

Appalachia

Volume 70
Number 2 *Summer/Fall 2019: Hitting "Reset" in
Wild Lands*

Article 7

2019

Rebuilding, a Photo Essay: Volunteers Help Restore Parts of the Oldest Trail in the United States

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Recommended Citation

Champagne, Paula and Klementovich, Joe (2019) "Rebuilding, a Photo Essay: Volunteers Help Restore Parts of the Oldest Trail in the United States," *Appalachia*: Vol. 70: No. 2, Article 7.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol70/iss2/7>

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Crawford Path Turns 200

Rebuilding, a Photo Essay

Volunteers help restore parts of the oldest recreational trail in the United States

Paula Champagne and Joe Klementovich



THREE HUNDRED PEOPLE, ALMOST A DOZEN ORGANIZATIONS, and \$150,000 were directed into Crawford Path in the summer of 2018, as the pilot project of a new trail funding and stewardship model posed by the White Mountain Trail Collective. Traditionally, trail work in the White Mountains has been done trail by trail, with the maintaining club and a land manager. The Crawford Path project was the first comprehensive investment in a single trail, with multiple trail maintainers and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The White Mountain Trail Collective is a collaborative group, featuring representatives from eight White Mountain trail clubs and the U.S. Forest Service. The collective's goal is taking a holistic approach to highest-priority trail work needs, boosting volunteer capacity, and supporting the trail stewardship traditions of the White Mountains.

Partners for the Crawford Path work included: the USFS's Pemigewasset, Androscoggin, and Saco districts of the Youth Conservation Corps; Dartmouth Outing Club; Old Bridle Path Trailworks; Wonalancet Outdoor Club; Student Conservation Association New Hampshire; Randolph Mountain Club; the Appalachian Mountain Club's 100-year-old Professional Trail Crew; and AMC teen and adult volunteer trail crews.

Because Crawford Path ascends into sensitive ecosystems, botanical teams from the USFS, AMC, and the alpine monitoring nonprofit Beyond Ktaadn all were on hand to work directly with the trail crews. These collaborations ensured that trail work would do minimal harm to alpine plants and that, after the work, vegetation would grow back successfully. The scientists also surveyed alpine plants along the trail and in Monroe Flats, an above-treeline garden where the rare dwarf cinquefoil grows.

Crawford Path, considered by many to be the oldest continuously used recreational trail in the United States, is also one of the few trails in the White Mountain National Forest maintained solely by the USFS and not by a trail club in partnership with the USFS. But in honor of the bicentennial, it was all trail hands on deck.

REI Co-op invested \$100,000 via the National Forest Foundation. The USFS contributed \$50,000. And the USFS and AMC contributed countless hours of staff time and volunteer work. Learn more at wmtrailcollective.org.

Some of the hundreds of volunteers moved and placed rocks to stabilize Crawford Path in the Alpine Zone. JOE KLEMENTOVICH





Previous page, top: *Members of an Appalachian Mountain Club teen volunteer crew help build a rock cairn on Crawford Path above treeline during a work party on June 27, 2018.* Previous page, bottom: *Placing stabilizing rocks along Crawford Path requires working eye level on the gravelly treadway.*

PAULA CHAMPAGNE/APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

This page, top: *Near the summit of Washington, a wind-weathered sign leans.* This page, bottom: *Alpine rigging techniques allowed crews to move larger rocks on the steep slope below Mount Washington.* JOE KLEMENTOVICH

