USING PRIVATE LANDS ON THE
NORTHERN FOREST CANOE TRAIL
Key Stats

- 740 miles
- NY, VT, NH & Maine
- 45 communities
- 23 rivers and streams
- 59 lakes and ponds
- 65 portages
A variety of paddlers
Idea for the NFCT as a continuous route originated in the 1990s, when Ron Canter, Mike Krepner, and Randy Mardres of Native Trails researched east-west routes used by Native Americans and early settlers.
TRAIL COMPLETED IN 2006
A mix of public and private land

New York

Maine

Vermont
Paddling infrastructure added to private lands
HOW DID WE MAKE THAT PUBLIC/PRIVATE COMBO WORK FOR US?

- Created section committees in each state to get grassroots support to help connect us to key people, including landowners

- Received support of tourism organizations who wanted economic benefits of a nationally-known trail

- Worked directly with landowners, explaining their rights and our needs

- We stayed under the radar and avoided the media until necessary
The result? NFCT is the longest inland trail in the nation.
A STEWARDSHIP PLAN IS ESSENTIAL

• Volunteer waterway stewards are eyes and ears on the ground
• Summer trail crew take on the bigger projects
• Waterway work trips combines volunteers and summer crew
EDUCATE THE USERS ABOUT LEAVE NO TRACE ETHICS
Challenges

- Changing land ownerships

- Property owners fear liability issues

- Property owners fear "takings." Not everyone is supportive of public access to private lands
ADVICE

• Build support from the ground up

• Realize every landowner situation is different. You’re going to have to be flexible and find creative solutions to varying scenarios

• Have a strong grasp on liability protections for landowners

• Have a stewardship plan