

To: Summit Stewardship Program Partners, Supporters, and Friends
From: Kayla White & Seth Jones
Date: 11/21/2022

2022 Summit Steward End of Season Report



In our **33rd** year, the Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program has made some exciting changes to the program with more to come! This year we hired a Chief Steward who helped train volunteers and staff. This is a position we plan on having into the future. This will give us the capacity needed to grow the volunteer pool for the Summit Stewardship

Program and Hurricane Fire Tower Stewardship Program, continue to accomplish high quality trail maintenance, and assist with our long-term monitoring projects. This year we had one Chief Steward, four summit stewards, one Photopoint Monitoring Field Tech, and 34 volunteers.

Summit stewards **educated 32,844 hikers** this year, making our total contacts since the start of the program **646,842**. Hiker contact numbers have increased from last year but aren't as high as previous years. Regardless, we continue to look for ways to better educate the public on protecting outdoor spaces and hiker preparedness, while also increasing our understanding of the alpine ecosystem, and the protection of alpine plants through trail maintenance.

Our accomplishments were made possible through the continuous support of our partners, donors, sponsors, and people like you. The [Adirondack 46ers](#) have continued to be such stalwart sponsors of the program. This is the [second year](#) of a three-year commitment. A big thank you goes to our friends at [The Mountaineer](#) for facilitating gear sponsorship through [SCARPA](#) (boots), [Darn Tough](#) (socks), and [Rab](#) (gloves), as well as discounts on gear at The Mountaineer. In 2020, the family of Dr. Norton Miller created an endowment for the program called the Dr. Norton G. Miller Memorial Fund. This means the Summit Stewardship Program now has three endowments, the other two being the [#507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship Program](#) and the Will Cummer Gear Fund. The Summit Stewardship Program was supported with funding from the [NYS Park and Trail Partnership Grants](#) and New York's [Environmental Protection Fund](#). The Park and Trail Partnership Grants are administered by Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. ADK also receives funding through its New York State contract through the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

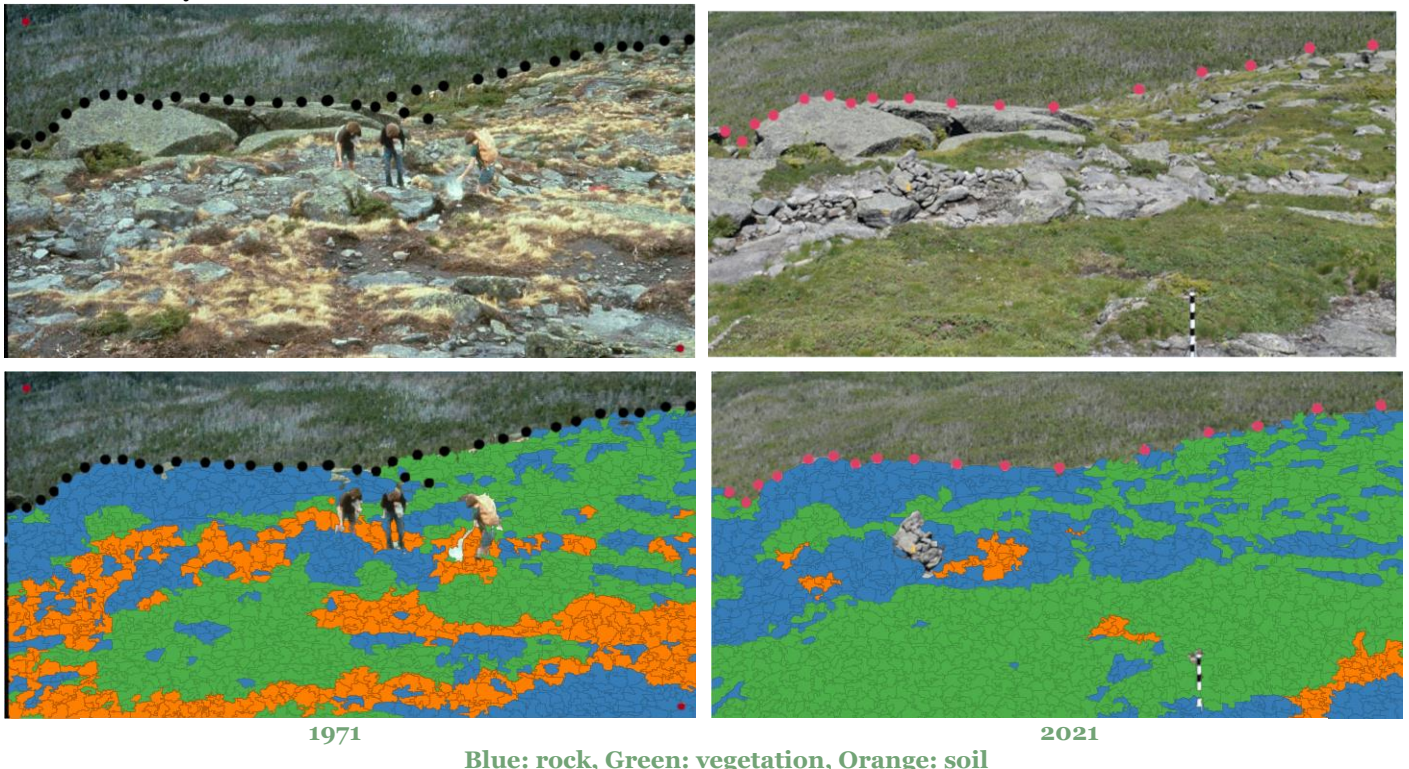
State of the Summit Stewardship Program:

Every year, I include in this report a list of projects that I'd like to work on in the upcoming year and spend some time reflecting upon the past season's accomplishments.

Below you can see the 2022 project list in *italics*.

□ *Photopoint Monitoring Research*

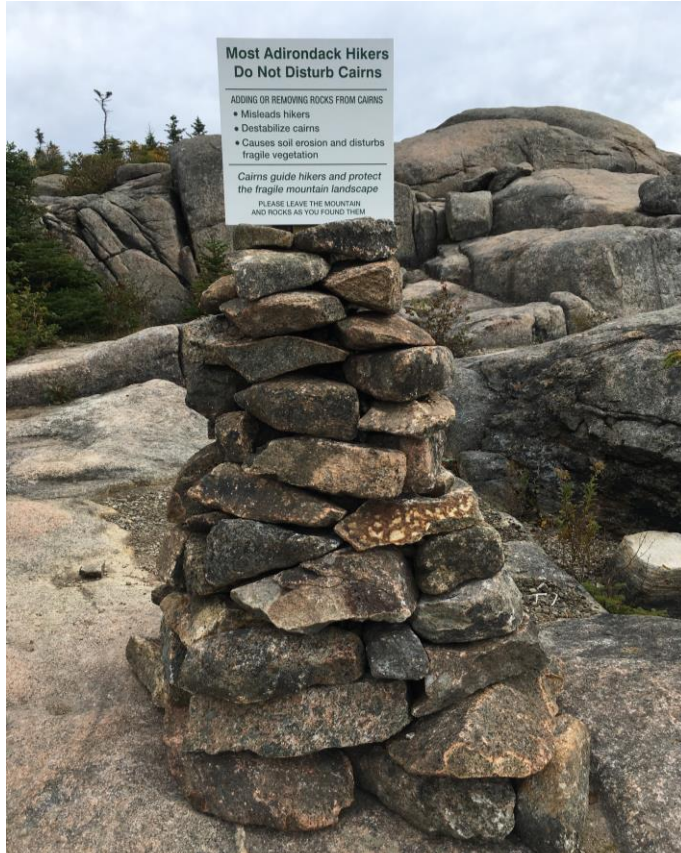
The program established a photographic monitoring system in 1999 to better quantify the interplay among hiker trampling, vegetation growth and persistence, and education efforts and trail maintenance. In 2021, we retook 59 photopoint images and added new photopoints. Tim Howard, from [New York Natural Heritage Program](#), has updated the methodology to improve the sampling strategy and statistical rigor, making sure it is up to current photopoint monitoring standards. Therefore, we've incorporated a scale measurement in photopoints and have introduced the line transect method. Tim has also started incorporating image classification into the analysis (see below).



This year we hired Photopoint Monitoring Field Tech Troy Tetreault to complete the work of adding new oblique photos and line transects to the alpine zone. He was able to add 82 new oblique photos, 50 new transects which contained 606 quadrats. This has expanded our photopoint coverage from nine to 16 summits! Our new design and set of photos will set a baseline for sampling and tracking vegetation change in and adjacent trampled areas into the future. Overall, our goal is to continue building a photo monitoring system that is straightforward to maintain, evaluates the effectiveness of the management actions implemented in the alpine zone, provides accessible data to address our questions, and is easily transferrable to other locations and partner organizations. Tim and I presented this work at the

Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering to get feedback on the analysis and are hoping to wrap up this winter/spring.

□ *Fire Tower Stewarding on Hurricane Mountain*



Cairns help hikers find their way especially in cloudy and snowy conditions

This is the second year we've been educating on Hurricane Mountain, and it has been an amazing outreach opportunity. Hurricane Mountain is recommended by the DEC as an alternative hike to the high peaks. It's also a family-friendly mountain and is part of the Lake Placid 9er and Fire Tower Challenge. As fire tower stewards, we educate about the cultural history of the fire tower, the natural history of the area, and Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics. For some hikers, Hurricane is a steppingstone to the high peaks and we're there to educate them accordingly. We educated 3,535 hikers on Hurricane which contributed 11% of our total contact numbers for the year. This expansion has been an exciting opportunity for our staff and volunteers to try something new. **We are looking for more volunteer fire tower stewards for Hurricane.** Please let me know if you are interested!

Since we've documented rare alpine/cliff-dwelling plants up there, we've also been working to better define the trail above

treeline. We've built one cairn on Hurricane and plan on building another one and mark the trail with yellow blazes. We also put a sign in the cairn discouraging hikers from tampering with it. We've had the cairn knocked over twice and the sign pulled out of it. Please help spread the word that cairns should be left alone and that they are different from stacked rocks created by hikers.

Thank you to our partners, Friends of Hurricane Mountain and DEC, for their assistance in this program.

□ *Buck Mountain Trailhead Stewardship Program*

Buck Mountain Trailhead Stewardship Program was created by local ADK volunteers who saw usage of Buck Mountain in Lake George increase over the years and with it an increase in recreational impacts. This program is completely run by ADK volunteers. I assisted with training, obtaining the volunteer stewardship agreement with DEC, and scouted the area for potential expansion. We're looking forward to seeing this volunteer program grow into the future. **If you live in the Lake George area and are interested in becoming a volunteer, let me know!**

□ Update Training for Staff and Volunteers

We are always trying to update and make the training implemented for our staff and volunteers better. This year for staff, we incorporated a lecture on Haudenosaunee culture and history by David Fadden at the Six Nations Iroquois Cultural Center. We often get asked about the presence of Indigenous peoples within the Adirondack Park so this training was extremely helpful. We also did additional



Botany and photopoint monitoring training on Whiteface with Tim Howard (NYNHP)

training on non-violent communication and inclusion in the backcountry. For our volunteer training module, we've added DEI articles and online sexual harassment training. I'm looking to create an asynchronous training module for summit steward volunteers over the winter.

□ Hire a Summit Steward Coordinator

I'm excited to announce that we will be hiring a Summit Steward Coordinator to run the Summit Stewardship Program for 2023. The Summit Stewardship Program and ADK's stewardship work has grown tremendously over the years, and we need more staff to not only continue the great work of protecting alpine ecosystems, but also to expand our efforts to protect more of the Adirondack Park. I will continue to help ADK grow their stewardship outreach as the Stewardship Manager and assist in the transition of the program to the coordinator. I've felt incredibly lucky to have been able to be a part of this program over the years; alpine summits are where I feel most at home. I will miss working as closely with summit stewards. Our volunteers and staff are the best! **Please help spread the word about the [position](#)**, the deadline for applications is December 5th.

□ *Spruced up the Summit Steward Yurt*

We were able to get some cleaning and projects accomplished this spring before the arrival of staff. We revamped the yurt by putting in a new floor, refinished the bunk beds and door, bought new mattresses, put in new support beams and awnings, removed the old stove for a new stove, and cleaned the place up. Thank you to Tom Manitta, Nate Greene, Jack Coleman, Mark Minnoe, and Kevin McDonough who all made summit steward accommodations homier.

Personnel and Scheduling



2022 Crew: L to R: Liam Ebner, Kayla White (Stewardship Manager), Troy Tetreault (Photopoint Monitoring FT), Bridey Ryan, Jake Vitale, Maddy Ten Kate, and kneeling: Jack Coleman (Chief Steward)

The 2022 summit stewards were a mixture of veterans and new staff this year, creating a solid crew right from the start of the season. I am extensively proud of them, and the alpine plants are lucky to have them!

Liam Ebner—This is Liam’s second year being involved with ADK. He recently graduated with a major in Mechanical Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Liam enjoys ultimate frisbee, climbing, and nature photography. He enjoys connecting people to the outdoors and the natural history of the Adirondacks.

Bridey Ryan—Bridey is also a second-year steward and has been coming up to the area since she was a kid. She recently graduated with a major in Cultural Studies at McGill University. Bridey previously worked in bird conservation in New Zealand. She’s a natural up on the summits and feels passionately about protecting alpine plants.

Jake Vitale—Jake is brand new to the program but not the Adirondacks. He is a 46er and has been climbing and hiking in the region since he was five years old. Jake recently graduated from SUNY College of Environmental Forestry and Science and hopes to go to graduate school for alpine plant ecology. Jake enjoys spending time identifying plants.

Maddy Ten Kate— Maddy is also new to the program but not the Adirondacks. She grew up hiking the fire towers and the High Peaks; her family also maintains lean-tos and has a cabin in

Newcomb. Maddy currently attends the University of Maine Farmington, where she is on the alpine ski and lacrosse teams. She loves educating kids about alpine plants.

Troy Tetreault— Troy was formerly a volunteer summit steward and returned as the Photopoint Monitoring Field Tech. He's done extensive research ranging from tree encroachment into boreal peatlands to alpine plant-insect interactions in the Adirondacks. Troy also did a multi-year study surveying alpine insect species and their specific interactions with wildflowers. He is also a 46er who enjoys chatting with people on the summits.

Jack Coleman—Jack has a wealth of knowledge, having been a volunteer for the program for the last nine years, but this is his first year as a paid staff member. Serving as the Chief Steward, Jack was the perfect person to help with training staff and volunteers. Jack is treasurer of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er and winter 46er, and an inspirational hiker who helps lead challenge hikes for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Seth Jones—Seth started his career here at ADK as a summit steward in 2008, which he did for three years. After spending a year running Johns Brook Lodge, he became part of ADK's Education Department. Seth is currently ADK's Education Director.

Kayla White—I'm ADK's Stewardship Manager. It's my ninth year with the Summit Stewardship Program and my eleventh year at ADK. I'm so excited to be on this journey with such an amazing group of people!

Volunteer Stewards: Our volunteers are a wonderful group of devoted stewards, many of them have been with us for multiple years. They are always willing to fill in and we could not fully staff the peaks or do much needed trail maintenance or research without them. We have **34** active volunteers in total, who spent **81 days** on the summits (usually with multiple volunteers out on a day) and spoke to a total of **8,454 hikers**.

- Mary Lamb—10th year
- Lois Dannenberg—7th year
- Ann Fogarty—7th year
- Jen Denny—7th year volunteer, 2 years staff
- Jim Schneider—6th year
- Ryan Nerp—3rd year volunteer, 4 years staff
- Tom Collins—3rd year volunteer, 2 years staff



Photopoint Monitoring Field Tech Troy Tetreault doing the line transect method

- Drew Benware—3rd year
- Tony Canike—3rd year
- Bob George—2nd year
- Kevin Douglass—2nd year
- Klarisse Torriente—2nd year
- Lucas LaBarre—2nd year
- Matt Szopa—2nd year
- Tanner Burt—2nd year
- Ryan Andrews—2nd year
- Angela Ranzini—1st year
- Kristin Kaye—1st year
- Michael Sweeney—1st year
- Piper Warren—1st year
- Tyler Lucero—1st year
- Tony Goodwin—1st year
- Rebecca Collins—1st year
- Adora Race—1st year
- Asya Ostrovsky—1st year
- Kim Brown—2nd year, Hurricane
- Bob Hunter—2nd year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Don Pachner—2nd year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Beth Drohan —2nd year, Hurricane
- John Loughlin—1st year, Hurricane
- Kristy Martin—1st year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Pamela Gothner—1st year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Peter Slocum—Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Mary Jean Bland—Friends of Hurricane Mountain

Seth and I held a virtual training for volunteers in May. We sent new and returning volunteers training videos and documents to review and they had to take an online assessment after reviewing the materials. We then did a Zoom meeting to go over any lingering questions. We were joined by DEC Forester Tate Connor who gave his presentation on the High Peaks Unit Management Plan and Lieutenant Kevin Burns who went over radio protocol and personal safety training.

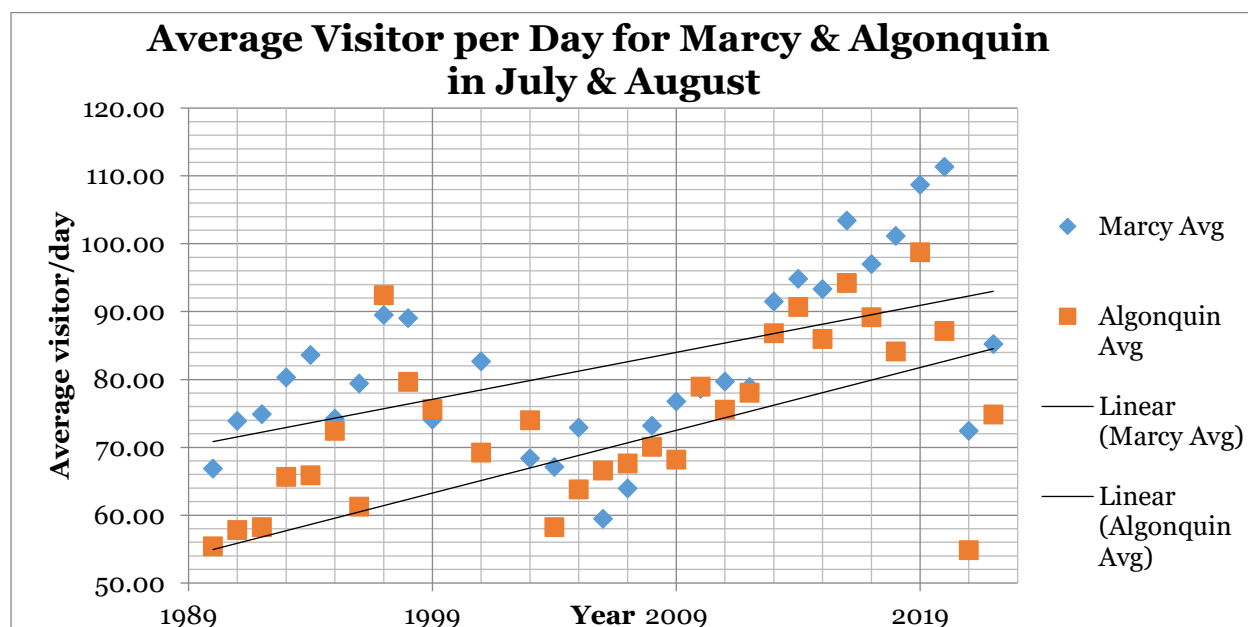
Seth and I helped trained new and returning trailhead stewards for the 46er Trailhead Stewardship Program. Noah and I trained ADK's Trailhead Stewards. Tom and I trained ADK's Campground Hosts. The Poke-O-Moonshine Steward joined our hike up Hurricane with our professional crew. We have also been working with ADK's Communication Director Ben Brosseau to expand our outreach through social media.

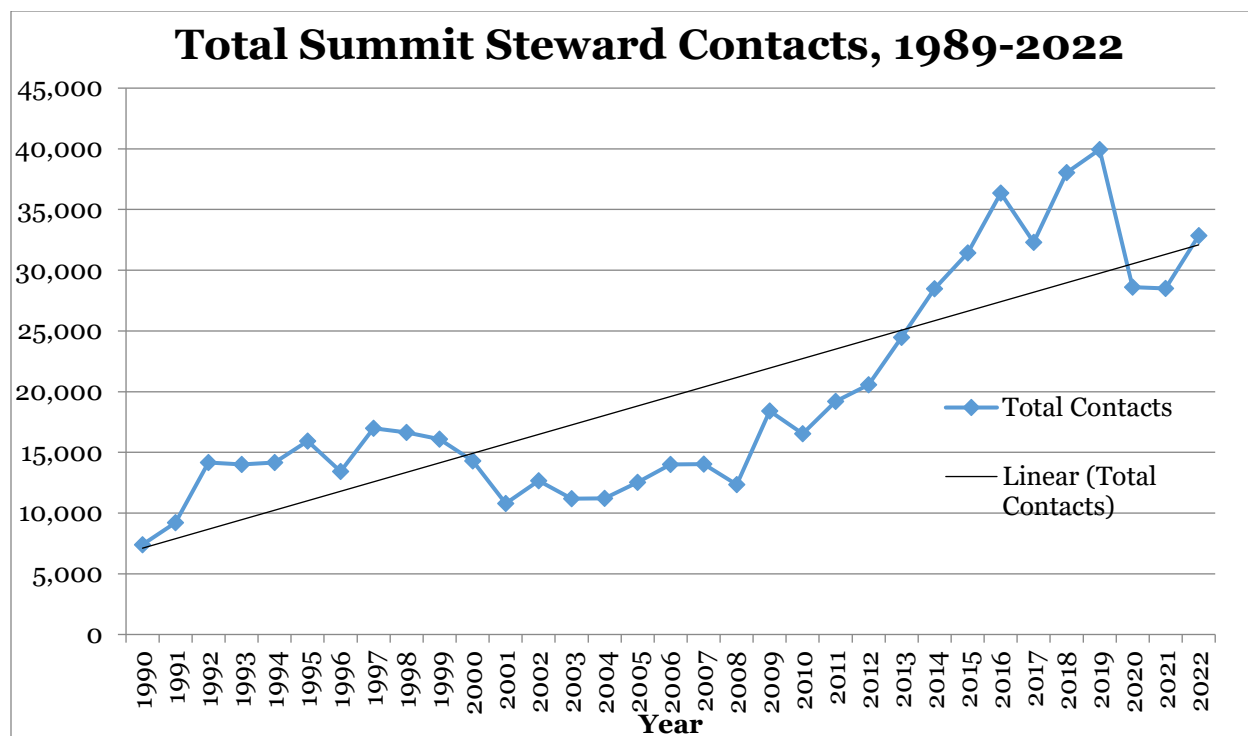
Education: Usage and Outreach

Year	Total Contacts	Days Covered	Average
2022	32,844	408	81
2021	28,514	428	67
2020	28,605	315	91
2019	39,939	393	102
2018	38,033	349	109
2017	31,625	305	104
2016	36,355	334	109
2015	31,440	344	91
2014	28,488	312	91
2013	23,804	305	78
2012	20,567	269	77
2011	19,211	275	70
2010	15,639	238	66
Total Contacts 1990-2022: 646,842			

As stated previously, our numbers increased this year compared to last year but still aren't as high as years past. Our busiest day was on Cascade with 547 contacts on the Saturday of Indigenous Peoples' weekend. Over the summer and fall, Algonquin and Marcy's highest contact numbers were in the 200's and only topped 300 once. Cascade ranged from 100-400 contacts throughout the summer and fall. I've continued to try and get more coverage days on Cascade midweek in July and August, and increased coverage for Giant on the weekends.

The graph below shows the average number of hikers per day for Marcy and Algonquin in July and August since the program started. This is the closest apples to apples comparison we have to look at the increase in the number of hikers, while partially negating the number of volunteers and staff that has fluctuated over the years.





Regarding outreach, I participated in *Adirondack Day* which is an event at New York’s capital where we educate legislators on issues pertaining to the Adirondack Park, thank them for investing in stewardship, and tell our field stories. Thank you to the Environmental Protection Fund for helping to fund this program. I also did a presentation on the Summit Stewardship Program to ADK’s Albany Chapter this fall.

Mountain Lake PBS spent a day on Wright Peak with Troy and I while we educated hikers and worked on photopoint monitoring. Check out the two pieces that came out of that hike: [Photopoint Monitoring in the Alpine Zone](#) and [Being a Summit Steward](#).

Botany and Research Projects:

This year marks the fifteenth year of our participation in Appalachian Mountain Club’s (AMC) Mountain Watch phenology program. We monitor the phenological stages of four species at standardized monitoring areas in line with the National Phenology Network (NPN). AMC uses this data to analyze long term trends in the timing of the different phenological stages, which could be an indication of the effects of climate change on the alpine ecosystem. We made 106 observations this year. AMC has also implemented the [Northeast Alpine Flower Watch](#), a citizen science project which asks hikers to use iNaturalist, a phone app, to take pictures of six alpine species in their blooming and fruiting phenophases. Hopefully, this will help create a more robust and complete data set. Feel free to download [iNaturalist](#) and participate!

Trail Maintenance and Project Days:

With a seasoned crew we’ve been able to get a lot of work done. Trail maintenance was completed on Marcy, Algonquin, Wright, Cascade, Colden, Gothics, Haystack, Boundary,

Skylight, Giant, NW Wright, Hurricane, Armstrong, Basin, Gray, Iroquois, and Saddleback. Stewards build a cairn on Hurricane to help delineate the trail to protect rare plants. Next year, stewards will blaze the summit with DEC and build another cairn.

Stewards did Peak Health Reports for Gothics, Armstrong, Saddleback, Basin, Rocky Peak Ridge, NW Algonquin, and NW Wright. These reports focus on the general health of the summit, the flora, trail damage, and what stewards should focus on in the future.

This fall, summit stewards were able to accomplish a lot of projects. Stewards repaired cairns on Boundary and the backside of Marcy. Furthermore, they brushed in the illegal herd paths from Iroquois to Shepherd's Tooth to Cold Brook Pass and Gray to Marcy. Signage will be and has been placed at the start of these herd paths to ask hikers not to take them. Please spread the word that these herd paths are closed to protect alpine plants and hikers should always stay on trail and on bare rock surfaces when in the alpine zone.

As always, we have been hard at work with regular brushing, scree wall work, cairn repair, and rock packing.

	Scree Wall	Brushing	Rock Pack	Cairn Rocks Removed	Cairns Rebuilt	Poop Buried
Algonquin	1234	351	133	369	5	2
Armstrong		40				
Basin	4	15	5			3
Boundary	15			27	4	
Cascade	569	85	35	76	0	1
Colden	34	59	8	0	0	1
Giant		110	0	0	0	
Gothics	20	30				
Gray		800				
Haystack	40					
Hurricane	30	70	0	40	4	0
Iroquois		1600			4	
Marcy	1471	614	210	413	22	7
NW Wright		25				
Saddleback		200	3			
Skylight	165	100	0	10	0	2
Wright	355	35	62	170	0	0
Grand Total	3937 ft	4134 ft	456 sq ft	1105 rocks	39 cairns	16 poops

Future recommendations:

Here are a few things that I look forward to doing in the upcoming year:

- ❑ Create asynchronous training modules for our volunteer programs with the potential to share with other stewardship groups
- ❑ Work with DEC to make sure they have the most up-to-date data on alpine stewardship
- ❑ Hire a Summit Steward Coordinator to help maintain the quality of our program and grow stewardship throughout the Adirondack Park
- ❑ Finish analysis for the Photopoint Monitoring Project in conjunction with the New York Natural Heritage Program this winter/spring. Publish on our findings.
- ❑ Continue to expand and improve the volunteer program and build up volunteer numbers for coverage on Hurricane, Giant (weekends), and Cascade (every day in July & August)
- ❑ Continue to build up the Hurricane Fire Tower Stewardship Program and get more volunteers
- ❑ Build group project days to accomplish more high-quality trail maintenance
- ❑ Conduct more public outreach programs throughout the year to expand our visibility (and please contact me if you're interested!)

Thank you!

As always, the Summit Stewardship Program would not be possible without the support and funding of several various organizations and individuals. We'd like to thank the following organizations:

- ❑ NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- ❑ Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy
- ❑ Adirondack 46ers
- ❑ Will Cummer Gear Fund
- ❑ #507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship Program
- ❑ Dr. Norton G. Miller Memorial Fund
- ❑ ORDA and the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center for access to the summit of Whiteface via the Memorial Highway
- ❑ The Mountaineer
- ❑ Environmental Protection Fund
- ❑ NYS Park and Trail Partnership Grants
- ❑ Scarpa
- ❑ Darn Tough
- ❑ Rab
- ❑ New York Natural Heritage Program

And individuals:

DEC: Tate Connor, Kevin Burns, Pete Evans, Robbi Mecus, Andrew Lewis, Jenna Curcio, Rob Daley; Andrew Miller, Wilson Cummer, Jack Coleman, Mary Lamb, Lois Dannenberg, Ann Fogarty, Jen Maguder, Jim Schneider, Ryan Nerp, Tom Collins, Drew Benware, Tony Canike, Bob George, Kevin Douglass, Klarisse Torriente, Lucas LaBarre, Matt Szopa, Tanner Burt, Ryan Andrews, Kate Berdan (TNC), Tim Howard (NYNHP), Steve Young (NYNHP), Sean Robinson (SUNY Oneonta), Paul Casson (ASRC), Vinny McClelland, Charlie Wise and the entire staff of The Mountaineer, Julia Goren, Ben Brosseau, Tom Manitta, Nate Greene, ADK's Education Department, and ADK's Maintenance Department.

It has been such a rewarding season. I just want to thank all of you for your continued support. I am so proud of the work we did this year. The Adirondack alpine zone is such a unique and beautiful place, and it has been a privilege to be part of this stewardship program. The work that we do to protect the alpine plants and the Adirondack Park is essential. I can't imagine a better place to work or more satisfying work to do. Please feel free to contact me at any time for help or with questions, suggestions, or opportunities for the program. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kayla White
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&

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