

RIDGELINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL ASSOCIATION

FALL 2022



SHTA COMPLETES GOOSEBERRY REROUTE

A historic event for the Superior Hiking Trail Association happened this year—we opened a newly constructed 4.7-mile section of Trail that officially closes the infamous “Gooseberry Gap!” ■ The Superior Hiking Trail is known to intimately and immersively connect people to some of the most scenic wild spaces in Minnesota. So when access was lost on a private parcel of land north of Gooseberry State Park in 2015, and subsequently detoured trail users on a road walk and a paved state trail, the Trail community was devastated.

(Continued on page 2)

PHOTO: Mist rises to the 270 Degree Overlook at the northern terminus of the Superior Hiking Trail during the fall color change along the Swamp River. Photo by Dan Dorland of D2 Photographic.

SHTA Completes Gooseberry Reroute ...CONTINUED FROM COVER

We often take for granted that the Trail is really just a series of social contracts between land-owners and managers who allow the Trail community to access their property. When one parcel along the trail alignment is lost, it can greatly diminish the user's experience on the Trail, which was the case with the creation of the Gooseberry Gap.

Staring down a more than four-mile "gap," which quickly was coined the Gooseberry Gap, the Association had only one option, adapt our plans! Something we do pretty well as trail folks. Staff, volunteers and

lowed by obtaining additional consulting services from Critical Connections Ecological Services, LLC.

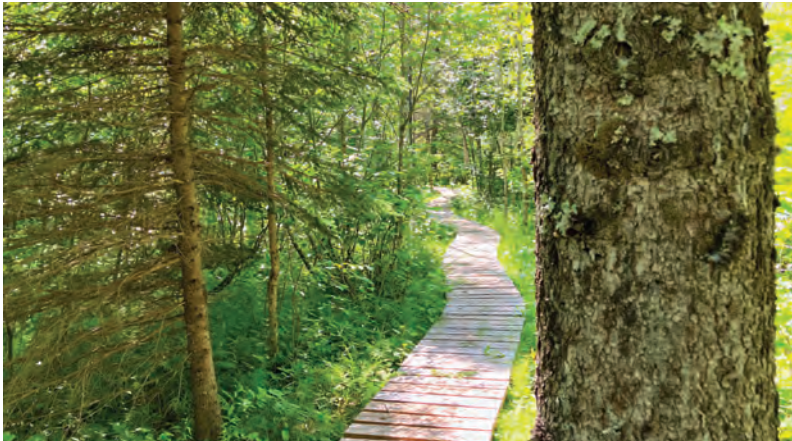
Once the final alignment was identified in late 2020, SHTA needed to obtain permission from both DNR Forestry and Lake County Planning and Zoning—the two public land managers of the area. Lake County ended up fielding some community concerns that arose from the Trail's new route. The Association listened and proposed ways in which we could work with the County to address those concerns, like better signage and

hired Dirt Candy, LLC, a local trail building company out of Grant Marais, who broke ground on Phase I in 2021 and completed Phase II in 2022.

Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation is a state economic development agency that invests in projects that foster vibrant growth and economic prosperity in northeastern Minnesota. Jim Plummer, the Economic Development Coordinator with IRRRB, said the agency invested in the Gooseberry Reroute for several reasons. The trail "makes host and nearby communities more livable and vibrant, attracts tourists and spending, and provides a healthy, fun outdoor activity for locals and visitors," Plummer said.

A WIN FOR THE SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL COMMUNITY

In the Trail community, projects of this size and scope don't have just one champion. Each phase of the project there were staff, board members and volunteers who picked up the baton and ran with it. At the center of the work were former Executive Directors, Gayle Coyer and Denny Caneff each held that baton. Gayle addressed the immediate challenges that came with the loss of a critical section of Trail, followed by Denny who led the environmental review of the potential new route and secured funding for its first phase of construction. Association staff and volunteers spent countless hours studying route alternatives, scouting the new routes through thick forest, fundraising, and working with the land managers to secure the permissions needed to make this project happen.



The new route features many boardwalks to protect surrounding wetlands.

public land managers worked together to help identify a new alignment that would traverse solely on public lands.

The tricky issue was wetlands. Holding true to our Association's values to minimize the impacts to the adjacent land and water of the Trail, we wanted to do our very best in developing the best possible route through these sensitive areas. The process required a lot of forethought, review and obtaining the right permits. We called in help from our friends at Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District and fol-

lowed by obtaining additional consulting services from Critical Connections Ecological Services, LLC.

Tamer Ibrahim, our Trails Operations Director, definitely had his work cut out for him when the project was greenlighted in the winter of 2021. This was the exact moment when material prices skyrocketed and wait times could only be estimated due to supply chain issues. Tamer jokingly said at one point "I bought up every available board of tamarack along the North Shore!"

The Association competitively bid the construction project and




Adam Harju of Dirt Candy LLC uses a mini excavator to build new tread on the Gooseberry Reroute.

To date, this is the largest re-route ever undertaken by the Association. It likely will not be our last reroute, but we hope that any future reroute is driven by the desire to improve and enhance the sustainability of the Trail and reduce its impacts on the adjacent land and water, and not due to loss of an easement or by competing development. The “Gooseberry Gap” will remain a cautionary tale that we will share as an example.

From those of us who are the current caretakers of the Superior Hiking Trail, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to those who stepped by when called on to help with this project. Our public land managers: the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry, Gooseberry State Park and Lake County Forestry. A huge thanks to our funders, Iron Range Resource Rehabilitation Board, Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund administered by LCCMR, and the dozens of individual donors and supporters from the Trail

community who invested in this project. We are also very thankful for the professional technical services of Critical Connections Ecological Services LLC, who identify the most sustainable final reroute for the trail, and of course our trail builders Dirt Candy, an amazing hyper-local North Shore business.

The Superior Hiking Trail is an iconic symbol of both the North Shore and also a larger national status symbol of Minnesota’s unparalleled rustic beauty. The scenic nature of the Trail is something to be celebrated and preserved.

Seven years and hundreds of thousands of dollars later, we couldn’t be more thrilled to finally close the Gooseberry Gap. With more than 300 miles of trail to steward, we hear other sections calling for our attention. The next chapter of our organization’s story is focusing on just that—Trail protection and making sure the Trail remains available to the next generation of Minnesotans who want to connect with the natural world. 

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



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PEOPLE.
NATURE.
FOOTPATH.

2022: A YEAR OF MILESTONES REACHED— TRAIL RENEWAL PROJECTS UPDATE

This year, the Superior Hiking Trail Association closed the Gooseberry Gap after seven years and hundreds of thousands of dollars, reaching our No. 1 milestone in our Trail Renewal Program’s “Big Bad Five” projects.

We also worked on two additional projects in our “Big Bad Five”—the Bean and Bear Lakes and Mystery Mountain sections—and dozens of other projects up and down the Trail. The SHTA staff would like to express our deep gratitude to everyone who volunteered or contributed this year: campsite adopters, section adopters, Trail Renewal Project volunteers, Duluth-area project volunteers, members, donors and land management partners. It’s been an incredible year of Trail Stewardship!



The Spruce Creek Bridge was damaged during flooding and started to fail.



In part-two of the project, volunteers and staff completed this sturdy new bridge. Photo courtesy of Volunteer Crew Leader Steph Hoff.

■ **Gooseberry Gap Reroute.**

The SHTA has officially closed the Gooseberry Gap, reconnecting the Superior Hiking Trail between Gooseberry Falls State Park and Blueberry Hill Road with 4.7 miles of new Trail. See pages 2-3 for the full story about how the SHTA closed the Gooseberry Gap.

■ **Duluth.** The SHTA has completed four water management projects that included re-routes and close to 1,000 feet of boardwalk replacement within the City of Duluth. This work was completed by contractors and volunteers. Two more projects are scheduled to be completed this fall.

■ **Caribou-Lake Agnes Structure Renewal.** This project replaced nine structures including 700 linear feet of puncheon and boardwalk.

■ **Nature Boy Bridge Removal.**

We removed a failing bridge and stabilized the bank between Pin-cushion Mountain and the Trail crossing at the Gunflint Trail. This water crossing is one we’ve identified as better to leave un-

bridged due to it being easy and safe to cross for the majority of the year.

■ **Woods Creek Reroute.** Four days and 300 volunteer hours finished a 300-foot reroute to move the Trail away from an eroding bank on Woods Creek. This project also featured our first-ever, single-identity work days that partnered with Unruly Women, a nonprofit focused on that empowering all female identifying and femme-leaning non-binary persons to reclaim their voice by unearthing their inner wild, outdoors.



SHTA Volunteer Coordinator Barbara Budd (r) speaks with volunteers about moving rocks safely with a rock net.

■ **Spruce Creek Bridge.** Thanks to the dedication of a group of returning and new volunteers, we were able to successfully complete this 34' bridge in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. The first part of the project focused on building level, square, and very solid abutments to support the bridge. The second part of the project installed the bridge located midway between Caribou Trail and Cascade River State Park.

■ **Sundling Boardwalk.** We replaced 200 feet of aged boardwalk with Wickcraft boardwalk, which is the same material used on the 2020 Sawmill Boardwalk replacement.

■ **Jonvick Boardwalk.** We installed 232 feet of boardwalk with 70 feet of puncheon on one side and 110 feet of Trail improvement on the other side. Both the Sundling and Jonvick Boardwalks were critical structure replacements due to the large beaver ponds present at these sites, which would be impassable without a boardwalk.

■ **Mystery Mountain Rehabilitation.** This rehabilitated a half-mile section of Trail using tread renewal and structure installation and repair between the Poplar River Bridge at Lutsen Mountains to the SHT Mystery Mountain campsite.

■ **Bean & Bear Reroute.** More than 50 volunteers contributed 1,200 hours to the Bean and Bear Reroute to move the Trail from a chronically wet area to higher and drier ground, which will make the Trail more sustainable and user friendly. This reroute will also reduce our impact on the surrounding environment as we use the Trail. 🏔️



Along with contributions from SHTA donors and members, the following projects were made possible by funding provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources:

- Gooseberry Gap Reroute
- Duluth Water Management Projects
- Sundling and Jonvick Boardwalk Replacements
- Caribou-Lake Agnes Structure Renewal
- Nature Boy Bridge
- Woods Creek Reroute
- Spruce Creek Bridge
- Mystery Mountain Rehabilitation and
- Bean and Bear Reroute.

The City of Duluth also contributed funding toward our Duluth projects. The U.S. Forest Service shared the cost of the Spruce Creek Bridge. The Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation and Minnesota Power also contributed funding toward volunteer training and support. The MN DNR Federal Recreational Trails Program funds supported the ongoing annual maintenance and renewal of the Superior Hiking Trail. Thank you, everyone, for contributing toward this year of milestones. 🏔️

“Thru-Hiker” Business Supporter: REI Co-op. REI Co-op goes the full distance in their support for the Superior Hiking Trail. We are so grateful for their support at the “Thru-Hiker” level with a gift of \$10,000 this year.



SHTA VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE AWARDS FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Each year, volunteers from the North Country Trail Association community are honored for their exceptional contributions. The Superior Hiking Trail officially became an affiliate of the North Country National Scenic Trail in 2019, a 4,800-mile trail stretching from North Dakota to Vermont.

Volunteers who receive these awards have given exceptional service, often many years' worth, to the North Country Trail and North Country Trail Association and their affiliates like the SHT. Four SHTA volunteers were honored Oct. 6 at the NCTA's Annual Celebration in Walker, Minn. Marty Anderson, Mike Ward, Dan Proctor, and Dave Jansen. In this issue, we highlight Marty and Mike. In future SHTA publications, we'll highlight Dan and Dave.



MARTY ANDERSON: COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR

This NCTA award honors a volunteer for exemplary work in promoting the Trail through a communications medium (newsletter, web site, brochure, etc.)


for three years or more. During the past three years, Marty Anderson has produced nine professional videos for the SHTA, offering a valuable resource to the SHT community. The videos range from safety and training videos for our volunteers to a mini-documentary about closing the Gooseberry Gap. The videos are regularly viewed on the SHTA YouTube channel and have increased our promotion of the trail as well as enhanced our training capabilities. When Marty attended a prospective volunteer meeting, he thought he was going to be picking up a shovel, but when he heard we needed a videographer, he jumped on it. Marty strengthens our communication and outreach with our volunteers, members, and users. The SHTA is lucky to have him sharing his passion for video with us.



MIKE WARD: SWEEP OF THE YEAR

This award honors a volunteer for tireless work and achievements behind the scenes on behalf of the Trail for a three-year period or more. Mike Ward is the

definition of tireless, and one of those volunteers who just keeps showing up for the Superior Hiking Trail Association in the most unexpected and critical ways. Mike joined the SHTA Board of Directors three years ago. Mike had been heavily involved in the SHTA community already, volunteering for us and demonstrating great enthusiasm for all aspects of the organization. Mike initially became interested in the SHTA because of his involvement in the trail racing community and setting the Fastest Known Time (FKT) record for 2016 on the SHT by running the entire trail in 8 days, 7 hours and 59 minutes. He led one of the SHTA's first Trail Stewardship Teams and helped us launch our outreach and education webinars in 2020. Behind the scenes he is putting in tons of work to make sure SHT users have the best possible experience on the Trail.

From everyone at the Superior Hiking Trail Association and North Country Trail Association, thank you Marty and Mike for sharing your talents, hard work, and dedication with the Trail! 



UPDATED 2022
**TRAIL
STORE
HOURS**

10 am–4:30 pm

May 19–December 23

■ Open Thursdays and Fridays

■ Closed Thanksgiving weekend.

Online store and curbside pickup also available.

CONNECT WITH THE TRAIL IN A WHOLE NEW WAY: VOLUNTEER



Volunteers from our Woods Creek Reroute Project.

The nature of a trail is that nature takes its toll. Experienced trail workers joke about this as “job security.” Trail work is never finished: brush continues to grow, waterways change course, beaver ponds flood trails, and storms do their damage.

To keep the Superior Hiking Trail open and accessible to everyone, hundreds of volunteers are needed every year. “I’ll never look at the trail the same way again!” exclaimed a first-time volunteer at our Woods Creek Reroute project this summer.

CURRENT SHTA VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- ▶ One-day trail maintenance events in Duluth
- ▶ Register at superiorhiking.org/volunteer

ONGOING SHTA VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- ▶ Office and Trail Store assistance
- ▶ Outreach events
- ▶ Leave No Trace education
- ▶ Costume maker
- ▶ Facebook moderators
- ▶ Camp cooks

For more information, contact Volunteer Coordinator Barbara Budd at volunteer@superiorhiking.org.

Volunteer opportunities are also announced in our monthly email newsletter, Trail Mix. To subscribe, visit our website. We also announce upcoming volunteer opportunities on our Facebook and Instagram.

Volunteers Strong and Mighty in 2022



This year, volunteers gave more than ever with a record-breaking 8,000 hours donated between Oct. 1, 2021 and Sept. 30, 2022. Volunteers are the heart and soul of the SHT, and we wouldn’t be here without the thousands of volunteers who have given their time, grit and energy since the very inception of the Trail. Thank you, volunteers!



A SUPERIOR GIFT

Did the Superior Hiking Trail give you new experiences and adventures this year? Please consider making a gift to the Trail to help the SHTA protect, renew, and enhance the SHT for generations to come. To learn more, visit superiorhiking.org/donate



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PHOTO: Astronomical dawn over Oberg Mountain. Photo by Dan Dorland of D2 Photographic.

SHT Publications now available as ebooks

The *Superior Hiking Trail Guidebook-Ninth Edition* and *Superior Hiking Trail Databook* are now available in a digital format as Kindle Ebooks on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and can be read with a free Kindle E-reader App.



Updated Digital Avenza SHT Maps

Our digital *Trail Atlas* has been updated following several reroutes including projects near Stewart Creek, Gooseberry State Park, Bean and Bear Lakes, Cascade State Park, and Lindskog Road Trailhead. We've also added new features including trailhead names and numbered mile markers for easier navigation. You can purchase the *Trail Atlas* in Avenza at [avenzamaps.com](https://www.avenzamaps.com). If you have previously purchased the map, you will be prompted to download an updated version for free through your Avenza App. 

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Hiking during Hunting Season



With fall color change comes another fall tradition on the North Shore: hunting season. During the fall, please wear blaze orange, educate yourself on hunting seasons, respect all Trail closure signs, and be prepared to encounter hunters on or near the Superior Hiking Trail.

In November, parts of the Trail are closed during firearms deer season. Plan ahead if you intend to use the SHT between November 5-27. For the full list of SHT Trail closures, please visit our Trail Conditions page at our website, superiorhiking.org.

State parks also host various hunts and may restrict access to state park lands during this time. Check with any park you intend to visit. For more information about hunting seasons, go to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website. 