



Boy Scouts at Grand Marais Kiosk. Photo Courtesy of Craig Woerpel

Grand Marais, Michigan - The North Country National Scenic Trail is America's longest National Scenic Trail, stretching 4,600 miles from New York to North Dakota. More commonly called the North Country Trail or NCT, it began as a proposal in the mid-1960s and became a reality in 1980. Its designation as a scenic trail means visitors experience some of the most outstanding beauty found anywhere in the US.

Within the central Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the trail connects with the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, providing breathtaking views of miles of pristine beaches, acres of northern hardwoods and unique rock formations. Called by the National Park Service (NPS) America's first national lakeshore, the spot where the NCT meets with Lake Superior is like no other place on earth. Each season – from spring's wildflowers to winter's raw beauty – gives campers and hikers a new wonder; the trail sees visitors year round.

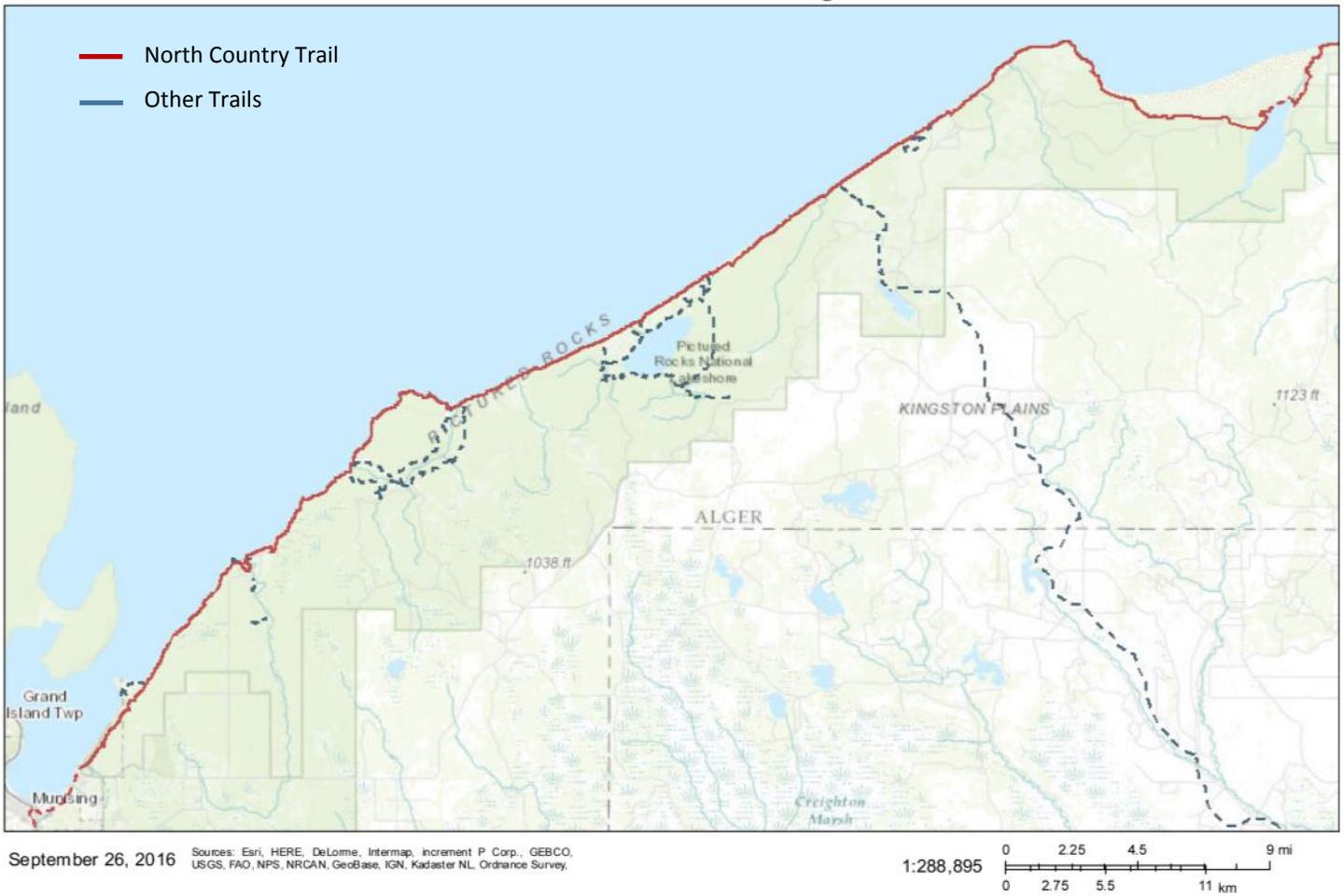
“The most descriptive term for Pictured Rocks is the name itself. The vistas from the trail looking out onto Lake Superior leave one in absolute awe.” Tim Hass, NCT volunteer

Hiking along the North Country Trail means the colors of the rocks and the natural wonder of the area waterfalls, like Spray Falls, are right where you are. Sand dunes, sandstone cliffs, waterfalls and forty miles of Lake Superior shoreline are just a few of the wonders that run through the area. One popular trip for hikers is from Munising to Tahquamenon Falls. Camping along this trail means more time to enjoy some of the finest scenic landmarks along the NCT, including Au Sable Lighthouse, Miner's Castle, Twelve Mile Beach and the Upper Falls at Tahquamenon Falls State Park.

Grand Marais, Trail Town for the NCT

The town of Grand Marais is a trail town – a community the NCT passes through that supports hikers and campers with services, promotes the trail and embraces its natural resources through the help of volunteers and

NCT Luce to Munising



local citizens. This portion of the NCT is a gem and is thoughtfully cared for, as shown by the new addition of a kiosk on the trail just east of Grand Marais allowing hikers and campers to navigate the path more easily.

The beauty of this part of the NCT isn't a very well-kept secret. More than 11,000 hikers and campers a year make their way down this section of the trail. Because of the many visitors, however, the trail along the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore has become worn.

Networks of Volunteers Protect NCT's Beauty

Thankfully, the North Country Trail Association has an amazing network of volunteers divided among chapters and spread across seven states who help maintain it. Based in Alger County in the eastern Upper Peninsula, the Superior Shoreline Chapter is responsible for developing, maintaining, protecting and promoting a 120-mile section of the NCT.

These volunteers maintain the trail from the mouth of the Two-Hearted River on the east in northern Luce County to Grand Marais in eastern Alger County, then over to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, where their portion of the trail begins again in Munising, continuing approximately 20 miles west.

The National Park Service maintains its own trails. This organization, along with the Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and chapters such as the Superior Shoreline Chapter, maintain this portion of the NCT.

The volunteers who care for the trail are an amazing group who bring various skills to the trail's upkeep. Most are involved in trail maintenance, but there are many more who work behind the scenes to conserve the natural

beauty of this section of the trail. People like Tim Hass, who is one of the trail maintenance volunteers, work diligently to keep the trail safe and accessible to hikers.

Volunteers put over 1,000 hours per person during hiking season – and that’s just in maintenance. Included among the maintenance issues that must be considered are natural factors of soil as well as wind and erosion. There are other, non-natural considerations that volunteers must be proactive about, like wildfires.

The beauty of the North Country Trail is a national treasure, and it’s exciting that part of it is in our area of the woods. Thanks to the sweat and care of NCTA volunteers, visitors can enjoy it for years to come.

More Information

<https://www.nps.gov/piro/index.htm>

<https://northcountrytrail.org/trail/states/michigan/premier-segments/pictured-rocks-to-tahquamenon-falls-backpack-hike/>

Volunteer—by clicking [here](#) or at <https://northcountrytrail.org/trail/states/michigan/explore-by-section/superior-shoreline-chapter/>.