

Trail Stewardship Work Summary 2024



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 2024 season, there were eight 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 2024 were down 20% from the previous season.



117,018
Interactions
with
hikers



50 Miles
of trails maintained

Building and maintaining trails is a high priority to ensure a safe, recreational experience. In 2024, stewardship crews focused on major and minor maintenance of established trails throughout the Parks. Stewards maintained close to 50 miles of Forest Preserve trails, which was 180 less than 2023. Crews also worked on over 16 miles of new trails, which was over 13 miles more than the previous year. During these efforts, there was 8,363 square feet of stone paving and cribbing completed, along with 1482 stone steps installed. Trail work also included 53 bridges built or maintained to assist with access, which is over 40 more than 2023. Cairn maintenance was another activity the stewards engaged in by removing 963 unnecessary cairn rocks and rebuilding 31 needed cairns along the trails.



Over 16 miles
of new trails or re-
routes built

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 378 bags of garbage and litter, helping to preserve the wild nature experience for visitors.

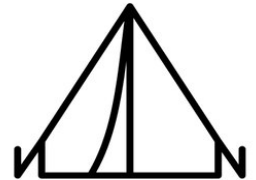


378
Bags
of litter
collected



53
Bridges built or
maintained

Camping is another popular activity within the Forest Preserve that stewards routinely help to keep safe and enjoyable. In 2024, stewards maintained 113 campsites, including established and primitive sites. 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 5 different privies.



113
campsites
maintained



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