

North Country Trail News

News items for anyone with an interest in the North Country National Scenic Trail

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Healthier Streams Near the NCT in the Manistee



Volunteers install GeoWeb material to stabilize and harden the trail surface.

from the [USDA Forest Service "Success Stories"](#) used with permission, by Dianne Berry, Dec 12, 2008

Several stream crossings on the Manistee National Forest are healthier thanks to joint efforts of Forest Service staff and North Country Trail Association (NCTA) volunteers. The West Michigan Chapter of the NCTA, with assistance from the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District, completed stream bank stabilization projects along two creeks using geotextiles and geocell materials to stabilize and harden the trail surface.

Intense recreation activities on sensitive topography led to substantial stream damage at a number of crossings along the North Country National Scenic Trail. Mountain biking and horse riding on steep slopes and sandy soils contributed to noticeable damage.

Along Michigan Creek, new trail rerouted a section of poorly located trail that was contributing to significant sedimentation and degradation of stream quality. Construction techniques included a locally unique application of geotextiles and geocells. Turn-style barriers and educational signage were installed at choke-points leading to the project area in order to deter illegal horse use and minimize the effect of mountain bike use on the trail.

Stabilization of an adjacent hillside with signs of damage from off-trail pedestrian traffic was completed as well, using biodegradable fiber water bars to slow water flow and filter suspended sediment. Additionally, a woven straw/ biodegradable net matrix was installed on the slope to stabilize surface soils and facilitate plant recruitment.

A variety of local, native seedlings were transplanted through the matrix to expedite the rehabilitation, add additional slope stability, and divert pedestrian traffic away from the slope. More than twenty Chapter volunteers contributed their time and labor to complete this project.

Along Tank Creek, an original section of trail was located within the sandy troughs of an abandoned railroad grade. Water and the resultant sediment would be trapped in the trough and funneled into the creek. A reroute of the trail out of the trough and up onto adjacent higher ground significantly reduced sedimentation of the creek.

Geotextiles and geocells were installed at the stream approach to help reduce the grade, stabilize the parent soils, and harden the trail surface. Biodegradable fiber water bars were also installed at strategic locations along the creek bank to slow water flow and filter suspended sediment. Barriers and additional educational signage are planned to deter illegal horse use that occurs along the trail and through the creek.

During these projects, volunteers overcame their doubts about the use of geocell materials.

"I received quite a few skeptical looks that first day when I pulled the geocell materials out of the truck," said Huron-Manistee National Forests' Trails Coordinator Chris Loudenslager. "But, upon completion of the project, more than a couple volunteers said I had made believers out of them."