

i BRIEFLY



Sue Shafer

A new 140-mile trail proposed by DEC would connect New York State with the North Country National Scenic Trail.

DEC: North Country Trail in New York?

A proposal by DEC would create a new 140-mile trail winding from Boonville on the western edge of the Adirondack Mountains to Crown Point on the shores of Lake Champlain. This trail could become the newest section of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

The plan would cover the eastern terminus of a hiking path that's been talked about for two decades. The North Country Trail is similar in concept to the Appalachian Trail; however, rather than follow a mountain range, it would take visitors through a diverse series of landscapes in seven states. Running from Crown Point to Lake Sakakawea, N.D., the 4,600-mile route would connect national forests, scenic areas and other significant resources. In New York, the path would capitalize on existing trail networks such as the Finger Lakes Trail and the Onondaga Trail.

A series of public meetings on the proposal was held in December 2007. Details about DEC's proposal can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/39658.html

20,000 Pitch Pines!

Employees of the Estee Lauder Corporation and their families, working with staff from DEC, planted their 20,000th pitch pine seedling in Long Island's Central Pine Barrens region on Nov. 17, 2007.

The seedlings, planted over the past five years, began their journey as tiny seeds inside the prickly cones of pitch pines—Long Island's native pine tree. The cones are collected every fall and sent to DEC's Saratoga Tree Nursery in Saratoga County. The Saratoga Nursery has been producing tree and shrub seedlings for the state since 1911. (See *Conservationist* October 2007).

Surviving seedlings will produce oxygen, trap carbon dioxide and other pollutants, provide habitat for wildlife, protect the watershed and drinking water aquifer, and be part of the largest and last remaining natural outdoor area on Long Island. Many other local civic, scouting and school groups participate in DEC-sponsored tree planting projects. For more information, call (518) 581-1439 or visit www.dec.ny.gov and search "Saratoga Tree Nursery."

ECO Harcher Awarded

Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) Cynthia Harcher



Jim Clayton

has been honored by the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) as its 2007 Wildlife Officer of the Year. Harcher received her award in

Chattanooga, TN, during the 2007 QDMA National Convention and Whitetail Expo. The award honors

a state conservation officer whose dedication to and enthusiasm for his or her work makes a real difference.

Harcher has been on patrol as an ECO in New York since 1988. In addition to her regular patrol duties, she also spends significant time educating adults and children on how and why her job in law enforcement directly benefits wildlife management for all species. Harcher works in DEC's Region 3.

White Nose Syndrome Endangers Bats

Al Hicks



Hibernating bats are dying in New York caves from unknown causes, prompting an investigation by DEC.

The most obvious symptom involved in the die-off is a white fungus encircling the noses of the bats. Called "white nose syndrome," the fungus is believed to be associated with the problem, but it may not be the actual cause of death. Affected bats deplete their fat reserves months before they would normally emerge from hibernation, and die as a result.

State environmental officials and caving organizations are asking people not to enter caves or mines with bats until further notice to avoid the possible transfer of the disease from cave to cave.

For more information, visit www.dec.ny.gov.