

Same Camp, New Council: 2010-19

By Peter Collinge

As the year 2010 opened, the new Seneca Waterways Council had been formed by the merger of the former Otetiana and Finger Lakes Councils. Camp Babcock-Hovey had joined Massawepie and Cutler in offering camping for the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts of the Rochester/Finger Lakes area. Don DeClerck continued as the new council's Camp Operations Director, but now had three camps to oversee. Also, Larry Pritchard (the Otetiana Council Scout Executive who had become the Seneca Waterways Council Executive) left in January to become National Jamboree Director. In April, 2010, Stephen Hoitt, who came from the Baden-Powell Council, became the new Seneca Waterways Council Scout Executive.

The Weisenreder Era concludes: 2010-2012

Through the council changes, Steve Weisenreder continued as the Massawepie Reservation Director, which he had been since 2002. Behind-the-scenes activities continued over the winter, such as hiring staff, promoting the CIT program, and recruiting volunteers for the Spring Work Weekends. Eagle Flight, which began in 2009 focused on merit badges, was promoting their second year for Scouts age 13+ and First Class or higher. They would operate June 27 – July 3, coordinated by Bob Cooper.

Christielee Bower, whose partner Ben Geiger started as the Massawepie Ranger in 2009, was hired as the camp's Business Manager in 2010. (She was initially considered to be the Climbing Director, but her fear of heights and evening job waitressing made the Business Manager position a better fit.) Gael Roberts, the previous Business Manager, helped to "show Christielee the ropes," which included things like faxing checks for deposit to Bill Boyle in the Rochester office. The camp did have a slow satellite internet connection but it was saved for high-importance, low-bandwidth uses in the camp office like camp emails.

Christielee particularly remembers Mark Mancini, who was the new Dining Hall Steward in 2010, as a staffer who kept trying to make things fun for the Scout campers. Mark showed up at camp with a box of interesting hats, and wore a different one each day. When there were too many campers to fit inside the dining hall for meals, some ate outside in the three carports, and not all were happy about that. Mark created some special experiences just for the carports (fine dining, luau theme, etc.) that soon had some campers preferring the carport seating!

In December, Bob Cooper announced that Eagle Flight had served 33 Scouts in 2009, 54 in 2010, and hoped to have 75 in 2011. Scouts who attend regular summer camp with their troop along with Eagle Flight receive a discount. Cooper was looking for more volunteer merit badge counselors, either for the week or for a few days. By early 2011, paperwork for Eagle Flight and other Massawepie programs was now being handled by Joyce Perkins, who had replaced Mary Lou Bopp as the council's Camping Administrative Assistant.

A 2010 survey commissioned by Seneca Waterways Council concluded that Boy Scouts who attended summer camp were in an environment that provided them with critical elements of healthy youth development, such as new skills, new friends, personal responsibility, and physical challenges.

In April, 2011, Ranger Ben Geiger and his then-girlfriend Christielee were doing their annual check of all of the camp's bird houses, cleaning them or documenting signs of life. At birdhouse #4 (Christielee's lucky number), Ben asked her to look inside, though she was reluctant because they had already found dead birds, scary spiders, etc. in the other houses up to this point. They were interrupted by a Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) officer letting Ben know about a situation that involved people from a car stuck further south on the unplowed Massawepie Road. Later, they went back to birdhouse #4 where Christielee used the power drill to unscrew the top, and

found a diamond ring that Ranger Ben had specially made for her with his mother's diamond. He got down on his knee in the still-tall snow bank, as the sun shone down and the snow softly fell, and asked Christielee to marry him! (They were married the next year on Leap Day: February 29, 2012.)

By May, 2011, an article by Camp Promotion Chair Duane Pancoast in the *Seneca Waterways Currents* newsletter said that weeks 2, 3, and 5 were full at Massawepie, but weeks 1 and 6 had plenty of room and week 4 had some room. Over \$20,000 in camperships (camp scholarships) had been awarded for the three Seneca Waterways camps, and more was available.

Another newsletter article, this one in the council's *Scouting Quarterly*, said that, while the summer camps made a profit of \$225,000, the camping deficit for the rest of the year was \$443,000, leaving a camping deficit of \$218,000 for the year. Note: these figures didn't include capital expenses.

The 2011 summer Program Director (Mark Costello) and Business Manager (Christielee Bower) made one long-lasting change. They felt that the Friday evening barbecue picnic tended to have Scouts waiting in long lines for food, and then just waiting around for the evening campfire to start. Mark and Christielee created a Carnival that started after Flags/Retreat, and continued through the dinner hour. Different staff members ran fun games and activities for the Carnival, which was a hit with the Scouts.

Soon after summer camp, in late August at the start of Family Camp, the tropical storm remnants of Hurricane Irene hit the Adirondacks and Massawepie. Among other things, Irene took out a power pole near Keymel Lodge that held two large transformers feeding the Gannett Lodge complex. Getting that replaced was time-consuming for the ranger staff and expensive (over \$14,000), but insurance eventually paid for much of it.

That fall, Camp Ranger Ben Geiger built the first of several lean-tos on the Massawepie property. Geiger was always ready to stretch his skills by tackling a new project, and this extra-large lean-to near Gannett Lodge at the site of the former Camp Voyageur Campfire Circle was a good challenge. A loft was later added inside to take advantage of the extra height. Geiger eventually built two more lean-tos: at the Four Points trail outpost in 2016, and at "Econ Rock" (the former Mountaineer Econ Area) in 2017. Those two are each very useful but definitely smaller than the Voyageur lean-to.

By November, brochures for the Seneca Waterways Council Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and Trek summer camps were available, and each district had a Camping Promotion Chair. The council said that camp attendance overall had been up in 2011, and units should take advantage of these resources to encourage their Scouts to participate in 2012.

OKPIK winter camping training for adults was offered again at Gannett Lodge at Massawepie during January 13-15, 2012, as it was most years during that era. The cost of \$80 covered food, lodging, and program activities.

By February, the Massawepie dining hall was full for weeks 2-5. The entire camp (including patrol cooking) was full week 5, and nearly full weeks 2 & 3. Massawepie attendance was 257 Scouts ahead of last year at this time, Babcock-Hovey was 142 Scouts ahead, and Cub Scout Adventure Camp was 221 Scouts and leaders ahead of last year. Massawepie was promoting 2012 as the 60th anniversary of the camp. A \$500 grant was available to a troop that had not camped at a Seneca Waterways Council camp in the past five years and brought eight or more Scouts to camp this year.

The cost for Eagle Flight 2012 (June 24-30) was \$350, or \$310 if Scouts also attended camp with their troops. Each Scout who attended Eagle Flight had the opportunity to earn 8-10 merit badges. All Eagle required badges, and dozens of "signature" badges were offered. Meetings with counselors to discuss prerequisites would start in March. A few more merit badge counselors and a few more Eagle Flight Week Scoutmasters were needed.

For many years, Massawepie hosted the last National Camping School (NCS) of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) each spring. Since the school calendar in New York starts and ends later than in many other states, the Scout camps in New York also start and end later, so Massawepie was available in mid-June for last-minute training of camp staff members. But by 2011 the Scout Executives of several other councils in New York felt that their camps should also have a chance to host NCS. A decision was made to rotate NCS among three camps, each for three years. Therefore, Massawepie was strangely quiet in June 2012, as Curtis Read Scout Reservation hosted NCS during 2012-14. After Rotary Scout Reservation hosted from 2015-17, NCS returned to Massawepie in 2018.

During 2012, the Seneca Waterways Council camps piloted the new National Camp Accreditation Program (NCAP) standards that all BSA camps nationally would soon be using. During visits in July, all three camps (plus National Youth Leader Training at Cutler) received gold accreditation.

2012 was Steve Weisenreder's last summer as Camp Director. He served for 11 summers at Camp Pioneer, a record for Massawepie, during which he kept camp attendance relatively stable (1788 Scouts in 2001, just before he started; 1860 Scouts in 2012) while BSA membership declined overall. Weisenreder resigned from the Scouting profession in the fall.

Off-season Camp Use Expands: 2013-2019

By the winter, Ed Theetge was announced as the Massawepie Camp Director for 2013. He had spent the previous eight summers as Camp Director for Camp Babcock-Hovey. Several new programs were also announced for Massawepie 2013: a BMX program, a Saturday check-in option (for a \$25 fee), three-day treks in addition to six-day treks, and "Massawepie Outfitter" as a place for groups to rent equipment like canoes and bear canisters for Adirondack trips. The three-day treks were advertised as better for younger or busy older Scouts, though relatively few groups ever signed up for them.

The spring work weekends in 2013 (Pre-Skills, Skills, and Beaver Weekends) saw several new projects. Ever since Pioneer reopened in 2000, the bathroom facilities had been porta-potties rather than permanent latrines as in the other Massawepie camps. The cost of paying a service to pump out the porta-potties three times per week was significant, and in 2013 the volunteers started building a few latrines each year to gradually replace the porta-potties. Also that spring, the volunteers began gradually building a few "tabins" (partially hardened tent cabins) each year in the staff site.

Ed Theetge remembers that during his first (2013) season as camp director:

A troop from the city decided to play a prank by taking another troop's flag. The prank was originally a long-standing tradition between the two troops. But what may have started as a harmless joke quickly became a serious matter, as the new leadership of the other unit was not amused and asked me to do something about it. When the missing flag could not be located, I addressed the entire camp during the evening assembly on the parade field. Standing before Scouts and leaders from every troop, I made it clear that the flag needed to be returned by the end of the day. I reminded everyone that Scout spirit was built on trust, respect, and doing the right thing, even when no one was watching.

My message was direct and memorable. I stated that if the flag was not returned and I discovered which troop was responsible, the entire troop would be sent home. The announcement immediately changed the atmosphere in camp. By the end of the day, the missing flag was returned, and the matter was quietly resolved. While no names were ever publicly mentioned, the lesson remained with those who witnessed it. The incident became one of those camp stories passed down through the years—not because of the prank itself, but because it reinforced the importance of honor, accountability, and living up to the values of Scouting. Plus, I have a very loud and commanding voice when needed.

Later in 2013, Camp Operations Director Don DeClerck and some of the camp properties volunteers, who were very pleased with the job that young Camp Ranger Ben Geiger was doing, wanted to take steps to keep him at Massawepie, especially after cycling through three new rangers the previous decade. Scout Executive Stephen Hoitt agreed to promote Geiger to Property Superintendent, but as part of that role expected him to start organizing more camp events outside of the summer season.

The first of those events was the inaugural Massawepie Adirondack Challenge in January, 2014. (In subsequent years the "MAC" became the Massawepie Arctic Challenge.) The Scout troops stayed in Gannett Lodge and Keymel Lodge, two of the few heated buildings at Massawepie. Ben Geiger recruited former Camp Food Service Director Tim Smith to lead the cooking, and Don DeClerck and several volunteers to help with program. As Geiger recalls, at the first meal one of the weekend staff led grace in the crowded main room of Gannett Lodge and then said, "Let's eat." Before the 90 participants could trample everything between their tables and the serving line, Christielee Geiger (Ben's wife) said, "Wait!" and proceeded to call up one table at a time in an orderly fashion. From that point on, Christielee became the MC and program organizer for the MAC weekend for a number of years to come. As with most of Scouting, both the food and program operations for the MACs have depended on a first-rate group of volunteers, many of whom were former Massawepie staff members.

A new option in 2014 for Scouts trying to raise money for camp was to sell Camp Cards for \$5, for which they would earn a \$2 commission. The card featured over \$100 in discounts from various merchants. As an incentive, units that signed up by February 28 and paid by April 30, and sold a minimum of 250 cards, would receive \$2.25 per card in commission.

The Camp Properties Committee was looking for volunteers for the spring Work Weekends, and listed 24 projects in the council newsletter, including building 2 latrines (in the Cranberry A/B campsites, using the same design as by the main parking lot), 2 more staff site tent cabins (using the same design as in 2013), and 48 new tent platforms. But the biggest project wasn't in the main part of camp.

For many years, a highlight of the TrailBlazers program for first year Scouts has been the "five-mile (actually closer to six-mile) hike" on the white-blazed trail around Massawepie Lake. But the future of that hike seemed threatened in 2014, since a main stringer on the trail bridge over the Massawepie Lake Outlet had broken and the bridge deck was underwater. The Massawepie Staff Alumni Association raised funds to renovate the bridge, and Peter Collinge (recently retired) spent hours doing paperwork and getting both DEC and Adirondack Park Agency approval for the bridge work, since it was on a known trout stream. Fortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers waived their separate jurisdiction fairly quickly, reducing the paperwork load!

The actual bridge reconstruction was done during the week of Beaver Weekend. It was a massive project, handled adeptly by numerous volunteers supported by Don DeClerck and Ben Geiger. The council purchased 17 new pine utility poles, each 25-35' long, with special less-toxic treatment against decay. The logistics were complicated by the mucky soil, a swampy and buggy environment, remnants of previous bridges in the water, and the lack of road access. All materials, tools, equipment and workers were transported to the site by three boats. Old materials were removed the same way. The pontoon boat (secured by Ben Geiger and renamed the "Sketchy") with a lift (designed and built by the volunteer electrician team) was invaluable. Also invaluable were the chest waders bought by multiple volunteers, the loan of two boats, the brains and brawn of the Slug Patrol team (volunteers from the former Longhorn District) and other helpers. The new bridge was functional before summer camp started, and the TrailBlazers were able to take their hikes around the lake.

Ed Theetge again directed Massawepie in 2014. By summer, weeks 1-5 were full in the dining hall, but week 6 still had spots available. That year, the camp staff made an effort to encourage the Scouts to see more of the Massawepie property than just Camp Pioneer. The Trading Post stocked a new set

of patches for visiting the various outposts on the property, and also added patches for the hike around the lake and for visiting the bog (the Massawepie Mire). In addition, a new program encouraged Scouts to spend a night at the former Camp Forester. Scouts would hike to Forester, set up trail tents, cook a dinner of trail food on trek stoves, see Deer Pond, and then be driven back to Camp Pioneer the next morning in time for breakfast. They wouldn't need to carry gear; it would be transported to Forester for them. At the same time this new program was starting up, the Eagle Flight program left Massawepie in 2014 and moved to Camp Cutler. Massawepie still had other programs for older Scouts: Mountain Fox (daily adventures, limited to 20 Scouts per week age 14+ or entering ninth grade) and both three-day and six-day Treks.

Property Superintendent Ben Geiger tried to establish a fall event in September, 2014: a fishing tournament. Between low sign-ups and the fact that his wife Christielee (who worked energetically at camp all summer as Business Manager despite being quite pregnant) was due around that time, this event was eventually cancelled. The lesson learned was that troops prefer a three-day weekend if travelling from Rochester to the Adirondacks for an event, so the fall 2015 event was scheduled for Columbus Day Weekend. (The unused 2014 Fishing Derby patches would be recycled for use in October, 2016.) The 2nd annual winter event (now Massawepie Arctic Challenge) was scheduled for Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend in January, 2015, and was a success. For \$70, participants got meals Saturday breakfast - Monday lunch, a ticket to Mt. Pisgah, a ticket to the Wild Center, a patch, lodging, and all of the weekend activities.

Since 2000, the St. Lawrence-Lewis Board of Educational Services (SLL BOCES) had run a summer program for children with special needs at Mountaineer (and prior to that at Pioneer), but that ended after the summer of 2014 due to changes in the rules for that program. In 2012 Kalamazoo College had started using Mountaineer in late August for their LandSea program for incoming freshmen. That program offers a transition to college through outdoors-based group experiences. Once the BOCES program was no longer using Mountaineer, Seneca Waterways Council began offering family camping at Mountaineer during the summer, ending before the Kalamazoo College group arrived.

Dave Cheney, who had been recently promoted to Council Program Director, would be the new Massawepie Camp Director for summer, 2015. Dorothy Bressler was now the Camping Administrative Assistant. Among the notable new summer staff members in 2015 was Rifle Range Director Rob Byers, who has worked at camp every summer since then. New programs advertised for 2015 included aerial archery, log rolling (in the lake), and BMX bikes. The early bird camp fee was \$355 for youth and \$180 for adults, with one free adult for a troop bringing five Scouts, and two free adults for ten Scouts. Scouts could stay a second week for \$330, and if they stayed three weeks, a fourth week would only cost \$90! Summer camp attendance for 2015 was 1883 Scouts (a total unmatched since then), from 77 Seneca Waterways units and 46 out-of-council units.

In 2015, 11 groups with 47 Scouts took Massawepie Treks. Treks cost \$355 per person. In the special *Summer Camp 2015* section of the spring issue of the council's *Scouting Quarterly* newsletter, Assistant Scoutmaster Charles Bronson of Waterloo Troop 74 gave this testimonial about treks, "After we got home and I looked at the pictures I had from the Trek, this one image [the sunset across Massawepie Lake from Gannett Lodge on the last evening] summed up the feeling of peace, tranquility, and treasured gift that I felt while I was there."

The "46 Groups of Scouts on 46 Peaks" fall event on Columbus Day Weekend, 2015, kicked off an ongoing series of successful fall events. While having a Massawepie group ascend each of the 46 high peaks was the goal, the organizers stressed the motto "Safety First, Summits Second", and emphasized that groups should not be afraid to turn around if needed. In the end, 90+ hiking groups from Massawepie with about total 500 participants successfully summited 44 of the high peaks, missing only Emmons and Donaldson in the remote Seward range. (Some peaks saw multiple Massawepie groups during the day.) After the Sunday evening banquet, Eagle Scout Blake Cortright

introduced and showed his new film, *The 46ers*. The \$35 per person weekend fee included that movie and banquet, along with a commemorative bandana, campsite, patch, and lanyard kit.

For summer 2016, Dave Cheney would again be the Massawepie Camp Director. Deborah Swift was now the Camping/Program Support staffer. Fees were mostly the same as 2015, except that staying for a second week cost \$190 (\$250 for out-of-council Scouts). Siblings received a \$25/sibling discount. Troops that signed up for a trek the week before or after their summer camp week would receive a 10% discount on the trek. The Camp Card fundraiser was back, with new commission levels: 40% if the cards were taken on consignment by the unit, 50% if they promised to pay (cards non-returnable), and 55% if they paid for the cards upfront. The \$5 discount coupon for Mark's Pizza would pay for the cost of the card, plus there were many other discounts.

The spring Here's How leader meeting was now a combined meeting for all three camps, and was held the evening of April 20 at the council service center. The list of camp program features included a Gaga Pit, which has remained a popular camp element. The camp also hoped to offer The Forester Program, which would involve camping in a remote area of camp for 5 days and 4 nights, earning 3 merit badges, and taking Leave No Trace Training. However, that program never actually launched due to low sign-up and logistical and staffing challenges. Family camping was again available at Mountaineer in 2016, from July 2 – August 5, and in Pioneer for two weeks after summer camp and over Labor Day weekend.

For the 2016 fall event during Columbus Day weekend, troops would have a choice. There would be a Fishing Derby (recycled from the cancelled 2014 event), or troops could hike the Tupper Triad (three nearby smaller mountains) or the Saranac Six (larger mountains around the Saranac lakes). The fee was \$25/person before August 13, and included a campsite, patch, Saturday cookout, and fishing prizes. Anyone age 16 or over needed a valid NYS fishing license to fish.

Dave Cheney was announced as the Camp Director for 2017, though that changed before camp due to illness. The camp again tried to offer the five-day, four-night Forester program, now at Four Points outpost rather than at the former Camp Forester, but again there were few sign-ups. Starting 2017, troops would receive one free summer camp leader for each eight Scouts in camp. Trek fees would be \$400 per person for six nights, \$250 for three nights, with a five-person minimum and a 10% discount for those who also attended summer camp.

In earlier years, the Massawepie Staff Alumni Association had raised funds to dedicate the Pioneer Campfire Circle to longtime Property Superintendent Loren Hakes, and had similarly dedicated the new Pioneer Rifle Range to Ray and Addy Meyering. In 2015, the Alumni Association Executive Committee decided to begin raising \$25,000 for the Massawepie Square Foot Endowment Fund in order to dedicate the camp's Trek Center to the Turner Family. Doug Turner had been the Trek Director since 1988, and before that was a CIT in 1972 and on staff many years since 1974. Doug's wife Laura had been on the Trek staff since 1997, and served in staff roles several years before that. Numerous other Turners had been on camp staff: Doug's parents (Jerry and Doris), his siblings (Russ, Ginny, and Nancy), and Doug and Laura's children (Michelle, Samantha, and Justin). Collectively, they served over 100 summers on staff. The donations for the Trek Center naming helped bring the balance in the Massawepie Square Foot Endowment Fund (started during Massawepie's 50th anniversary in 2002 to support the camp's future) to over \$100,000 by the end of 2016. Once the \$25,000 goal was reached in 2016, a dedication ceremony for the Turner Trek Center was scheduled for June 3, 2017, during Beaver Weekend. Following remarks by Scout Executive Stephen Hoitt and a few stories from former Reservation Director Dick Trier, Council President Lew Heisman helped Turner family matriarch Doris Turner unveil the "Turner Trek Center" plaque.

After learning in spring that Dave Cheney would be unable to serve as 2017 Camp Director, Camp Operations Director Don DeClerck became the overall Massawepie Reservation Director. Since

DeClerck still had other duties, Jon Northrup was appointed as Pioneer Camp Director. That system, with an overall Reservation Director and separate Camp Director, had been used during all of the years when Massawepie housed several camps, but 2017 was the first time for it since the end of the Adirondack Scout Reservation after 1998.

In August, some 30 members of the family of Virginia Sykes Dreby gathered at Massawepie after her passing. They planned an outdoor Quaker memorial service in the Campfire Circle, but it was moved into August Lodge due to rain. Virginia was a granddaughter of William Sykes, who had purchased the Massawepie property after the Hotel Childwold closed. When Virginia Dreby visited Massawepie for the camp's 50th anniversary celebration in 2002, she said that when the five children of William Sykes were deciding how to dispose of Massawepie, she urged her father to be the tie-breaking vote to sell to the Scouts rather than to a developer. (Thank you, Virginia!) Virginia was married to Edwin Dreby III, whose album of photos (available to view on the Massawepie Alumni Association website) of the old hotel buildings at Massawepie in the 1940s are probably the best remaining record of those structures. And former Massawepie Chaplain Guido Verbeck III remembered playing with the son of Virginia and Edwin Dreby when the Verbeck family visited the Sykes family property during the last three summers before Massawepie was sold to the Scouts.

The 2017 fall event was the October Odyssey, and featured a scavenger hunt type of competition, with a limit of 350 participants. Sample challenges were: climb a high peak, complete the Tupper Triad, visit five ponds or outposts, or catch a fish. Troops would earn points by completing tasks on the property and within driving distance nearby and posting photos. Camping was at Mountaineer or at any of the 15 outposts. The price of \$15/person included awards, given out at 4:30 PM on Sunday to allow troops to then leave for home if they wished, in addition to a campsite and two meals.

The 2018 Massawepie Arctic Challenge was held January 12-15. Due to limited heated sleeping spaces (in & near Gannett Lodge) only 48 Scout and 16 leader spaces were available. The fee of \$95 per person was the same fee the following weekend for the Okpik winter skills training for leaders.

Over the winter of 2017-18, a new BSA policy was announced effective 6/1/2018: adults accompanying a Boy Scout troop to camp or another activity for 72 hours or more must be registered members of the BSA, undergo a criminal background check, and complete Youth Protection Training. (Before that, parents did not have to be registered with the BSA to attend camp.)

For 2018, Matthew Ghirarda had been hired as the new Council Program Director. He would act as the overall Massawepie Reservation Director that summer, but since Ghirarda was new to Massawepie, Jon Northrup would continue as the Pioneer Camp Director. Summer camp attendance bounced back nicely in 2018 from a lower number during 2017, which was also a National Jamboree year. In 2018, there were 1783 boy-weeks of camping at Massawepie by Scouts from 130 units. The portion of the campers coming from outside Seneca Waterways Council had been gradually increasing, and represented 48% of the boy-weeks by 2018. (That was the last summer that the term "boy-weeks" would be used!)

One "new" feature in summer 2018 was the use of a natural rock face, east of the Russell Road in the northeastern corner of the camp property, for the camp's climbing program to supplement the use of the climbing towers. This rock face had actually previously been used for many years until the late 1980s when climbing towers were built in Mountaineer and Forester. Before reopening the rock face in 2018, a rough "jeep road" was built from the Russell Road to the base of the rocks, to allow for evacuation of a climber in the case of an accident. Hopefully that road will remain unused!

The October, 2018, event was an Outpost Weekend, where troops were encouraged to visit the outposts within Massawepie. Also that fall, a new Legacy Unit Award program was announced. Units that attended a Seneca Waterways Council camp (Massawepie or Babcock-Hovey) for three

consecutive years (with at least three Scouts) starting 2017 would receive a 3% rebate after the 2019 season, based on total youth and adult fees. The five-year rebate would be 7%, and 10% for seven years, though the program was discontinued before those later rebates were paid.

January, 2019, brought the Massawepie Arctic Challenge weekend, with an increased fee of \$125 per person, and Okpik training January 25-27. On January 27, the Camping Kick-off for leaders of units planning to attend any of the three council summer camps was held at the council office, with the camp directors, program directors, and other key staff available to answer questions.

In the fall of 2018, the national BSA had announced that the former "Boy Scouts" program would become "Scouts BSA," and that all-girl troops could be formed starting February 1, 2019. Since many troop sites at summer camp were used by the same troops year after year, and since having troops of girls in camp would be a new experience, a new site (Sacandaga) at the edge of Camp Pioneer was created and reserved for the girl troops that first summer of 2019. Massawepie had troops of girls in attendance every week of the 2019 summer camp. After that the girl troops reserved sites wherever they preferred.

The council was promoting Massawepie Adirondack Treks as a way to make planning easy: just bring two adults and 4-10 Scouts, and the camp would handle the logistics. A new offering for 2019 was "Solo" provisional treks, where individual Scouts age 14+ could sign up, with a different itinerary planned each week. These treks might appeal to Scouts whose units weren't planning a trek, and they had the option to bring along a friend or parent. Since the idea of weekly provisional treks wasn't repeated in future years, it apparently didn't attract enough sign-ups.

Camp cards were back again in 2019 with a new wrinkle: in addition to a commission of 40-55% for selling the \$5 cards, there would be drawing for prizes. Each unit could submit its top seller for the first three drawings with a prize of a free week of camp. There would be three more drawings for units that sold 50 or more tickets, and a final drawing in June for all units from previous drawings.

In its ongoing quest to improve the camp staff experience, the Massawepie Staff Alumni Association (MSAA, now Massawepie Alumni Association or MAA) decided to bring electricity to the staff site where mostly junior staff (under age 18) lived for the summer. (In 2017, the MSAA had worked to replace stoves in a number of the staff cabins, and in 2018 they had replaced staff beds and mattresses.) Two small lean-tos were built in the staff site, with electrical outlets in each, providing a place to charge phones. No phone charging had been needed in 1952 when Pioneer first opened!

Matt Ghirarda was again the Massawepie Reservation Director for 2019, and (reverting to the previous management model) also served as the Camp Director for Pioneer. A significant change that summer was that Doug Turner had retired as Trek Director, which he had been since 1988, and Freddy Stein was directing the Trek program. The camp attendance was again strong, which kept the slightly smaller-than-usual staff busy. In fact. For several weeks the camp had a large white rental tent outside the dining hall to provide extra seating capacity. The staff of all three council camps received a special "2019 Camp Staff" council shoulder patch for the 10th anniversary of the Seneca Waterways Council.

In August 2019, during an unofficial "Week 7," Massawepie hosted over 125 international scouts and leaders from the Latvian Scout Association for their large summer camp gathering called "*Solijums*." This gathering brought together youth and adult members from the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Latvia.

The 2019 fall event was the "Peak Weekend," October 11-14. The weekend fee was \$35/person (\$10 less if registered by September 19), which included camping at Mountaineer, a Saturday night

cookout, and Sunday breakfast. Troops were encouraged to hike the Tupper Triad, the Saranac Six, or a high peak.

Camp fees for 2020 were announced in the fall, with the Scout fee increasing to \$410 if all payments were made by the Early Bird deadlines, and a second week costing \$300. A sibling discount of \$40 per sibling was available by request after first full paid Scout in the family. Adult fees would be \$200/week or \$41/day, with 1 adult free for every 8 Scouts. Legacy troops would again receive a 3% rebate after 3 consecutive years at camp. Unfortunately, none of these fees actually applied, since no summer camp was held at Massawepie in 2020. But that's a story for a different chapter!

pc 7/2026
updated 8/2026