



**Monday**  
December 15, 2014  
**Cloudy**  
**40°/34°**

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# TIMES OBSERVER

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75¢

## Johnson named to NCTA board

**By ROB ANDERSEN**

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The fifteen-member North Country Trail Association (NCTA) board of directors voted to add Kirk Johnson to their board for at least a three-year term, with possibly two more terms to follow.

“My new position on the board of directors for the North Country Trail Association started when I was voted on to the board this past Saturday, and is a volunteer position,” he said, “just like board service for any other non-profit organization.

“At a minimum it will entail my attending three board meetings in person every year: two in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a third which

will rotate from year to year around the seven states through which the North Country Trail passes,” he said.

Johnson noted that the North Country Trail was established by Congress in 1980, in the tradition of the Appalachian Trail and other National Scenic Trails, and is the longest backpacking trail in America at over 4,600 miles. One year afterwards, the NCTA was founded as the volunteer non-profit organization partnering with the National Park Service in the stewardship in the North Country Scenic National Trail. Their headquarters are in Lowell, Michigan.

“The North Country Trail passes for 265 miles through

Pennsylvania, including 95 miles through the Allegheny National Forest,” Johnson said. “Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has identified several prospective wilderness areas in the ANF that the North Country Trail passes through such as Minister Valley, the Tionesta old-growth area, and Tracy Ridge. Tracy Ridge is the largest roadless area in the ANF, and encompasses a nine-mile segment of the North Country Trail.”

He said that in terms of other well-known National Scenic Trails, the Appalachian Trail passes through 26 federal wilderness areas, the Continental Divide Trail passes through 20 federal wilderness areas, and the Pa-

cific Crest Trail passes through 48 federal wilderness areas. However, so far the North Country Trail only has five federal wilderness areas along its length: the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness Area in Minnesota, the Rainbow Lake and Porcupine Lake Wilderness Areas in Wisconsin, and the McCormick and Beaver Basin Wilderness Areas in Michigan.

“Being elected to serve on the NCTA board of directors is an honor, and I believe that it will dovetail well with my primary work for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness. The mission of FAW is certainly not inconsistent with the mis-

**See JOHNSON / A10**

# Johnson joins NCT board...

sion and vision of the NCTA," he said. "People who are passionate about FAW and preserving additional wilderness areas in the ANF are also by and large passionate about hiking, backpacking, backcountry camping, and the stewardship of the North Country Trail. It's going to be great fun, he added."

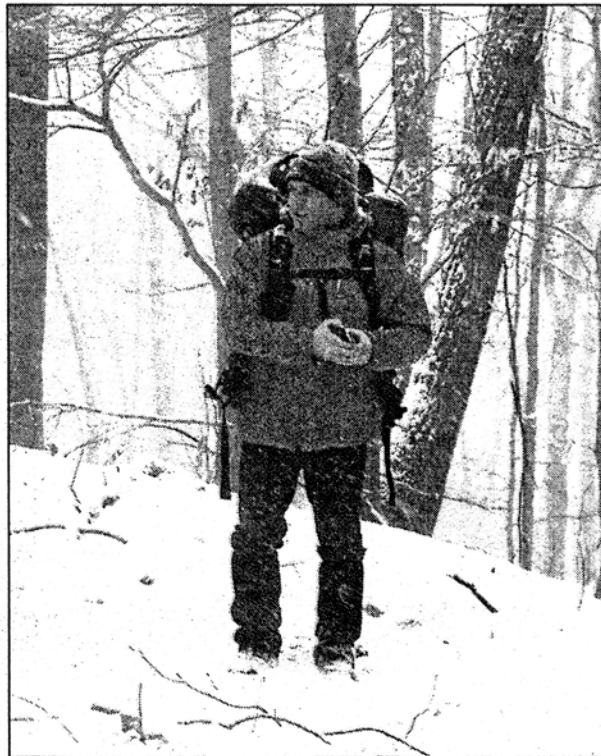
He said the trail is unique, in that a large por-

tion of it is on private lands, which made blazing the trail more difficult.

Johnson earned his BA from Albion College in Albion, Michigan in 1992, where he did frequent trail work in the Whitehouse Nature Center on campus, where he was employed. He earned a Master of Environmental Studies degree from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash-

ington in 1999. While living in Washington he was a volunteer trail maintainer for the National Park Service in Olympic National Park. He serves as executive director for the Warren-based Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, which he founded in 2001 and which seeks to have qualifying portions of the Allegheny National Forest designated as wilderness areas under

the Wilderness Act of 1964. These include areas that the North Country Trail passes through such as Minister Valley, Tionesta, and Tracy Ridge. Johnson has been an NCTA member since 2000, and for the last ten years the volunteer adopter/maintainer of the 5.5-mile segment of the NCT through the proposed Minister Valley Wilderness Area.



**Kirk Johnson**