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Long Trail NEWS

SPRING 2025, Volume 85, No. 1

The *Long Trail News* is published by the Green Mountain Club, a non-profit organization founded in 1910.

THE MISSION OF THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB is to make the Vermont mountains play a larger part in the life of the people by protecting and maintaining the Long Trail System and fostering, through education, the stewardship of Vermont's hiking trails and mountains.

We are committed to ensuring the GMC and Long Trail System are places that are inviting, safe, and open, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

The Green Mountain Club and Long Trail System are located on land which is the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples including the Western Abenaki. This land has served as a site of meeting and exchange among Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. We recognize and respect them as the traditional stewards of these lands and waters, whose presence continues to enrich our community. We strive to respect and protect the lands within our use.

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GET IN TOUCH! Email the editor with your feedback at cmiller@greenmountainclub.org.

Dear friends of the Long Trail,

For more than a century, the Long Trail System, this simple footpath in the wilderness, has been the Green Mountain Club's top priority. From 1910 to 1930 our priority was to build it. After the trail was built the focus shifted to promote it. With the post-war recreation boom of the '50s and '60s the priority changed to maintain it. In the '80s and '90s we shifted to protect it. And now our top priority is to sustain it.



Keegan Tierney

We know the 115-year-old Long Trail System needs significant investments to bring it to today's sustainable trail standards. The trail has always been impacted by hiker use and weather events. But today we see hiker use increasing annually and a higher intensity and frequency of storm events that impact the trail more than past patterns. Determining where and how to make strategic investments on the 500-mile system requires fresh eyes and inspired fiscal and capital planning. That's where our Sustainable Trails Assessment comes in.

This winter we received a generous grant from the Waterwheel Foundation to launch a trail planning tool that will start with a GIS-based assessment of the system through a sustainable trail design lens. It will overlay our trail maps with data on cross-slope, soils, hydrology, sensitive ecosystems, and tread slope to show us where the trail is most vulnerable. We will then add data on hiker traffic.

This will give us a georeferenced database for planning, reporting, and communication. It will guide prioritization of investments in the trail to help remedy those areas that are most at risk of failure from future intense weather events. It will improve our ability to respond rapidly and manage information after an event. And it will inform our work plan for the next 25 years as it is adopted by staff, volunteers and partners.

The science and art of sustainable trail design has come a long way since the Long Trail was built. We now understand that by applying the technical and engineering aspects of roadway construction to trail building, we can achieve higher sustainability for our trails. The two disciplines have more in common than many people realize, and applying road building knowledge, on a smaller scale, is essential for building durable, long-lasting, and environmentally sustainable trails. Now, to be clear, I'm not advocating that we pave the LT — but the construction standards need to match the anticipated use and weather impacts of the future.

I look forward to sharing the results of the GIS assessment next year. As always, we will rely on support from all of you: hikers, volunteers, and donors will ensure we have the knowledge, skilled labor, and funds for a successful sustainable trails assessment. It is an exciting time to be part of the club and this effort, and I look forward to working with all of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keegan Tierney".

Keegan Tierney
Director of Field Programs

FRONT COVER: *Stratton Pond, the largest body of water on the Long Trail and one of the most popular overnight sites we manage. Photo by Katie Cutting*

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer to Help People Hike!

Do you know the trails around Mt. Mansfield and Smugglers' Notch well, and find yourself being a go-to person for information on which trails to hike in that area? Share your love of the Notch as a volunteer with GMC at Barnes Camp! Welcome visitors to Barnes Camp and provide information about hiking trail recommendations, the Green Mountain Club, and the Long Trail during the hiking season.

CONTACT: Emily Mosher, emosher@greenmountainclub.org

"Seeing the gratitude on hundreds of people's faces through the season is priceless! Volunteering at Barnes Camp allows me to help the Green Mountain Club promote the mission more effectively than my modest hiking abilities can. I took the challenge to hike every trail we may recommend over my first few years and can sprinkle in commentary that cannot be found in a book or online. Also, it is by far the most accessible volunteer location with the best views." – Barnes Camp Volunteer Brian

Volunteer to Rebuild Trails!

Spend a week on a volunteer trail crew this summer as a member of GMC's Volunteer Long Trail Patrol! Live and work on the southern Long Trail/Appalachian Trail with a crew of fellow volunteers, led by two professional crew leaders. No prior trail crew experience necessary – we'll teach you everything you need to know. Volunteers can choose to work single or multiple "weeks," starting Thursday evenings and ending Tuesday afternoons. Learn high-level trail building and repair skills used to combat the effects of climate change and increased hiker usage.

CONTACT: Lorne Currier, lcurrier@greenmountainclub.org

"The week was truly special and so rewarding! I don't have the words to express the gratitude I feel to have been able to work alongside + share this experience with others." – Volunteer

(More volunteer opportunities on page 7)

GIVING IN HONOR OF Cherished Memories

HIKING ON THE LONG TRAIL can be life changing, and time spent there with loved ones can create lasting and cherished memories. That's why Jane Risch decided to honor her late father, Fred Risch, by giving back to the Long Trail. Thanks to Jane's donation, the Long Trail and the mountains of Vermont, places Fred loved, especially during retirement, can continue to welcome other explorers.

Jane remembers traveling to Vermont during school vacations to ski and hike. His enthusiasm for Vermont grew, and eventually he built a second home

in Londonderry. He lived there after retirement in 1982, skiing and hiking for the remaining 18 years of his life.

Jane wanted to commemorate her memories of her father on the Long Trail and to honor his deep love of Vermont. Fred especially loved skiing at Bromley Mountain and hiking the southern sections of the Long Trail. After learning what the trail needed there, Jane donated funds for improvements to Lost Pond Shelter and Peru Peak Shelter, for finishing a trail relocation on Bromley Mountain, and to endow Lost Pond Shelter and Spruce Peak Shelter.



Fred Risch with daughter Jane Risch

Jane's donation was especially helpful because it completed the funding needs for specific trail projects, and her endowments will provide for future shelter maintenance. We thank her for her generosity and for sharing memories of her time spent in the mountains with her father. The work completed in Fred's memory will enable many others to enjoy the mountains he loved so much.

Restoring Historic Taft Lodge

MAINTAINING HISTORICAL PRESERVATION STANDARDS REQUIRES METICULOUS PLANNING

BY JUSTIN TOWERS



ONE OF THE LARGER FIELD PROJECTS THIS SUMMER WILL BE STRUCTURAL REPAIRS TO TAFT LODGE, the oldest, largest, and second-highest shelter on the Long Trail. After a rebuild in 1996 and successful log replacements in 2016, the 105-year-old shelter once again needs attention.

Notoriously snowy winters have taken their toll, with snow piled against the shelter encouraging rot in the lowest logs that had not appeared before the 2016 restoration. So we will again restore the historic cabin's appearance, function, and structural integrity, while adhering to historic preservation standards.

Serving on the Long Trail Patrol crew that replaced rotten sill logs in 2016 was the highlight of my six years on the seasonal staff. Now, as a project coordinator, I am pleased to plan and oversee the project.

Taft Lodge sits at 3,650 feet, 0.8 trail miles from the summit of Mount Mansfield, at 4,395 feet the highest point in Vermont. Judge Clarence Cowles, a charter member of the Green Mountain Club and builder of the Long Trail between Camel's Hump and Mount Mansfield, spearheaded the effort to build the lodge in 1920.

Cowles hired local lumbermen and builders Willis Barnes and Clyde Brink to construct the shelter in the summer of 1920. Its namesake, however, was Judge Elihu Taft, a colleague of Cowles who donated the construction costs. Taft's stated capacity is 32 campers, but a glance inside the truly cavernous lodge makes this figure seem conservative. It is a historical icon of Mount Mansfield and the Long Trail.

Replacing the lower logs of any large log cabin is daunting enough. Doing so most of the way up the tallest mountain in Vermont is

another order of challenge. In 1920 horses hauled logs up the mountain, a testament to the determination needed for major tasks before modern machinery. Today however, using horses would be impossible: the route they took no longer exists, and improving the Long Trail for horses is not in line with modern environmental standards and management goals for the trail. So, we'll do as we did in 2016, and use a helicopter.

“ Taft Lodge was by far the best shelter on the Long Trail – it almost felt like a hotel. ”

TIMMY MCCORMACK
End-to-Ender 2022

Five logs of varying lengths from 8 ½ to 13 inches in diameter will be required. Some will replace entire logs. Others will replace rotten sections, “scarfed,” or fitted, into the rest of an existing log. We expect to cut more than one log from a single tree.

In the past, we've replaced Taft Lodge logs with spruce trees planted by the Callahan Family near Will Monroe's old homestead at the end of Camel's Hump Road in Duxbury. Monroe was a contemporary and friend of Cowles who was responsible for extending Cowles's original trail from Camel's Hump southward to Middlebury Gap. So it seems fitting to source logs from his farm, now part of Mount Mansfield State Forest. With permission from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, we'll do it again.


After felling the trees, we'll cut each just a little longer than we need, and debark them before the airlift. This may seem less impressive to people nowadays than transport by horses. However, I believe Cowles, Barnes, and Brink would think otherwise.

In 2026, after the logs have had a chance to dry a bit, we'll return to finish the job. Stay tuned for a full report, but in broad strokes, we will use six-by-six-inch timbers and heavy duty screw jacks to support the wall above each log we will replace. We'll cut the rotten log free, chopping it out until there is room for a fresh one, with the wall suspended in the air.

Then, we'll prepare the new logs. After a year's seasoning they will be lighter and easier to move. Sills must be milled or hewed flat on one side and free of protruding knots or imperfections on the other. Each log for the second course will get similar treatment on top, while the bottom will be “Swedish scribed” to conform to any irregularities in the log below. Every log will require joinery on

each end: saddle notches for full replacements, and scarf joints for partial replacements to fit into corresponding scarf joints on the sound existing logs in the same course.

Now for the hard part: The newly prepared replacement logs must be slipped into place. Speaking from experience, this will require one part rigging, one part sweat, and one part Yankee ingenuity. Logs are irregular, both old and new, so each one will probably require an approach different than the log before it.

As expected with a large-scale project on a historic shelter, there is a significant cost associated. The Green Mountain Club is looking to raise \$100,000 over the next two years to fund the necessary project design, materials, air lift, and skilled backcountry construction crew. I'm eager to be back at Taft over the next two summers, and I'm honored to have a role in preserving Mount Mansfield's highest and largest backcountry shelter. I hope Cowles, Barnes, Brink, and Taft would be proud of the club's continued commitment to keeping the cabin they worked so hard to build. 



Justin Towers, pictured, worked on the 2016 Taft Lodge restoration and will lead the 2025 project.



2016 Taft Restoration—crew member Daley whacks a replacement log into place.



Dinner with a view from Butler Lodge. Photo by Diana Osborn

Big News for Conserving the Long Trail System

GMC AWARDED \$250,000 TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLAN

BY MOLLIE FLANIGAN

IN PREVIOUS EDITIONS I'VE DESCRIBED THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLAN that outlines our road map to permanently protecting the Long Trail System. Plans are great, and strategic plans are even better, but even the

best plan is quickly obsolete without the funding to implement it.

In recent years, before we developed the strategic conservation plan, the club's land protection effort focused on a few high priority properties that hosted the Long Trail. The strategic conservation plan


brings a system-wide approach to GMC, and that has enabled us to bring our vision for landscape-scale conservation to the attention of the land conservation funding community. And last fall the club received an anonymous \$250,000 grant to fund implementation of the plan!

This means we can double our land conservation program effort for the next three years. It will enable us to lay the foundation for future land protection while still stewarding previously conserved land. We can shift from monitoring unprotected parcels and trying to act when properties go on the market, to a high-capacity and faster proactive approach to protecting the remaining vulnerable three percent of the Long Trail System.

This spring we are hiring a full-time land stewardship coordinator to expand the capacity of the program. Our goal this year is to establish or reestablish relationships and develop individualized approaches for the owners of parcels that host portions of the Long Trail and its side trails designated as Tiers 1 and 2 in the plan. We will identify the number of actionable trail conservation opportunities on the 54 parcels, which total 12,866 acres, and are owned by individuals, towns or institutions. We will address Tiers

3 and 4 in years two and three. We aim to work on three conservation projects each year of the grant.

The grant is a major advancement in GMC's 39-year effort to conserve the Long Trail System. It includes a matching requirement, so we are working to identify more organizations and individuals interested in supporting this effort to protect the remaining 3 percent of the Long Trail System. We must raise \$35,000 by 2026, another \$67,000 by 2027, and \$60,000 more by 2028.

Thanks to steady support from members and donors like you, the club's land conservation program is positioned to start putting our strategic conservation plan into effect. If you would like to be a part of this collective effort, please consider a gift. I look forward to writing more about progress on the plan in future editions of the *Long Trail News*. 

Continued from page 3

Volunteer to Monitor Conserved Lands

Want to learn more about conservation easements and how they are upheld? We are looking for new volunteer Corridor Monitors to adopt parcels in northern and central Vermont. Corridor monitors are asked to visit their assigned parcel at least twice a year to ensure conservation restrictions are being upheld and maintain the boundary line. This is a great way to learn map, compass, and bushwhacking skills; gain conservation experience; and observe wildlife.

CONTACT: Mollie Flanigan, mflanigan@greenmountainclub.org

"I greatly enjoyed working in the woods during various seasons and demanding terrain. I looked forward to each trip and I enjoyed numerous encounters with wildlife, such as observing a cow moose and calf. And several bear tracks and scat. Great to have had the opportunity to give something back to the Green Mountain Club."

— Former Corridor Monitor

Properties available for adopting:

- **JAY:** Western slopes of the Green Mountains, Route 105 south to North Jay Peak and Stanhope Ridge. 640 acres, 3 miles of boundary
- **JAY:** Eastern slopes of Jay State Forest, south of Route 105. 285 acres, 2.3 miles of boundary
- **WEST HARTFORD & POMFRET:** Appalachian Trail corridor between Joe Ranger Road and Quechee West Hartford Road. 343 acres, 6 miles of boundary

Strategic Conservation Plan Snapshot

In the land trust world, strategic conservation plans are used to update and hone conservation goals, to ensure organizations work proactively and effectively to protect the values they aim to conserve. GMC's strategic conservation plan was adopted in 2023.

Since 1986, GMC and partner organizations have protected more than 25,000 acres of land and 80 miles of the Long Trail System's treadway. The system is now 97 percent legally protected (up from 96 percent last year). However, every foot of treadway is critical for the continuity of a long-distance trail.

To achieve the goals of the plan, the following trail and corridor miles must be protected:

- 4.5 miles of Long Trail
- 12.7 miles of side trails
- 85 miles of trail corridor lands

To explore the GMC strategic conservation plan in detail, please visit greenmountainclub.org/scp

FIELD NOTES

SEASON PREVIEW

BY KEEGAN TIERNEY, DIRECTOR OF FIELD PROGRAMS

AS I WRITE THIS DURING A JANUARY COLD SNAP, the Green Mountain Club Field Programs team is hard at work recruiting and interviewing incoming backcountry caretakers, trail crew members, and special project technicians.

Fortunately, we have a strong contingent of committed returning staffers whose experience will ensure we reach the high standard of backcountry work we expect of ourselves as we tackle a typically full slate of projects.

There is some uncertainty regarding the state of federal funding based on recent White House executive orders – see the sidebar on this page for more information.

Here's what the club will work on:

Shelters and Facilities

The oldest and largest overnight structure on the Long Trail, **Taft Lodge**, needs new base logs. Battered by high-elevation rain and snowstorms, Taft regularly needs rotted material

replaced. Project Coordinator Justin Towers will lead both the cutting and airlifting of new logs by helicopter this summer, and their installation next year. The renovation will meet historic preservation standards. For more on the Lodge's history and unique construction approach, read Justin's article on page 4.

We will **renovate Battell Shelter*** to increase capacity. Battell was built in 1967 in the standard U.S. Forest Service Adirondack lean-to style. Eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a mid-century modern design, it must adhere to National Park Service historical preservation standards.

Today Battell is a popular overnight site because it is easy to reach and close to the renowned Monroe Skyline, but it only sleeps six to eight comfortably. Though tenting is not permitted because of vulnerable subalpine vegetation, hikers are often tempted to tent rather than squeeze into the shelter. We want to increase capacity while complying with historical preservation standards, and we are developing the final design with U.S.



The current Long Trail alignment on Belvidere Mountain follows an old logging road that gets very messy in wet weather.



We anticipate beginning flood repair work on a number of sites, including the Homer Stone Brook trail, pictured.

Forest Service staff members, the GMC Trail Management Committee, and historic preservations advisers.

Trails

Two of our major trail projects will both remove trail segments from private land to public land and improve their quality.


We will relocate a portion of trail **just north of the Massachusetts border*** to get it out of a flat, muddy area and onto a sidehill where we can improve drainage and reduce mud.

Way up north, the **Long Trail on Belvidere Mountain** follows an old private logging road that becomes a streambed in wet weather. We will relocate the trail westward onto the Long Trail State Forest, and build on sustainable grades with good drainage structures, so it will be drier and more durable and enjoyable.

Flood Repair*

We anticipate receiving the first federal disaster recovery funding for portions of the trail most severely damaged in the 2023 floods. If funding goes according to plan, we will begin repairs on the LT/AT between **Little Rock Pond** and **Forest Road 10**; the **Homer Stone Brook Trail**; the LT/AT **Homer Stone Brook Bridge**; the **Old Job Trail**; the LT/AT in the **Lye Brook Wilderness**; and the **Lye Brook Falls Trail**.

Two of these trails risk further damage from severe storms, so we will relocate about half a mile of the LT and the upper third of the Homer Stone Brook Trail.

Finally, we plan to **replace the bridge** just north of Peru Peak Shelter, because its north abutment was undermined. 

**Denotes projects slated to take place on federal land*

Federal Funding + GMC

This edition of the *Long Trail News* is produced amongst a flurry of White House Executive Orders impacting federal agencies. The freeze on federal funding and reductions in force at federal agencies have the potential to impact the Green Mountain Club's field work on federal lands. As of publication, we are proceeding with programming for the 2025 field season as planned, but have developed contingency plans, including reductions in seasonal staff, should the need arise.

GMC works with the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) and National Park Service (NPS) to cooperatively manage about 250 trail miles, or around 50 percent of the 500-mile Long Trail System. The Long Trail and its side trails from the Massachusetts border north to Mount Ellen traverse the GMNF, and the Appalachian Trail Corridor from Massachusetts east to the New Hampshire border is owned by the National Park Service.

Federal funding comes to GMC through two primary sources: directly through grants and agreements with the US Forest Service and indirectly through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that receives funding from the Department of Interior for work on the Appalachian Trail.

Approximately 20 percent of our annual revenue for trail work comes from federal sources. For the upcoming field season, GMC has approximately \$500,000 budgeted in federal funding from executed contracts and agreements for trail work which accounts for over 40 percent of our annual Field Program budget.

At this point we have not seen any guidance from the federal government to indicate that existing contracts and agreements will not be honored. Based on current guidance, the club is moving forward with seasonal field staff hiring and funded project implementation as planned.

Throughout the club's 115-year history it has weathered numerous disruptions in support for the Long Trail System. The club's resilience is due to the quality work performed by staff and volunteers and the generous support of you, our members and donors, that are committed to ensuring that the trail is available to current and future generations. Thank you for your ongoing support of GMC.



Federal lands traversed by the Long Trail, including the Green Mountain National Forest and Appalachian National Scenic Trail corridor, managed by the National Park Service.

— MIKE DEBONIS



Hiking the Triple Tiara

SHORTER VERSIONS OF LONG TRAILS ARE
THE PERFECT THRU-HIKING GETAWAY

BY AUBRI DRAKE

MANY HIKERS ASPIRE TO THRU-HIKE THE THREE "TRIPLE CROWN" LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS: the Appalachian Trail (AT), the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), and the Continental Divide Trail (CDT). But for those who can't take months or years off from work, there is an alternative: "**The Triple Tiara.**"

The three trails of the Triple Tiara are accessible to more people, because each takes most hikers three to six weeks, compared with four to six months for the thousands of miles on the AT, CDT, and PCT. A handful of weeks away from home and work is more doable for many people, with no need to pack up a home or quit a job. And these trails are wonderful places to have an adventure!

The Triple Tiara, also known as the Mini Triple Crown, highlights sections of the Triple Crown's trails: Vermont's Long Trail; the *Nüümü Poyo* or John Muir Trail in California (*Nuumu Poyo* means roughly the People's Trail, part of a centuries-old Sierra Nevada indigenous trade network); and the Colorado Trail.

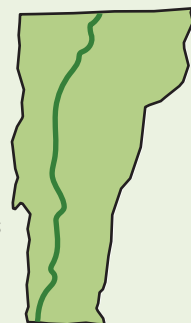
While the LT, *Nüümü Poyo*, and CT are popular destinations on their own, the concept of the Triple Tiara as its own distinct challenge has become more widely known in the last five years. The Long Trail's 272 miles partially overlap the AT for about 108 miles, while the Colorado Trail's 475 miles overlap the CDT for about 310 miles. The *Nüümü Poyo*'s 210 miles overlap the PCT for about 158 miles. These trails also include some of the most iconic and scenic parts of their longer counterparts.

LONG TRAIL

272 miles, no permits required

Biggest challenges: Semi-technical and rugged terrain; weather

Biggest rewards: Trail community at shelters and towns; Vermont's high point (Mount Mansfield, 4,395 feet)



The Long Trail, the oldest long distance hiking trail in the country, is full of classic Northeastern terrain pushing the boundary of steep, rocky, muddy, and rugged. I finished the AT in 2017, and the next year I completed the Long Trail during a heatwave and severe drought. Every one of the 4,000-foot summits was socked in; the water sources that still existed were muddy and low. The weather was hot and humid, with lots of sweating and chafing to go around. But Vermont weather is unpredictable – if you go, it could be cold and rainy, even in summer.

My trip's highlights included sunrise at Puffer Shelter, sunset at Sterling Pond Shelter, and trail magic with my aunt and her partner. It was wonderful to stop for a zero day in Waterbury. I visited the Ben & Jerry's factory, the Vermont Artisanal Coffee & Tea Company, the Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Cabot Cheese, the Smugglers Notch Distillery, and of course the Green Mountain Club's visitor center. I finished in three weeks, averaging 15 miles a day, which is about average.



Aubri shared stories from the Triple Tiara journey as part of this winter's outdoor adventure speaker series. Watch his presentation here: youtube.com/greenmountainclub



Aubri Drake at Journey's End on the Vermont/Canadian border.



Completing the Nüümü Poyo on Mt. Whitney in California.

NÜÜMÜ POYO or JOHN MUIR TRAIL 210 miles (plus 10 miles to exit); permit required



Biggest challenges: Permits; resupply and travel logistics; remote location; altitude

Biggest rewards: Beautiful backcountry lakes; epic mountain passes; summiting Mount Whitney, the highest peak (14,500 feet) in the lower 48 United States

The next year (2019), I traveled out West for my first time to hike the Nüümü Poyo. I was lucky, scoring a solo permit through Yosemite's online permit lottery 24 weeks in advance to hike southbound from Happy Isles to Mount Whitney. The permitting process is complicated, and depends on factors including group size, intended start date, and route. Be prepared to spend time researching and entering the [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) lottery if you plan to pursue this trail.

I planned the complex travel and resupply logistics, and was ready to go. Unfortunately, because of travel problems I had been awake for more than 36 hours before starting an 18-mile day at

10 am. Nevertheless, I summited the intimidating, inimitable Half Dome that day as I hiked out of Yosemite Valley.

The combination of travel exhaustion, quick hiking pace, high elevation (much of the trail is above 10,000 feet) hit me very hard: my first five days were some of the darkest mental days I've ever struggled with on trail. I would have quit if it hadn't been so hard to just leave the trail. After a high snow season I faced head-high snow on passes even in August, with terrible mosquitos in some places. Fortunately, none of the notorious water crossings were a problem.

Endless mountain views more than made up for the struggle. Each climb to a high pass took me past breathtakingly clear alpine lakes. The trail traverses three national parks, two national forests, and a national monument, all endlessly gorgeous. My mental health improved as my body and brain acclimated to the altitude, and the last three days flew by. Below snowline, the trail was sunny, dry, and hot, but with frequent access to cold water. I didn't even get any summer afternoon thunderstorms!

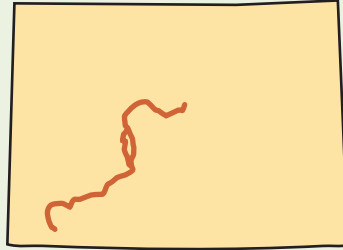
I first heard about the Triple Tiara on this trip from a fellow hiker, and considered pursuing it. I finished in 10 days, averaging 22 miles a day. The average is three weeks, but as an experienced thru-hiker and a full-time employee, I wanted to maximize my time off.

COLORADO TRAIL

475 miles,
no permits required

Biggest challenges: altitude; weather; water carries

Biggest rewards: epic, expansive views; friendly mountain towns



After hiking other trails (including the PCT and the Arizona Trail), I headed for the Colorado Trail in 2024. Altitude was still a challenge, with most of the trail above 10,000 feet, and a high point of 13,271 feet, but I was more experienced than before.

After sleeping three hours at the airport, I started up Waterton Canyon. Within minutes I spotted a herd of mountain goats scrambling high on the canyon walls. I saw hundreds of other animals, including sheep, cows, marmots, pikas, deer, hummingbirds, owls, elk, a fox, a marten, a snowshoe hare, and a mama bear and cub.

The trail presented long stretches of alpine travel (up to 30 miles), long water carries (up to 20 miles), and threatening thunderstorms most afternoons and some evenings--it rained twice a day for my last seven days, perfect for my Northeastern weather skills. I slept in my tent at 12,500 feet in a lightning

storm. But I also hitched a ride to town on a train to resupply, something I've never done on any other hike. And the trail often offered endless views, with hundreds of peaks on the horizon! I finished in 17 days, averaging 32 miles a day (15 hiking days, 2 rest days); the average is around four weeks. 🏔️

Aubri Drake is a thru-hiker, ultrarunner, and LGBTQ advocate. He discovered long-distance backpacking in 2013 and has been running away to the woods ever since. He's hiked the Appalachian Trail, Tour du Mont Blanc, Long Trail, John Muir Trail x2, Tahoe Rim Trail, New England Trail, Cohos Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, Arizona Trail, and Colorado Trail. Aubri has



Aubri on the Colorado Trail.

also completed numerous Northeast routes and peakbagging lists in both winter and summer seasons. Their writing has appeared in the Long Trail News, Trail Runner Magazine, and Treeline Review. Follow his adventures on Instagram at @genderqueer_hiker or transcendingmountains.blog



Views for days on the Colorado Trail.



3 Questions with Asa Worthley

PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE NEW *LONG TRAIL GUIDE* COVER

Tell us about the shot – what were you aiming to capture?

This photo was taken August 30 around 6 a.m. from the deck of the Octagon, a Stowe Resort-operated restaurant located just below the Mount Mansfield ridgeline, off the Mansfield Toll Road. The goal was to catch the sunrise and low-altitude mist that rolls through the valley this time of year. In late summer, when temperatures start to drop at night, mornings are super dynamic. If you're lucky, getting above the fog for a late summer sunrise is like looking across an ocean of clouds with mountain peak islands poking through mist.

What's your connection to the Long Trail?

I grew up in Vermont but didn't fully appreciate the Green Mountains until I was out of college and moved back to Burlington. I spend a lot of time kicking around the woods now – mostly for day hikes, powder stashes and photo missions. In the warm months, I usually link up with different sections of the Long Trail and have lunch with a view. It's the best way to turn my brain off and just be present in nature. My dog Pepper appreciates it too :)

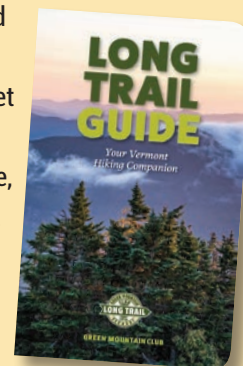
How do you feel about having your photo featured on the cover of the *Long Trail Guide*, a book that has been published for more than 100 years?

Pretty awesome!! Shoutout to my friend Sarah [Bailey] who works for GMC and helped facilitate this photo. I met her when I was working at Stowe a few years back and we did a feature on GMC caretakers and high alpine plants. I'm happy to collaborate with the people and organizations who put so much effort into maintaining the places I enjoy throughout the year! Also... 100 years? I wonder what cutting trails looked like back in the 1920s... 🍷

The all-new 29th Edition of the *Long Trail Guide* is out now!

Buy at GMC's Visitor Center on Route 100 in Waterbury Center, at local retailers, or online at store.greenmountainclub.org \$19.95 paperback or \$9.95 eBook (coming soon).

Your purchase supports GMC's work on and off the trail. Members get 20% off all merchandise, all the time.





Where on Trail?



1 This stone structure was built in 1929 and still stands, though its roof and sleeping deck have been repaired. Named for a local politician, the shelter's unique construction, indoor fireplace, and setting in an overgrown field make it a desirable overnight spot, though not without management problems.



2 A subtle homage to trail work hides on a side trail south of Camel's Hump: an old crosscut saw embedded in the earth, an example of nature's ability to cover and erase signs of human management.



3 At first glance this looked like a fungus, but it's actually an old Long Trail blaze among those briefly made from painted metal disks. "There was some discussion as to the relative merits of blazes and white metal disks for marking the Trail. It was finally decided to stick to blazes on the southern part, but to try out the disks to some extent on the northern part, and see whether they are satisfactory," read the 1929 *Long Trail News*. So where on the northern part is this hiding?



4 Hikers encounter this "20-by-30-foot glacial boulder opened precisely in the middle to a three-foot-wide gap through which the Trail proceeds." (*Long Trail News*, 1977). It became part of the route of the LT in a 1977 relocation.

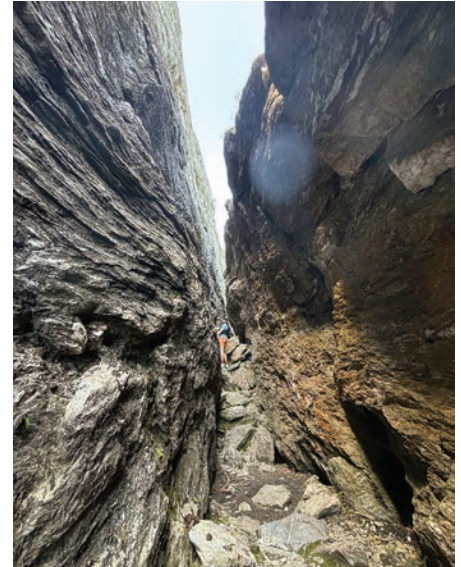
THE LONG TRAIL AND ITS SIDE TRAILS offer lush green vistas, stunning alpine summits, and refreshing ponds and streams. But a closer look on your next hike can reveal lesser-known features. We've included some photos and hints below, and invite you to guess their locations. If you visit any of these sites, please follow all trail guidelines and Leave No Trace principles to limit your impact on the land. Happy hiking!



5 This impressive cascade, the sixth-highest waterfall in Vermont, has a viewing platform reached via a ADA-accessible boardwalk.



6 This narrow northern notch takes the hiker over, under, and through a jumble of massive boulders. It can be a challenge, described as "treacherous and poorly marked" in a 1946 *Long Trail News* article, but it is a favorite "scrambly" section among many hikers.




7 Mount Mansfield is the busiest mountain in Vermont, but its maze of side trails offer quiet—and challenge—with unique features aptly named: the Cliff Trail, the Canyon Trail, and the Subway Trail come to mind. Which gravity-defying feature is this?



8 There is actually evidence of dozens of plane crashes on and around the Long Trail, researched and recorded by historian Brian Lindner. The remains of a Cessna that crashed in 1973 is found by a subtly marked trail just off the summit of one of Vermont's 4,000-footers.



Find descriptions and directions for many of these trails and features in the new 29th edition of the *Long Trail Guide*, available in March 2025.

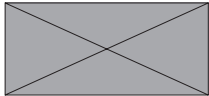


1. Governor Clement Shelter, Shrewsbury; 2. Hedgehog Brook Trail, Fayston; 3. Long Trail south of Route 108; 4. Split Rock, Woodford; 5. Thundering Brook Falls, Killington; 6. Devil's Gulch, Eden; 7. Cliff Trail on Mount Mansfield; 8. North of Mt. Abraham



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SAVE THE DATE

GMC's 115th Annual Meeting
Saturday, June 14, 2025

GMC Headquarters in Waterbury Center
Information and Registration coming soon!
greenmountainclub.org/annual-meeting

Vote for GMC's Next General Directors

At GMC's Annual Meeting on June 14, five general seats will open on the board of directors. Directors are elected by members to three-year terms, with a limit of six consecutive years of board service.

The GMC Nominating Committee presents the following candidates for approval:

Lauren Bierman (first term)
David Hathaway (second term)
Nika Meyers (second term)

Marc Vincent (first term)
Philip Werner (first term)

To meet the candidates and cast your vote, go to greenmountainclub.org/vote2025