

Northwest Camp Committee (VCC) Annual Report for 2022

The Committee had an active and successful year managing the cabin and its surrounding 125-acres, high on the Taconic plateau. The rustic but cozy cabin, constructed of American chestnut logs is tucked away under an old-growth hemlock forest canopy in the very remote northwest corner of Connecticut. The Northwest Camp Committee volunteers managing this self-service facility continue to balance the needs of its guests with a safe, healthy, and environmentally responsible lodging experience.

The Committee strategically benefitted financially with a 10% increase of registration fees that were effective on June 1, 2022. As it turned out, the '22 Bednights report (see below) shows that June had the highest number of bednights and is now the most popular time to book. Due to the lack of snow for the last two years, summer months are now the peak season replacing winter months.

Another achievement in 2022 was the utilization of additional storage of registration data on SharePoint. Since 1951 Committee Registrars have had hard copies of registration books, now data is added by the Registrar but knowing that the SharePoint data could be lost the Committee opted to stay with the hard copy tradition as well. Tied to this was the appointment of a new Outreach Coordinator, Tom Potter, who now can easily create a database and add e-mail contacts from SharePoint for event outreach.

Citizen science continued as a priority at NW Camp with a meeting with Dr. Carol Cheah of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station on the practice of biological control of the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive pest. Teaming up with CT DEEP and their Volunteer Stream Temperature Monitoring Network continued to show an increase in stream temperatures.

As dry as the summer was, the stream next to the cabin continued to flow and supply the much-needed water resource for campers to access. The amazing Ridgerunners kept a close eye on campfires and monitored the cabin on a regular basis. Due to the newly covered skylight (since the new roof was added directly over the stairs leading to the loft limiting any natural light), the committee added another octagon window on the east side of the cabin. Washed gravel was delivered in anticipation of the new box staircase planned to be installed at the November workparty with the help of members of the AT Trails Committee. The Committee continued to sell Cabin Illustrated T-Shirts and the book "A Century Outdoors" by the Centennial History Committee that has lengthy section covering NW Camp and the Committee from 1949-2021.

The Perseids Meteor Shower Extravaganza was a success even though the Full Sturgeon moon washed out some meteors from viewing. Eleven were counted in a one-hour period and three were very long, colorful, and bright with vapor trails. The weather was stifling hot and dry preceding the event, but thankfully dropped to the refreshing fifties each night. On Friday evening, our very special guest Dr. Susan Masino, professor of applied science at Trinity College and County Director of the Old Growth Forest Network presented her PPT on the "Importance of Preserving Old-Growth Forests for People and the Planet." Her presentation emphasized the significance of permanently preserving the health of the old-growth forest all around NW Camp.

A free cookout with a tasty and decorated cake was provided by members of the NW Camp Committee on both nights. Ridgerunner Coordinator of Southern New England, Tyler Andreacchio led a morning bird walk along the Bog Bridge Trail and AMC Ridgerunners

presented a Leave-No-Trace mini-workshop. On Saturday night, special recognition presentations were made to the AMC Ridgerunners and the very helpful Mt Riga Ranger, Dan Brazee. Singer and guitarist Joel Blumert performed in the evening and then our additional special guest, Felicia Ortner a Connecticut Master Wildlife Conservationist presented her "Bear Reality" PPT. All her photos were her own, dispelling many myths while promoting the reduction of conflicts with our wild bear neighbors. Special thanks to NW Camp Committee members, Paul Thoma and Carol Langley who planned the cookouts!

At the annual November workparty Box Steps were installed leading down to the stream. Extensive planning by the NW Camp Committee and the AT Trails Committee led to an Inlands Wetlands Permit application that was approved by the Town of Salisbury Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission (IWWC). The new steps provide a much safer and a more environmentally friendly way of gaining access to the stream. The Committee is proud of the fact that it used Black locust as an alternative material to pressure-treated lumber, especially since the stream serves as the only source of drinking water supply for guests. The Committee truly appreciated the IWWC Chair, Larry Burcoff who made regular site visits and joined two of our workparties.

The hope remains alive that this well-managed and fragile piece of property, through the Committee's collaborative and information sharing process will ensure and sustain its long-term health and viability for future generations to enjoy. -Rod Parlee

