

THE HUNGRY BEAVER

The Journal of the Kekekabic Trail Club



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May 2004

President's Column

Terry Bernhardt

The Board of Directors elected me to serve as President at the April 6 meeting. I am taking over from Derrick Passe who has been both President of the Club and chair of the Trail Committee. We owe Derrick many many thanks for the hours and hours of work that he has put into the KTC. It simply would not be possible to maintain a volunteer club with out the dedicated work of leaders like Derrick. At the April meeting Lynn Glesne was elected Vice President, Mark Stange as Secretary and Jim Luadtke as Treasurer. We also owe Jim and Mark thanks for serving as officers for many years. Lynn is a welcome new addition to the leadership of the club.

During my term as President I will try, with your help, to advance and solidify gains in several key areas:

- Member services and communication – we have made a good start with the able assistance of Liisa Beckman. Member renewals have been routinized, renewal reminders are going out, and we are making a concerted effort to contact both recent and longer term lapsed members. Liisa is updating information on www.kek.org. If you haven't visited our web site recently, do so. It has current information about club activities and current editions of the Hungry Beaver.
- Grants and financial resources – It is imperative that we seek funding, in addition to our membership fees, in order to maintain and grow the KTC.
- Recruiting and training leaders for the Club – leaders need to be recruited and encouraged to participate on a long term basis in order to provide a solid foundation for the club. We also need to involve member who only have the time to contribute in small ways on limited projects. It will take a combination of dedicated leaders and many hands doing many small

jobs to ensure that the KTC survives and more importantly thrives.

- Advancing the fundamental reason for the KTC's existence –maintenance of the wilderness trails and encouraging the public to support and use the trails. The Trail Committee is at the heart of the club. We need more members to step forward and help with the planning and execution of the spring trail maintenance trips. We also need to use all of the resources available to us to let the wider community know about the trails and encourage their use.

A hearty thanks to:

- The Trail Committee, Derrick Passe, Terry Serres and John Koffski for their dedication and hard work in planning the volunteer training and trail maintenance trips. There is no way to sufficiently thank Derrick, Terry and John and the others who have helped with this effort.
- Liisa Beckman for cheerfully and competently bringing order and timeliness to many of our member services.
- Bill Burt for serving as editor and putting out the Hungry Beaver month after month.

Sharon Scott Johnson for organizing the KTC information booth at the Outdoor Adventure Expo.

Clear Trails, Clean Waters

KTC Works with Friends to Help the MPCA Monitor Water Quality

On this year's trail clearings, you may notice a new and unfamiliar tool! It's the Secchi disk. Since 1973, citizen volunteers have helped the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) monitor the quality of Minnesota's lakes. In 2004, the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness will join this effort by inviting members and allies to collect water data as they paddle the lakes of the Boundary Waters.

Volunteers lower a Secchi disk (an 8-inch disk attached to a calibrated rope) into the lake and record the depth at which the disk is no longer visible. Measuring water transparency is easy, and it provides useful information about a lake's water quality.

From the MPCA Web site, here is some information on what these measurements signify, pertinent to Minnesota waterways: "Secchi transparency measurements provide a basis for assessing current water quality, estimating trophic status (overall health and productivity) and documenting water quality trends over time. It is a measure of water clarity and varies greatly among Minnesota's lakes. In most Minnesota lakes, Secchi transparency provides an indirect measure of the amount of algae in the water; however, suspended sediments (soils), or color due to dissolved organic materials, can limit transparency as well. These dissolved organic materials create the 'tea' or 'coffee' color of lakes and rivers such as Big Sandy Lake in Aitkin County or the St. Croix River. Calcium carbonates in the water, creating the extreme turquoise color in lakes such as Bluewater Lake in Itasca County, can also limit transparency." Sarah Strommen, Policy Director, Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, and Terry Serres

Here's to Our Sponsors

The "invisible volunteers" on our May trail clearings are businesses that lend their goods, services, time and people to our endeavor. They serve as the launch pads for our trips, making the logistics manageable and ensuring that our volunteer crews are comfortable. Without their support, our trips would have a hard time making it off the ground! We encourage you to check them out next time you are in need of outfitting, lodging, or refreshment in canoe country.

Bear Track Outfitting Co., 800.795.8068,
www.bear-track.com
Gunflint Lodge, 800.328.3325, www.gunflint.com
Northern Tier National High Adventure Base,
BSA—Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base,
218.365.4811, www.ntier.org
Smitty's on Snowbank Lake, 800.950.8310

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, we have our Minneapolis-based sponsors:
Midwest Mountaineering—our home base, 612-339-3433, www.midwestmtn.com
REI—host of our volunteer training, 952.884.4315 (Bloomington), 651.635.0211 (Roseville), www.rei.com

And, finally, a salute to our partners in trail management:

United States Forest Service—Kawishiwi, Tofte, and Gunflint Ranger Districts

Successful Trail Clearing

What makes a successful trail clearing trip? It is made up of a lot of things. It starts with the planning in October. Around Christmas time the trips are coordinated with the rest of the MWTA (Minnesota Wilderness Trails Alliance). Pretty soon people start calling to say they want to lead such and such trip. They in turn start calling their friends and start to fill up the trip. Volunteers take brochures and drop them off at stores, parks, schools, libraries... Other volunteers fold the brochures up and stamp, address and mail them to last year's volunteers. The brochure starts appearing on websites throughout cyberworld and at outdoor shows. Volunteers start calling the 800 number, coming to meetings, emailing questions. Ultimately many of them volunteer to contribute their time to go on a clearing trip. Not only do they volunteer the time in the woods, but they participate in planning what they need to bring, go to training, or help their trip leader buy food.

All this work and this still can't guarantee a successful trail clearing. What happens on a 7 day trip when it starts raining the first night and doesn't stop until you get back in the car? What happens when breakfast runs out two days before you are scheduled to leave? What about the portages that just seem to go on forever? What about the personality conflicts that inevitably arise? What about the ice that doesn't want to seem to go out of the lakes? What about the snowbank in the middle of the portage trail? What about the mouse that runs across your face when you are sleeping? Or the red squirrel that invades your food cache? The plugged up water filter? the wood ticks? black flies? army worms? mosquitos? Or, what about the tent mate that snores like an oncoming locomotive?

How can you survive this clearing trip? There is one easy way. It is called attitude. Every morning I get out of bed and proclaim with a smile on my face "Another Sh**ty Day in the BWCA." But, a lousy day in the BWCA beats ANY day back at work. After intravenous injections of coffee, and melting my polypro gloves to my fingers, I come to realize that today is going to be a pretty good day. So, put your smile on, grab a nipper and let's go do some damage to some alder brush. Just think how nice that rock back in camp is going to feel tonight after you get done clearing for the day and can lean up against it and listen to the loons serenading you. And then, try fall asleep before the locomotive so your snoring can keep them awake.

Thank you Trip Leaders, Volunteers, organizers, Sponsors who make the Clearing Trips successful.

Volunteering is a Many-Splendored Thing

You can help the Kek in more ways than just whacking through brush ... and in more months than May! The Kekekabic Trail Club can always use your help, input, participation, and suggestions! These are just a smattering of ideas (see Board member listing in this issue for contact information):

Attend the member gatherings. Usually the first Tuesday of the month at 7 PM in the Expedition Room at Midwest Mountaineering. Speak up on club business and share club news. We always have engaging speakers and presentations. Meeting updates are in the Hungry Beaver and current information can be found on the web site

www.kek.org.

Help fold and stuff flyers, stick labels and stamps, and eat pizza! Third Tuesday of every month, upstairs at Midwest Mountaineering in the offices behind the Thrifty Outfitters, 6:30pm. Contact Liisa Beckman for details.

Help organize the Volunteer Appreciation picnic to be held starting at 5:30 PM, Tuesday, June 8, Como Park in St Paul. We will gather at the Como Park Picnic Shelter, near Midway Parkway and Hamline Avenue in St. Paul for a fun celebration of the completion of the spring trail maintenance trips.

Contact Terry Bernhardt if you can help organize the picnic and celebration.

Take a hike! Organize and lead an outing for members. The outing can be in the Superior National Forest, metropolitan parks, state parks or wherever is appropriate. Let Liisa Beckman know if you want to advertise outings on the KTC web site.

Help review the volunteer manual, shortly to be reprinted. Contact Derrick Passe.

- Update the Kekekabic Trail Guide—a project not yet launched, but inevitable. Contact Derrick Passe.
- Write an article for the Hungry Beaver. Send to Bill Burt by the second Tuesday of the month.
- Join and participate in the Kek-List listserv through Topica. See the link at the bottom of the www.kek.org home page.
- Recruit a member, and renew your own membership! Talk about the KTC with friends, family and acquaintances who are interested in wilderness trails. Membership info is on the web site.
- Buy a T-shirt, hat, patch, or sticker—and wear it! Items can be purchased in person at a Club

meeting or let Liisa Beckman know if you want specific items.

- It's not all about what we want you to do for us: let the Board know what we can do to improve the club and the value of being a member. Contact Board members if you have a burning issue or need to bring forward for consideration.
- Initiate a project! Is there something you think *just needs doing*? Share ideas with the Board of Directors, and offer to organize and lead projects. We frankly have more ideas about what needs to be done than we have people willing to take the lead and ensure that projects are completed.

We are a small band of volunteers – if everyone pitches in and helps a little we can accomplish a lot.

A Different Kind of Working Hike: Bringing the North Country Trail to the "True North"

Join a Through-Hike of the Kekekabic Trail in September

One of the great things about being out in nature (whatever that means to each of us—for most in our club I suspect it's some remote lake or forest trail) is the very physical sense of belonging to something much greater—oddly, it's a physical sense that through its very immediacy becomes deep and spiritual. In working with the Kekekabic Trail Club, with its compelling history and the stories that I hear from other members, I enjoy the same feeling of belonging and humility. Likewise, our namesake trail itself, the Kekekabic, stands to become part of something of a much grander scale. While of course preserving its unique and indomitable identity — that is, a segment on the western end of the 4,000-mile North Country National Scenic Trail weaving from the Adirondacks in New York to the prairie land of North Dakota.

I find this one of the most exciting aspects of being involved in the KTC, because it brings a new dimension of challenge and opportunity to our work on these celebrated and beloved trails. It will also link our mission with those of our friends at the Minnesota Rovers Outing Club and Superior Hiking Trail Association, whose trails will also be part of this reroute.

At the Trails in the Heartland Summit in late January, I had the pleasure of meeting and hearing speak Rob Corbett, National Trail Manager of the North Country Trail Association. I was impressed

with his breadth of vision combined with nuts-and-bolts knowledge, but above all by his passion for trails. One of the very first things he said to me was, "I really want to hike your trail!" From this was born the True North Hike, so called because the Kek along with the Border Route will be the northernmost sections of the trail. It's a five-day through-hike of the Kekekabic Trail, September 17 through 21, with as many of the side loops as we care to take in. It's sort of a peripatetic strategy session on the inclusion of the Kek in the North Country National Scenic Trail ... but, while the reroute is pending Congressional approval, this trip is not! Mostly, it's a great excuse to hike and talk trails.

We welcome participation throughout the club, so if you are interested in joining this hike, contact me at 612.414.4116 or serrest@comcast.net. We are limited to the party size of nine, but if we run over, we can start a second trip heading the opposite direction. Discussions will probably touch on funding, facility needs (trailheads, etc.), promotion, possible trail expansion through Ely toward the Chippewa National Forest, the environmental impact of the current Kek route and possible route adjustments, trail standards and signage or lack thereof, etc. These are obviously topics of importance to the vitality of our club, but not everyone who comes has to wade in neck-deep with the talking heads! This is an opportunity to introduce a knowledgeable and interested newcomer the ins and outs of our trail and what it means to us.
Terry Serres 612.414.4116

Anticipated Planning

Timeframe for the NE MN Route Assessment

By Fred Szarka, Trail Manager, North Country NSTs
The following article of timely importance to our trails is reprinted from the Spring 2004 issue of the "Call of the North", the newsletter of the Minnesota chapters of the North Country Trail Association. Many Thanks to the NCTA for their kind permission to reprint here

I have been asked to provide an update on the planning process for the Northeastern Minnesota Route Assessment. On February 11, North Country NST staff from the Madison office met with Midwest Regional Director Quintana and his staff. The Regional Director stated that he could not approve an administrative change to the route shown in the Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of the North Country National Scenic Trail; the change is substantial and according to the National Trails System Act requires congressional approval. His staff made several suggestions for changes in organization of plan. As a result the North Country NST staff revised the plan and made other changes. The revised plan is currently being reviewed in Madison and should be sent to the Regional Office for formal review by the end of March. Technically the plan is a draft plan until it is approved by the Regional Director of the NPS, but for simplicity we will refer to it as the plan.

National Park Service policy requires that this kind of plan be reviewed by Regional Office staff for compliance with appropriate laws and regulations. The Midwest Regional review requires 3 weeks. We

KTC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM



Name _____ Home Phone () _____
 Address _____ Work Phone () _____
 City, State, Zip _____ E-mail: _____

YES, sign me up at the following Annual Membership Level (all levels include a 1-year subscription to the *Hungry Beaver*):

- _____ \$20 **Individual**
- _____ \$35 **Family**
- _____ \$50 **Sustaining** (Includes your choice of a 3-map set of the Kekekabic Trail OR a KTC T-shirt—indicate below)
- _____ \$100 or more **Trail Guardian** (Includes **both** a 3-map set of the Kek Trail AND a KTC T-shirt—indicate below)
 - _____ Yes, send me a 3-map set of the Kekekabic Trail!
 - _____ Yes, send me a KTC T-shirt! Circle shirt size: SM MED LG XL
- _____ Special gift

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED Check this box if you do not want your name in the KTC phone book.

Return this form with your check made payable to: *Kekekabic Trail Club, 309 Cedar Avenue S., Minneapolis MN 55454*
The KTC is a nonprofit, charitable organization under 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible.

anticipate that this review will be completed by late April. Following that review North Country NST staff will evaluate the comments provided by the region and make any changes that are warranted.

Following final changes to the plan, the NPS will post the plan on the NPS website and prepare review copies for distribution both on CD and as traditional paper copies. Distribution of the plan will begin an official 30 day public review. The NPS will schedule Open House meetings, near the beginning of that review period, in Duluth, Ely, Grand Rapids, and the Metro area as we did last year when we announced the resumption of the planning process. Following the close of the comment period the NPS will make any changes to the plan that may be warranted. It is customary to allow an additional two weeks for comments to be received prior to finalizing the plan. It is expected that the official comment period will run through the early June.

In addition to finalizing the plan, the staff will prepare briefing materials for NPS Washington DC staff and for briefing the Minnesota Congressional Delegation and the appropriate Congressional Committees. The final plan will be accompanied by a Finding of No Significant Impact as required by the National Environmental Policy Act to be signed by the Regional Director when he approves the plan. This is expected to be completed by late June. I have to point out that there is always the problem of schedule creep; where things simply take longer than anticipated. I think it would add no more than a week to any step.

NPS Midwest Regional staff recommended that the Washington DC briefings be held after the public comment period so that we can definitely tell NPS Washington staff, the Minnesota Delegation, and Congressional committees that there is local and regional support for the proposal and there is no significant opposition to the plan. It is likely that the briefings can be presented in June. Approval of the plan should be expected in late June or July.

Following the signing of the plan, either the NPS or a member of the Minnesota Delegation will need to draft language approving the change in the route. It is possible the appropriate committees will approve the change without requiring legislation. If not, the delegation will have to sponsor legislation, probably in the form of an amendment to some other park related bill, to authorize the change. The timeframe for that action is beyond my ability to predict, but unless significant opposition turns up it could happen before Congress adjourns in the fall.

Presidents Note: We will notify you, on the www.kek.org and via the Kek-List, when the Public

review process for the route plan is to begin. At that time, probably some time in April or May, we will be advising you to act in support of the plan, by writing letters and e-mails and attending open-house meetings. So be ready to act (but not before release of the pla)! You can also lend support by joining the NCTA – find information at www.northcountrytrail.org.

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Calendar

Tuesday, May 4, 7 PM at Midwest

Mountaineering – Report on scouting trips on the Kekekabic and Pow Wow Trails. Bruce Anderson and Peter Sparks will report on their scouting trip of the Kek Trail; Derrick Passe and Jim Luadtke will report on the status of the Pow Wow Trail. It is likely that they will have some photos to share as well stories about their trips and guidance for the crews going out in May to work on the trails.

May 11: Hungry Beaver Articles due to Bill Burt, lmjwrb@aol.com

May 18: Volunteer Night—Mailing and Pizza
Pizza Party, 6:30pm at Midwest Mountaineering—
come to the conference room in the upstairs offices
(behind the Thrifty Outfitters)

**June 1 Membership meeting will not be held.
Come to the Picnic / Thank You Party on June 8.**

**Tuesday, June 8, Starting at 5:30 PM – Picnic and
thank you party for the trail crews, crew leaders
and Trail Committee.** We will have a picnic and
party at Como Park Picnic Shelter, near Midway
Parkway and Hamline Avenue in St Paul. The shelter
is located just south of the Como Park Zoo. Burgers,
Brats, Buns and soft drinks will be provided by the
Club. Members should bring a dish to pass – salad,
side dish, desert, etc. More details coming soon.



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