

# Forest Preserve Trail Stewardship Work Summary 2023



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

Stewardship contracts for the Bureau of Forest Preserve and Conservation Easements focus primarily on education and outreach, and trail building and maintenance. Over the 2023 season, there were nine contracted or grant-funded stewardship organizations working to advocate, maintain, and build trails for New York's DEC managed public lands. A typical steward season runs May through October, however trail building and maintenance crews worked through December as the weather allowed.

Stewards in the Adirondacks and Catskills met hikers at trail heads and on the trails to educate about Leave No Trace™ principles, alternative hiking opportunities, and how to adventure safely and sustainably. Stewards worked to facilitate a positive trail experience and discourage and mitigate misuse of the trails and the surrounding lands. Hiker interactions for 2023 were up 62% from the previous season.



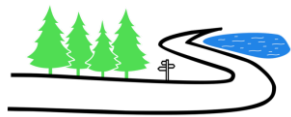
**148,050**  
Interactions  
with  
hikers



**230**  
Miles  
of trails maintained

Building and maintaining trails is a high priority to ensure a safe, recreational experience. In 2023, stewardship crews focused on major and minor maintenance of established trails throughout the Parks. Stewards maintained 230 miles of Forest Preserve trails, which is more than 60 miles of trail coverage compared to 2022. Crews also built over 17,000 feet of new trails, which was over 20,000 feet less than the previous year. During these efforts, there was 7,070 square feet of stone paving and cribbing completed, along with 256 stone steps installed. Trail work also included 10 bridges built or maintained to assist with access. Cairn maintenance was another activity the stewards engaged in by removing 720 unnecessary cairn rocks and rebuilding 32 needed cairns along the trails.

While working on the trails, stewards often cleaned up along the way. The Catskill stewards also organized a local clean-up day with additional volunteers. In total, throughout the season, stewards collected a total of 300 bags of garbage and litter, helping to preserve the wild nature experience for visitors.



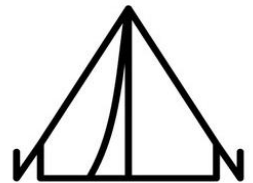
**Over 17,000 feet**  
of new trails built



**300**  
Bags  
of litter  
collected



**10**  
Bridges built or  
maintained



**424**  
campsites  
maintained

Camping is another popular activity within the Forest Preserve that stewards routinely help to keep safe and enjoyable. In 2023, stewards maintained 424 campsites, including established and primitive sites, which is 300 more sites than 2022. This usually involves cleaning up trash around the site and out of the fire rings, cleaning fire rings, and disassembling illegal fire rings. To assist with keeping campsites clean and sustainable, stewards relocated 12 different privies.



Full season Stewardship Reports can be found on DEC's website under 'Stewardship Contract Annual Reports' or by scanning the QR Code.