GIANT NEWS

Newsletter of the Sleeping Giant Park Association
Autumn 2026 • Issue 134

Visitor Center Update

by Jeff Borne, Visitor Center Committee co-chair

If you've visited the park recently, you've probably noticed something exciting has taken shape near the start of the Tower Path - a new Visitor Center for the park! The building itself is now finished, and in August the interior and exterior woodwork received its final stain. We are currently awaiting a certificate of occupancy and, assuming all goes as planned, expect the Visitor Center to open to visitors in autumn 2026. The new building includes 2 heated restrooms which will be open during park operating hours.

But completing the building is only the beginning. The State of Connecticut constructed the facility, while SGPA has been entrusted with furnishing and bringing its large multipurpose interior space to life. Our goal is to create much more than a room with displays. We envision a welcoming starting point for a visit to Sleeping Giant—a place where visitors can orient themselves, learn about the mountain's natural and cultural history, understand how to explore it safely and responsibly, discover new reasons to care about the park, and receive information on hiking conditions.

To help make that vision a reality, SGPA has partnered with Kent Golden, a professor in Quinnipiac University's Interactive Media and Design department. Golden brings experience in exhibit design, multimedia production, and interactive experiences—including work associated with exhibits at Yale's renovated Peabody Museum.

The first phase will establish the overall design direction for the space and put several important pieces in place. Plans include a custom ranger and visitor information counter, space for maps and educational materials, an SGPA merchandise display, and a large digital screen that can support visitor information, multimedia programming, presentations, and future exhibits. The area is being designed as a flexible, accessible station where park staff can greet visitors and help them plan their time on the Giant. This is intentionally only the beginning. The broader vision includes exhibits interpreting the Giant's geology, ecology, history, trails, and stewardship, using both traditional displays and interactive technology.

→ *Continued inside*

Visitor Center Update

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Concepts under development include a detailed three-dimensional model of the Giant, touchscreen kiosks, interpretive graphic panels, and multimedia features. Quinnipiac faculty and students may also play a role in developing some of these elements.

Because we want to do this thoughtfully, the interior will develop in phases over the next several years rather than appearing fully finished on opening day. We look forward to welcoming visitors into the building soon—and sharing much more as this new gateway to the Giant continues to take shape.

Doolittle Property — woodlands, fall 2023

Stewarding the Doolittle Property

by Gail Cameron, Environmental Stewardship Committee chair

For decades, protecting the Doolittle Property was one of SGPA's most important conservation goals. The 29-acre parcel was the largest remaining privately owned inholding within Sleeping Giant State Park, and SGPA first sought to acquire it nearly 40 years ago. When that opportunity finally came in 2023, SGPA acted—securing the property and beginning the substantial work of removing deteriorated structures, vehicles, debris, and other remnants of its former use. With cleanup largely behind us, attention has shifted from protecting the land to restoring and caring for it. SGPA's Environmental Stewardship Committee, Trail Crew, and other volunteers and partners are now working to improve the ecological health of the property, particularly its roughly four acres of open meadow. A major focus has been controlling invasive mugwort, which can quickly dominate disturbed areas and crowd out more diverse plant communities. As native plants are able to begin populating these areas we will also supplement with additional plantings to expand the meadow.

A limited number of trees that are native to areas further south and west of NE (such as Loblolly Pine) may be planted to build resiliency in climate change. Secondly, a small number of chestnut trees will be planted to follow resistance to chestnut blight with the help of the CT Chestnut Association and scientists from the Agricultural Experiment Station.

After decades spent trying to conserve the Doolittle Property, SGPA is excited to carry out this next phase of stewardship—and ultimately to ensure that this remarkable addition becomes a healthier, more diverse, and more resilient part of Sleeping Giant State Park for generations to come.

Spring-fed pond on the Doolittle Property

Congrats to Our Newest Giant Masters!

by Mick Martucci & Manju Prabhu, Giant Masters Corrdinators

The **Giant Master** Program challenges hikers to complete all 32 miles of blazed trails at Sleeping Giant State Park. Congratulations to our 2026 class:

#683 Thomas Straub
#684 Diana Randall
#685 Eric Keller
#686 Christian Tomain
#687 Colin Miller
#688 Jocelyn Theriault
#689 Jeffrey Munro
#900 Steve Curran
#691 Brita Guirguis
#692 Daniel Guirguis
#693 David Cadugan
#694 Dominique Cesario
#695 Jen Caro
#696 Allison Barasz
#697 Zipporah Barasz

Giant Marathoner: #30 Julia Castner
4-Season: #70 Danie Caro, #71 E. Glatt, #72 David R Hill #73 Robert Rhone #74 Brian Slattery
12-Month: #16 Karen Orpilla

Trail Crew Updates

by Mike Miller, Trail Crew Chair

SGPA's volunteer Trail Crew has been hard at work again this season, helping keep Sleeping Giant's trails safe, accessible, and enjoyable for thousands of visitors. From routine maintenance to clearing storm damage, their efforts make an enormous difference across the park.

So far this season, the crew has:

- Re-blazed about 8 miles of trail including all of the north – south running Red Trails
- Installed trail head signage
- Cleared 41 blowdowns from across the trails
- Collected 123 pounds of litter (a lot considering that much of it is coffee cups and water bottles)
- Completed 609 hours of volunteer service since the start of our Trail Crew season in March
- The Trail Crew has also patrolled and trimmed back all 32 miles of the Giant's trails at least once and in some spots, several times to keep ahead of this years growth.
- Cleaned and maintained waterbars throughout the Park to help control erosion, and installed new ones as needed
- Done repairs on trail bridges and stairs
- Oversaw Scouting America projects in the Park
- Helped with invasive species removal
- Rerouted small sections of trail for safety and erosion control

And the season isn't over yet!

The Trail Crew always welcomes new volunteers. No special experience is necessary, and it's a great way to give back to the Giant while spending time outdoors. The Trail Crew meets every Sunday morning (weather permitting) through the end of November.

Become a Giant Master!

Hike all 32 miles of blazed trails. Scan QR or visit: sgpa.org/giant-master for details. Summary: if you are a SGPA supporting member you submit an official log (see web site) to the coordinators that indicates the dates you completed each trail. You have to be a basic Giant Master to apply for an advanced level.

The 4-season has the 32 miles repeated in each season with no time restritions. The Marathoner is done in one day. The 12-Month is 12 times within a year, once per month.

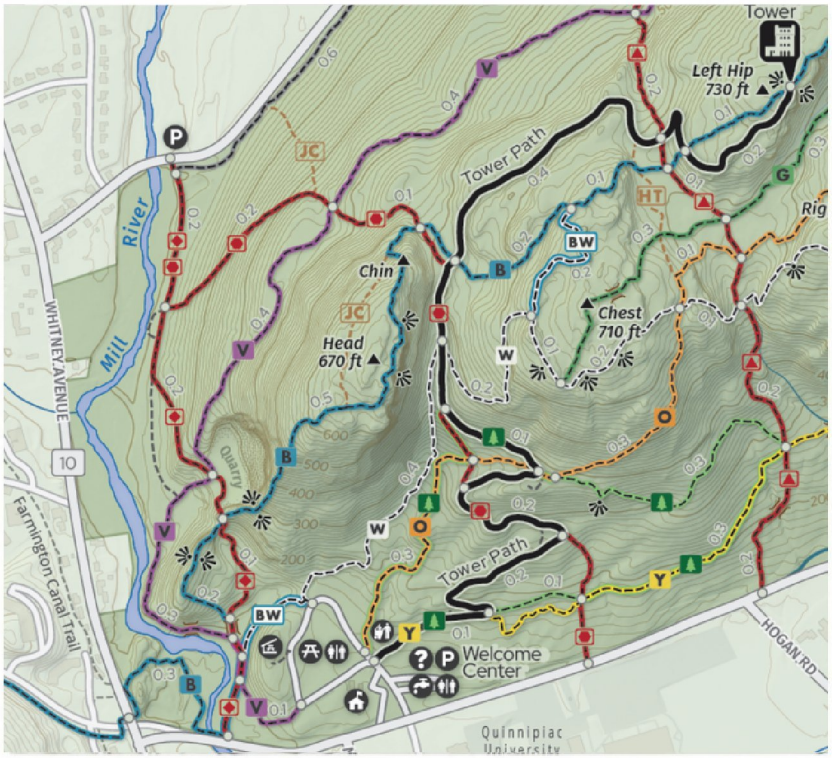
New Maps for the Park

by Aaron Lefland, Vice President

Earlier this year, SGPA released a completely redesigned trail map for Sleeping Giant State Park – correcting errors, adding topographic contours, shaded relief, and points-of-interest icons to help visitors plan their routes.

The map is available on SGPA's website, with printed copies at park kiosks.

We're also developing an interactive version of the map for computers and phones – mobile users will be able to see their location and access our Nature Trail and Geology Guide right on the traill.



Excerpt from new map

Head to a collection of links that includes SGPA's event calendar for more seasonal hikes and volunteer opportunites as well as other resources

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Annual Membership Meeting

Hear updates from across SGPA and, in this election year, vote on the proposed slate of officers and directors.

Sunday, Oct 18, 2026 • 12:00–1:30 PM

Sleeping Giant State Park Visitor Center
200 Mt Carmel Ave, Hamden, CT

Membership Holiday Party

Save the date for one of our favorite traditions: food, drinks, live music, and plenty of merriment in the pavilion adjacent to the main parking lot! Optional short hike at noon starts at the main parking lot and returns to the pavilion.

Sunday, Dec 6, 2026 • 12:00 PM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Luis Arata, President
Aaron Lefland, Vice President
Sandra Glick, Treasurer
Tom Morse, Secretary

Directors

Jeff Borne
Gail Cameron
Chris Fagan
Lonny Gee
Eric Hansen
Mary Anne Hardy
Trina Learned
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Chuck Maynard
Mike Miller
Manju Prabhu
Matt Viens

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VOLUNTEER

Help protect, enhance, and promote Sleeping Giant!
SGPA welcomes volunteers to our Committees:

- Programs & Events
- Environmental Stewardship
- Trail Maintenance
- Land Acquisition
- Communication & Outreach
- Fundraising & Membership
- History
- Finance
- Nominating & Goverance

The mission of SGPA, in partnership with the State of Connecticut, is to build upon a legacy of conservation and stewardship to expand the park and the opportunities it offers for physical recreation, spiritual renewal, and enjoyment of and learning about the natural world

Get Involved:
sgpa.org/volunteer
admin@sgpa.org

Trading Post
Look good while supporting the Giant
head to our online store
sgpa.org/trading-post

Trail Crew: every Sunday morning April through November, 9 AM at the main parking lot.