects. Their preparation for this role will emphasize safety and effective volunteer leadership, in addition to modern trail-building theory and methods.

All-In Mobilization

We occasionally face a really big project – several hundred feet of board walk to build, or a long section of new trail to create. For those projects, which will be carefully planned out months or more in advance, we will deploy all our Volunteer Crew Leaders, staff and scores of volunteers over several days to complete the project.

All projects, whether requiring an All-In Mobilization or just a Volunteer Crew Leader and a few volunteers taking on a stairway construction, will adhere to modern trail-building techniques as used by our sister trail organizations and state and federal agencies. We will comply with state and federal land and water conservation rules and regulations. And, while we've been lucky to have few, if any, accidents or incidents with volunteers, we will emphasize anew safe and effective trail work techniques for volunteers.

The Big Bad Five Get First Dibs

Last fall we conducted a first-ever systematic “conditions assessment” of the SHT, focusing on sections in Lake and Cook counties. While we found several small problems (and lots of Trail sections in fine condition), we also found sections of the Trail in pretty rough shape that will get a good share of our attention in the coming two years. We've come to refer to them as the **“Big Bad Five.”** If you've been in the area of these sections in recent years, you will know what we're talking about.

Gooseberry Re-Route

We'd intended to open this new section of the SHT, north of Gooseberry Falls State Park, in the fall of 2017. But we had the new route delineated for wetlands and found we would need to build at least 3,000 linear feet of board walk. We've decided to not only delay the opening of that new route, but also try to find a shorter alternate route that would take



Derrick Passe (right) and Mac Hogfeldt of the Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District behold an SHT scourge – mud holes. Fixing the worst of the worst of these is an SHTA priority.

the SHT through higher, drier ground.

Split Rock River Loop Trail

The trail that leads from the way-side at Hwy. 61 along the Split Rock River is heavily used – and it shows. Beefing up its resiliency is a priority.

The Land of Mud

We treat the sections between Britton Peak to Oberg Mountain, and from Oberg to Lutsen Mountains, as two of the Big Bad Five. These sections were built in the early days of the SHT, before modern trail-building standards were established. They get heavy use and much of the ground the Trail passes over in this territory is wetlands.

Bean and Bear, Hard to Get There

The loop that takes you around Bean and Bear Lakes, between Silver Bay and Tettegouche State Park, is beloved, and therefore well-worn.

What to Do?

Thanks to a grant from the LCCMR (Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources), SHTA will contract with trail experts from this region to walk these sections of the SHT, this summer. They will document the issues and make specific recommendations and prescriptions for how to repair and improve them – how we can make them resilient to heavy use and survive the ravages of inevitable climate change. (We have to plan for more water landing on the Trail.)

We'll seek other grant funding to actually carry out the work the experts recommend be done. We're throwing a dart at the wall here, but it's not a stretch to say getting just the Big Bad Five in good shape could cost several hundred thousand dollars.

It's important to point out that while we are concerned about the health of the current Trail, we plan to add loops, spurs and overlooks to enhance your experience. We want to keep you continually surprised and excited about the Trail's offerings.



The Superior Hiking Trail Association is dedicated to building, managing, renewing and promoting the Superior Hiking Trail.

721 Seventh Avenue, Suite 2
Two Harbors, MN 55616
218-834-2700
www.superiorhiking.org

STAFF

Denny Caneff, Executive Director
Jaron Cramer, Development and Communications Director
Gayle Henton, Special Projects Coordinator
Lisa Knight, Administrator
Jody Nonnemacher, Trail Information Center Manager
Jo Swanson, Director of Trail Development

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Volume 33, Issue 1

*Linking people with nature by footpath
along Lake Superior's North Shore.*



New Crew

We welcome **Jaron Cramer** and **Lisa Knight** to the staff of the SHTA.

Jaron is our communications and development director. He comes to us from Washington state, where he worked for the Washington Environmental Council/Conservation Voters. He's taking on most aspects of our fund raising and external communications, from developing a new business membership program and informal events on the Duluth SHT, to digging into the deep depths of code underneath our web site.



Lisa is our new administrator. With her husband Jeff and their business partner Dan Cruikshank she built the Two Harbors-based outdoor gear maker Granite Gear. Lisa was a one-woman finance manager and grew that operation as Granite Gear itself expanded. (The owners sold the business in 2014.) She's a mother of two sons and loves to plan family trips, including "the best family trip ever" to Ireland in 2017.



Crowing About A New Bridge

On a fine snowy weekend in February, an intrepid crew of volunteers, led by SHTA board member Dave Tabaka, tugged and twirled three 1,200-pound beams into place over Crow Creek that comprise the support structure for a new bridge. The bridge is about 80% complete; we will let you know when it's ready to cross. Meanwhile, about 300 yards east of this site on Crow Creek, we will again be moving big beams into place to build another new bridge over the West Fork of the Kadunce River. (Both bridges are found on the SHT between Cook Cty. 14 and the Kadunce River spur trail from Hwy. 61, about 6 miles east of Grand Marais.) That bridge too will require that magic combination of finesse and full-on

grunt work to put the beams in place – and, in the case of the second bridge, over a 30-foot deep gorge.

Not captured in these photos, but immensely helpful on this bridge project, are the hard-working folks of the U.S. Forest Service, and SHT friends and neighbors Steve and Nancy Sande. Also not captured in these photos but lending left and expertise that weekend were Todd Rowe and Matt Long.

Our hope is to open both bridges by the fall of 2018.



Photos courtesy of John Storkamp and Joshua Houdek

FROM THE OVERLOOK



Talkin' TIC

You've known it as, and we've called it, "the store" for many years. In the spirit of renewal, we now refer to our retail outlet and information station as the Trail Information Center. We learned last year that by almost two-to-one, visitors to our world headquarters in Two Harbors came for information about using the SHT. Many people bought things too. We're happy to continue providing both goods and information to visitors.

The TIC opens April 16 Mondays & Thursdays

10:00 am-5:00 pm

Fridays

10:00 am -7:00 pm.

We're especially pleased that Jody Nonnemacher will manage the TIC. Jody has worked part time for us for 6 years and knows the Trail like her sock drawer. Speaking of clothing, look for Jody's touch on our line of attire; she has "hip but practical" as a theme.

We'd love to see you. But there's no need to stop by the TIC in Two Harbors for Trail Guides, maps and other items – it's easy to order online. <https://shta.org/store/>

Three Cheers and a Call for Volunteers

We look forward to reuniting with familiar faces and seeing some new faces too! In May, the volunteer season launches with our annual trail-clearing: we'll be hosting two volunteer weekends led by Han Taylor. Larry Sampson will return for a few projects, like building the Ely's Peak Loop in Duluth and re-routing the Trail near Chester Creek. These and all upcoming volunteer opportunities will be posted on the SHTA Calendar (superiorhiking.org/calendar/). Check out this calendar and click the event you're interested in to learn more details, including how to register. Returning volunteers, please note that SHTA no longer uses volunteer email lists. If you've been losing sleep wondering why you haven't been getting emails about volunteer events, rest assured that it's not personal. If you have questions about volunteering on the Superior Hiking Trail, drop me a note: jswanson@superiorhiking.org.

See you on the Trail!

will rev up his shuttle vans in the service of SHT users from **May 11 to October 14**. Superior Shuttle runs Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, including the major summer holidays. By and large, his service covers the Trail from Castle Danger to Grand Marais, though you can make special arrangements for shuttle service on the far ends of the Trail.

Superior Shuttle has no formal affiliation with the Superior Hiking Trail Association.

All inquiries should be made at www.superiorshuttle.com or 218-834-5511.

Another shuttle option is Harriet Quarles, based out of Grand Marais, who primarily shuttles in the Cook County area. You can learn more about her and her services at harrietquarles.com or 218-370-9164.



You could be as cool as John Storkamp, Roberta Laidlaw, Wendy Baldwin and Todd Rowe if you volunteer with SHTA.



Superb SHT Segments You've Never Heard Of

Okay, admit it: a hike at the Bean-Bear Lakes loop, or a trek to Pincushion Overlook, is great, but those Lake Superior vistas get old. You can see Superior from your car, anyway.

Let us suggest some off-the-beaten-path segments of our beloved North Shore footpath that may surprise you with their beauty, solitude and ruggedness. You can do these as "out and back" trips and still enjoy their finest features.

Photo by RedCanoeCre8tive

World renowned waterfall

It's true: the International Society for Waterfall Protection and Sustainability (they only have a PO box, no web site) has proclaimed the waterfall on McCarthy Creek "the cutest waterfall on the entire SHT, if not in North America." You'll find it if you hike between Rossini Road and Lake County Demonstration Forest, northwest of Two Harbors. While you're out there, you can enjoy the towering pines of the Demonstration Forest.



Stroll with a camel

Start at either the Grand Portage trailhead, within Jay Cooke State Park, or at Beck's Road, straight west of Gary/West Duluth. Once you gain elevation, the undulating terrain will make you feel like you're walking on the backs of a string of camels. Watch out: some of those camel humps drop off sharply. If you really need to see water on this hike but can live without seeing Lake Superior, you'll get a few nice peeks at the St. Louis River estuary. (Go in spring before the leaves block the view.)

Walk the (state) line

With the construction of our bridge over the Red River, you can cruise from Jay Cooke State Park to the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. Hint: Park on Hwy. 23, walk into the state park until you get a peek at that massive rail-road trestle, then return. Across Hwy. 23 you'll find the Wild Valley Road trailhead. Continue just under two miles, over our new bridge, and on to the state line and to the southern terminus of the SHT. For a real thrill, pull out your mobile phone, open Google Maps, and see your blue dot floating over the boundary. If you look really closely, and if conditions are right, you might just see the state line, there, under the duff.



Hike Fest 2018

- **Hike** **Commune with other hikers**
- **Learn about a Walk on the Wild Side, Tanzania-Style**..... **Win a raffle prize**
- **Buy a “mystery bag”**..... **Hike at night**
- **Catch the highly acclaimed TREAD Talk** **Hike again!**

Registration is on-line ONLY and CLOSSES APRIL 30 - shta.org/event/hike-fest/

All A Board

Four current board members of the SHTA – Dave Tabaka, Kevin Pillsbury, Kelsey Jones-Casey and Tyler Teggatz – seek to be re-elected to their second three-year terms.

Seeking election to the board of directors for the first time is Becky Zrimsek, a Northfield resident and native of Duluth. Becky is assistant vice president for external relations at Carleton College. She hopes to bring to the board her expertise in donor involvement and stewardship, program development, strategic planning, fundraising and campaign planning, and communications.

Election of board members takes place May 17, at the SHTA's annual meeting at Hike Fest.





731 Seventh Ave, Suite 2
Two Harbors, MN
55616

(218) 834-2700
superiorhiking.org

The Ridgeline

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We hope you notice our new look. The theme of this issue of Ridgeline, now in its 33rd year, is **“renewal.”** That’s how we like to think of this publication and much of what we’re doing at SHTA these days. There is great tradition and history to stand on here; renewing those traditions with fresh ideas and ways of doing business is what we want to do. Let us know how we’re doing.

This isn’t the first time SHTA has asked your opinion on an important matter. In the second issue of Ridgeline, in the summer of 1987 (see below), we asked members to suggest names for the publication. By the next issue, the

name “Ridgeline” appeared, with a design that clearly was the precursor to our logo. Unfortunately for whomever came up with the name, they were not credited.

NO MASTHEAD!

Readers do you have any ideas for a name and design for the masthead of your newsletter? Put your entry on paper and send it to the SHTA without delay. If you are exceptionally talented we might just give you the honor of preparing the copy for our printer.

For further ways to participate in this rapidly growing Association, see the “Help Wanted” column on page 3.