

2024 Mid-Season Route 73 Trailhead Stewardship Program Report

We're happy to announce the completion of the first year of the Route 73 Trailhead Stewardship Program!

The program's mission is to foster an outdoor ethic in every trailhead visitor, and provide the skills and knowledge needed to protect New York State's wild lands and waters for the benefit of all living beings. Seven trailhead stewards were hired for the summer and fall and were stationed at trailheads from Thursday to Monday. Their season began on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend in May and ended in October on Indigenous Peoples' Day. Locations include trailheads for Giant (Roaring Brook Falls and the Ridge Trail), the Garden, Rooster Comb, and Cascade Mountain (on Thursday and Mondays when the 46er Trailhead Stewards are not there). Stewards also visited busy rock-climbing destinations like the Beer Walls, Jewels & Gems, and Chapel Pond. Trailhead stewards educated **20,870** hikers, backpackers, and rock climbers and were stationed at those trailheads 382 times this year.

Personnel



There was a total of five trailhead stewards during the summer (pictured). Four stewards had to return to college, but one steward was able to stay on and we hired two more stewards for the fall season. We were still able to maintain good coverage into the fall thanks to our education team. Thank you, Mary Glynn and Daria Stacy, for filling in the gaps!

Front to Back & L to R: Front row: Becca Guetzov; Second row: Sean Voelger, Natalie Banister, Elliott Vaughn; Third row: Ian Trudell, and Kayla White. Not pictured: Chris Keyes and Juliana Smith.

Partners, Donors, & Sponsors

This program is contracted by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Funding is provided through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) as

administered by DEC. DEC also provided uniform shirts, name tags, and safety vests. Thank you to DEC staff for providing administrative, training, and logistical support.

Thank you to [L.L.Bean](#) for donating gear to the program. L.L.Bean provided rain jackets, rain pants, and zip-off pants to trailhead stewards, as well as providing additional gear to ADK's trip leaders, summit stewards, and maintenance team.

Education: Usage

The Garden parking lot filled on Saturdays from July-October usually before the stewards arrived at 5 am. The Roaring Brook parking lot filled anywhere from 8 am-12 pm, with it commonly filling around 10:30 am. Rooster Comb parking usually did not fill unless it was a very busy Saturday for the Garden. The Ridge and Cascade parking lots were hard to judge when they filled since stewards were stationed away from the parking areas.

Trailheads	Contacts	% of Contacts	Days*	AVG Person/TH/Day
Roaring Brook	2679	13%	58	46
Roaring Brook Falls	10	0.05%	5	2
Beer Walls	240	1%	30	8
Ridge	4284	21%	63	68
Jewel's & Gems	28	0.13%	20	1
Chapel Pond	56	0.27%	12	5
Garden AM	6086	29%	80	76
Garden PM	2964	14%	46	64
Garden (Total)	9050	43%	126	72
Rooster Comb	1254	6%	33	38
Cascade	2444	12%	27	91
Heart Lake	813	4%	5	163
Creature Walls	12	.06%	3	4
Total	20,870		382	50
*Days equates to number of times a steward was at a trailhead.				

The trailheads where stewards educated the most hikers was the Garden, Ridge, Roaring Brook, and Cascade (43%, 21%, 13%, and 12%, respectively). It's important to note that Route 73 Trailhead Stewards were only at Cascade Thursdays and Mondays while at the other trailheads they were there Thursday through Monday meaning that Cascade coverage on weekdays was still impactful. However, the number of hikers educated at a location is only one metric for success as seen in trailhead stewards' takeaways.

Month	Contacts	Days*	AVG Person/TH/Day
June	2683	78	34
July	6385	96	67
August	5562	104	53
September	4099	77	53
October	2141	27	79
Total	20,870	382	55

The busiest days were the last weekend in September and the first two weekends in October at the Garden. On Saturday, September 28th trailhead stewards educated 207 for the morning shift (5 am-1 pm) and 246 for the evening shift (12-7 pm), totaling 453 people for that day! The Saturday of Indigenous People's Day stewards educated 247 for the morning shift and 65 for the evening shift. The rest of that weekend had cold, rainy/snowy weather which kept numbers down for that Sunday and Monday. July saw the highest number of educational contacts overall. Looking at the average person per trailhead per day, July and the first half of October were the busiest.

Trailhead Stewards' Key Takeaways

Trailhead stewards complete end of season reports to summarize their field season. Here are some key takeaways paraphrased from those reports:

- ✓ When someone is unprepared, it is better to be kind, relatable, and give good advice that covers one or two main issues than be a stickler.
- ✓ Stewards felt that the Roaring Brook trailhead was an effective educational spot due to its proximity to the Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR). Stewards interacted with hikers who were confused about the reservation system for AMR and offered alternative destinations to those who didn't have a reservation. At that location, there were many people just going to the waterfall, especially in the afternoon. Stewards suggested staying later into the afternoon to interact with those folks.

- ✓ The Garden is the most influential place to steward due to its diversity of destinations. Interestingly, many hikers come to do the first brother as a beginner hike. There are also a lot of people doing multi-day backpacking trips that need to be educated on camping regulations. Stewards were able to convince a substantial number of campers to go to The Mountaineer to rent bear cans who would have otherwise gone into the Johns Brook Valley without one.



- ✓ At the Garden trailhead stewards struggled at times with parking lot conflicts especially when there were no Town of Keene Front Country Stewards or DEC staff present. It's important to note that trailhead stewards are there only as an educational presence and not law enforcement or parking attendants.
- ✓ The least effective educational locations were Rooster Comb (for hiking) and Jewel's & Gem's (for rock climbing). The Rooster Comb parking lot is mainly utilized as overflow parking for the Garden (estimated 50-60%) and by locals.
- ✓ Rooster Comb and Garden parking lots could benefit from parking spot lines.
- ✓ Beer Walls was the busiest of the rock-climbing locations and climbers were excited to have stewards there as educators.
- ✓ Hikers are starting to come to the trailhead locations to get advice for their upcoming hikes(!), but we need to publicize the program more.
- ✓ Stewards wanted opportunities to give back and do more hands-on stewardship work like trail maintenance or clean-up days.

Future Recommendations

- ❑ Review season with DEC and make programmatic decisions based off of trail usage data
- ❑ Consider adding or dropping locations
- ❑ Consider adjusting hours based off of location, day of the week, schedule of the Garden shuttle, and hours of daylight
- ❑ Add additional gear sizes and invest in puffy jackets, hats, and gloves (more cold-weather gear). Look into gear sponsorship
- ❑ Work with DEC and the Town of Keene on successful coverage at the Garden

- ❑ Add to the educational materials stewards have for tabling
- ❑ Continue to add additional metrics to document whether the program is being successful (# of campers that stewards sent elsewhere to rent a bear can, etc.)

Thank You

The Route 73 Trailhead 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
- ❑ Town of Keene Front Country Stewards
- ❑ Adirondack Climbing Coalition
- ❑ L.L.Bean

And individuals:

Joe Pete Wilson, Tate Connor, Bob Ripp, Chris DiCintio, Pete Evans, Andrew Lewis, Jenna Curcio, Charlie Foutch, Nicole Duchene, Rob Prackajlo, Allison Rooney, Assistant Forest Rangers Wyatt & James, Jill Trunko, Will Roth, David Fadden, and ADK staff who filled in on training and fall stewarding: Seth Jones, Mary Glynn, Julia Goren, Daria Stacy, and Liam Ebner.

This is a new beginning in stewardship along the route 73 corridor! Thank you for all of your support. Please feel free to reach out via phone (518-523-3480 x 117) or email with any questions or comments on how we can continue to improve the program and better protect the Forest Preserve. Thank you.

Most sincerely,

Kayla White
Stewardship Director
Kaylaw@adk.org