

New Hampshire State Parks Volunteer Program

2020 Annual Report



Compiled by Jesse Creedy Powers, DNCR Volunteer Program Manager

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Overview

2020 was an interesting year for the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Volunteer Program. The program as a whole was put on hold from March to June due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the many challenges brought on by COVID-19, the state's volunteers were still able to make considerable contributions throughout the year and across the state.

Jesse Creedy Powers started as the new Volunteer Program Manager in July of 2019. Before the pandemic, Jesse was on track to pick up where the previous Volunteer Program Manager left off. Jesse spent the summer and fall of 2019 familiarizing herself with the program and introducing herself to DNCR volunteers across the state. During this time a chainsaw policy for volunteers was finalized along with trail blazing standards.

Friends groups and non-motorized trail organizations in long-term agreements with DNCR were getting back into the swing of reporting their work using the Department's Annual Work Plan. The Annual Work Plan was created in 2017 to give groups the chance to put together work and event plans for the year and to capture any nuances and activities not covered in a standard volunteer agreement. Work Plans also familiarize the Division Directors and staff with the undertakings of each of our partners and allows our Directors to give the necessary approvals for work and events to take place.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 31st, 2020 all volunteer activities were suspended. With stay-at-home orders in place and not much known about the virus, it was a hard but necessary decision made to keep volunteers, visitors, and staff safe. As spring turned into summer, the state parks, forests, and historic sites saw an unprecedented number of visitors. The absence of our volunteers during this time didn't go unnoticed. Trail crews normally out doing their spring clean-ups were unable to get the trails ready for the upcoming season, visitor education was put on hold, and all of our single day events that usually help staff to prepare for the start of the season were cancelled.

Throughout the spring and into the early summer, Director Bryce of the Division of Parks & Recreation met with the Governor's re-opening task force to determine how to stay open and safely operate in a pandemic. Out of this process came COVID-19 guidelines for DNCR volunteers to follow while performing trail work and general maintenance. With protocols and safety guidelines in place, limited volunteer activities were allowed to start back up on June 16th, 2020.

DNCR volunteers have shown a great deal of resilience throughout this whole process. With the program suspended for several months and many volunteers not volunteering this year, the lack of volunteer presence on state lands was missed by many. As COVID-19 has shown us, outdoor recreation is more important than ever. This goes hand-in-hand with the importance of our volunteers who provide a variety of invaluable services for our state lands, visitors, and staff.

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2020 Highlights

Volunteer Agreement Type	Total for Calendar Year
Long Term Groups	34
Single Day Groups	2
Individuals	83

Long Term Groups = Friends groups and non-motorized organizations in a long term volunteer agreement with DNCR (up to 3 years).

Single Day Groups = Groups that enter into a short term agreement with DNCR to perform a single project or event.

Individuals = Individual volunteers who do not work on behalf of a Friends group or other organization.

- **8,555 volunteer hours** were submitted for the 2020 calendar year, this equates to an estimated value of **\$244,398** in donated volunteer labor and time on DNCR land.
- An estimated **872 people** volunteered on DNCR land in 2020.
- **5 Friends groups and non-motorized trail maintenance organizations** entered into volunteer agreements with DNCR **for the first time**. These groups include: Friends of Fort Constitution, Friends of Fort Stark, Friends of the Ledges, Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund, and the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Trailway Coalition.
- **11 long-term Friends groups** and non-motorized trail maintenance organizations **renewed their volunteer agreements**. These groups include: Access Fund, Appalachian Mountain Club, Belknap Range Trail Tenders, Cohos Trail Association, Coos Cycling Club, Friends of Northwood Meadows State Park, Monadnock Climbers Association, Monadnock Happy Trails Association, Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition, Trailwrights, and the White Mountain National Forest.
- **The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources provided liability insurance** that covered approved volunteer activities for 9 different non-profit Friends groups and non-motorized trail maintenance organizations whose work spanned 21 different state reservations.
- The Volunteer Program Manager **attended 32 meetings** with various Friends groups and non-motorized trail maintenance organizations.
- The Volunteer Program Manager **received the Rookie Award** from the New Hampshire Association of Volunteer Administrators for, “outstanding accomplishments of a volunteer administrator who is relatively new to the profession (experience of 3 years or less).”
- Volunteers provide a variety of services throughout the state including grounds maintenance, trail work, GPS surveying, data collection, invasive species removal, search and rescue, and so much more.

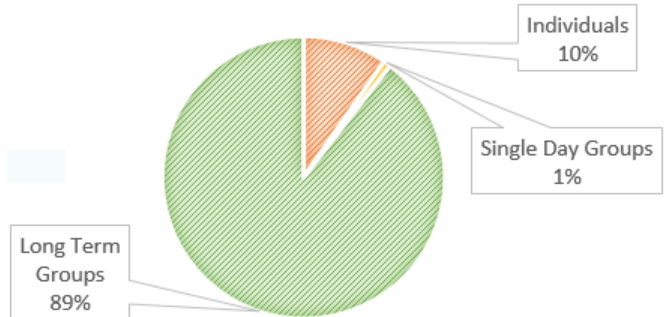
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Volunteer Hours for 2020

Volunteer Agreement Type	Hours for 2020 Calendar Year
Individuals	826.5
Single Day Groups	70.5
Long Term Groups	7,658
TOTAL HOURS	8,555

Percentage of Hours by Agreement Type



Volunteer Hours Over Time

Calendar Year	Reported Vol. Hours	Approximate \$ Value*
2012	751	\$16,575
2013	3,208	\$73,335
2014	10,456	\$240,279
2015	19,187	\$472,755
2016	16,971	\$418,096
2017	18,565	\$473,779
2018	21,403	\$551,341
2019	24,660	\$646,832
2020	8,555	\$244,398

* Approximate value is calculated using the Independent Sector's Value of Volunteer Time

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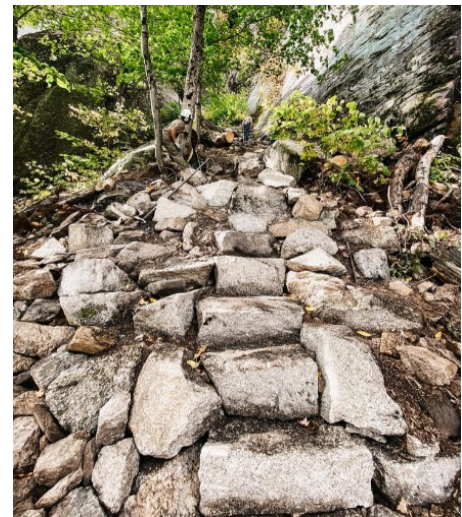
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- **Chainsaw approval process for volunteers** was finalized and enacted; this process allows DNCR Volunteers to request annual approval to use a chainsaw on Department land in order to cut down debris to clear the trails.
- The Department held **2 free volunteer chainsaw safety certification classes** for DNCR Volunteers, one at Bear Brook State Park and one at Weeks State Park.
- **Nansen Ski Club** entered into a long-term agreement with the Division of Parks & Recreation in order to restore the **Nansen Ski Jump at the State Historic Site** in order to hold sanctioned ski jump competitions.
- **White Mountain Trail Collective** completed 10 weeks of work at the Thin Air Face climbing area at **Cathedral Ledge State Park**. Work included the creation of 100 rock steps, 250 feet of scree, 8-12 foot long retaining walls, and hundreds of square feet of rubble. Work crews on this project included **Access Fund** and **AMC**.
- **Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund** celebrated their accomplishments at the Profiler Plaza in **Franconia Notch State Park** with a Trails Dedication Ceremony in September of 2020.
- **Friends of the Pemi: Livermore Falls Chapter** and Department staff installed 7 interpretive signage at the Livermore Falls Recreation area, 3 more signs are reserved to put up at the Historic Site across the river.
- **Blue Ocean Society** held **24 beach clean-ups** and removed a total of **437 pounds of trash** from state beaches.
- **Surfrider Foundation: NH Chapter** removed a total of **257 pounds of trash** from state beaches including an estimated 2,200 cigarette butts.



DNCR instructor AJ Dupere working with a volunteer at a chainsaw safety class



Rock steps built by White Mountain Trail Collective and partner crews at Cathedral Ledge State Park throughout the summer of 2020



Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund, Governor Sununu, state representatives, and DNCR staff at the ribbon cutting ceremony at Profile Lake

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2020 Highlights



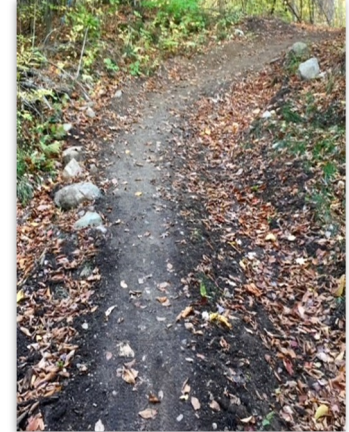
Sprague Energy Group
volunteering with Blue Ocean
Society at Wallis Sands State Park



Bog bridges build by the Cohos
Trail Association



Bridge built by Southern NEMBA
on the chipmunk trail at Bear
Brook State Park



Rebuild of the CCC Perimeter Loop
trail at Moose Brook State Park by
the Coos Cycling Club

- Recreation Trail Program (RTP) grant administered through the NH Trails Bureau was awarded to the **Coos Cycling Club** to complete a trail rebuild of the severely eroded **CCC Perimeter Loop trail at Moose Brook State Park**.
- RTP grant was awarded to the **AMC** for trail work on the **Lonesome Lake trail at Franconia Notch State Park**.
- A trail and two bridges were built and installed by **Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition** around Morey Pond at **Kearsarge State Forest**.
- **Friends of Pisgah** held 10 volunteer work days at **Pisgah State Park**.
- **White Mountain National Forest** Trailhead Steward program did not operate at the Old Bridal Path/ Falling Waters trailhead at Franconia Notch State Park in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Before and after of bittersweet invasive removal at South Beach State Park by volunteer Karla Sorenson



Cutting back and maintenance of the Hogback trail
at Greenfield State Park by volunteer Bob Beck

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Reported Volunteer Hours on DNCR Land Honorable Mentions

- * Appalachian Mountain Club: 1787 hours
- * Blue Ocean Society: 561 hours
- * Cardigan Highlanders Volunteer Trail Crew: 595 hours
- * Cohos Trail Association: 904 hours
- * Coos Cycling Club: 225 hours
- * Friends of the Ledges: 320 hours
- * Friends of Northwood Meadows State Park: 204 hours
- * Friends of the Pemi Livermore Falls Chapter: 300 hours
- * Friends of Pisgah: 280 hours
- * Friends of the Wapack: 39 hours
- * Nansen Ski Club + Friends of the Big Nansen Ski Jump: 1288 hours
- * NEMBA Central Chapter: 140 hours
- * NEMBA Southern Chapter: 117 hours
- * Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund: 45 hours
- * Seacoast Science Center Volunteers: 258 hours
- * Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition: 120 hours
- * Surfrider Foundation: 152 hours
- * Trailwrights: 18 hours
- * Wantastiquet-Monadnock Trailway Coalition: 265 hours

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Looking Ahead

2021 Volunteer Program Initiatives

- **Group Recognition Signs** - Signs recognizing motorized and non-motorized volunteer groups will be installed at kiosks and trailheads throughout the state. These signs will serve to recognize and promote volunteer groups in an agreement with DNCR that support the long-term maintenance and operations of state parks, forests, trails, and historic sites.
- **Online Work Reports** - The Volunteer Program is working to create an online form that will allow volunteers to submit their work reports electronically. The goal of an electronic form is to make submitting work reports easier for volunteers. Paper and PDF work reports will still be available to those who prefer email or mail.
- **Expand Data Collection** - Receiving more work reports and expanding on the data collected from volunteers will help to guide decisions imperative to supporting the Volunteer Program as a whole. Volunteer data is shared with staff, lawmakers, and the general public to highlight the contributions DNCR volunteers make across the state. For the first time ever the Volunteer Program was able to report on the total number of people who volunteered on DNCR lands in a calendar year (an estimated 872 people volunteered in 2020).
- **Volunteer Program Handbook** - The Volunteer Program Manager is continuing to develop a handbook of volunteer policies, protocols, and FAQs as a resource for volunteers and staff.
- **Chainsaw Classes** - The Volunteer Program will continue to expand the number of DNCR chainsaw safety classes offered for free to DNCR volunteers. These classes are taught by a Division of Forests and Lands instructor and offered in various locations across the state. Three classes are planned for 2021 (so far) with class sizes capped at 10 to comply with COVID-19 restrictions.
- **Volunteer Recruitment** - The Volunteer Program is looking to further assist our volunteer groups with recruitment through promoting groups on NH State Parks social media accounts and advertising upcoming group work days. *(Please note: Volunteer work days are limited to 2 separate groups of 10 volunteers per property as of February 2021 due to COVID-19.)*
- **Cooperative Trail Group Meetings** - Biannual meetings are scheduled to be held with state staff and user groups at Bear Brook State Park and Pisgah State Park in order to collectively maintain and improve the trail system at each park.
- **Communication and Paperwork** - Solidifying the relationship between volunteers and Site Supervisors to effectively address work on the property. Encouraging the continued submission of volunteer paperwork to the Volunteer Program Manager.