

**CHAMPLAIN AREA TRAILS**

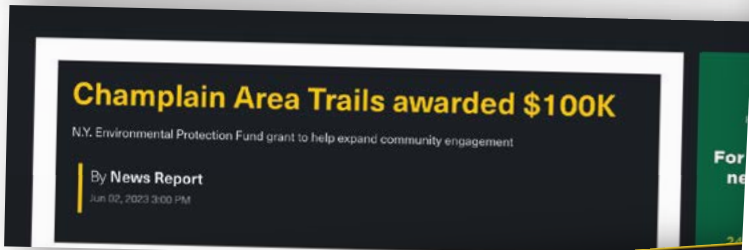
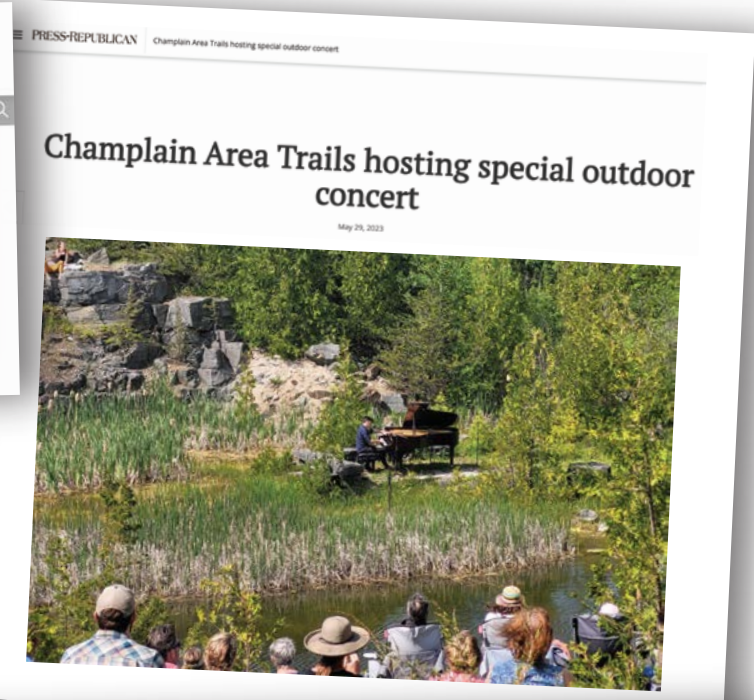
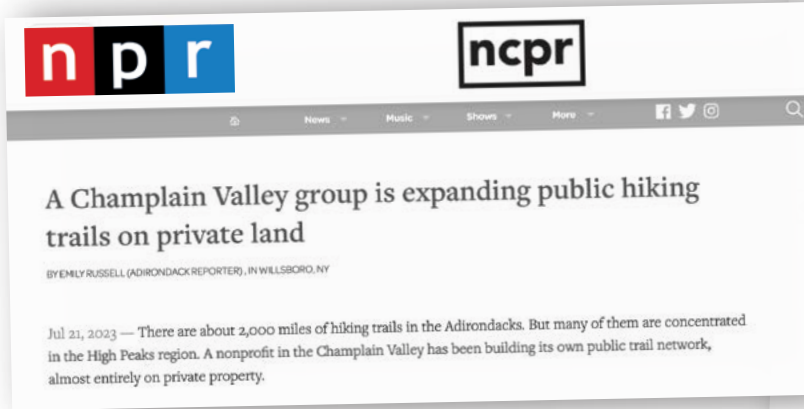


**2023 HIGHLIGHTS AND  
2022 IMPACT REPORT**





# CATS IS NEWSWORTHY



## Mission

Champlain Area Trails saves land, makes trails, connects people with nature, and promotes economic vitality in New York's Champlain Valley.

## Vision

Through our trails, lands, hikes, and outdoor educational activities, the Champlain Valley is a place where people, communities, and businesses thrive, and everyone enjoys the benefits of outdoor recreation and being in such a beautiful and unique place.

## Champlain Area Trails

6482 Main Street  
PO Box 193  
Westport, NY 12993

Phone: 518-962-2287

info@champlainareatrails.com  
www.champlainareatrails.com

## PHOTO CREDITS:

Brendan Wiltse Photography, current and former staff, and various other volunteers

## 2023 Highlights

# Dear Friends of Champlain Area Trails,

Thanks to your support, we have preserved nearly 1,000 acres of land over the last fifteen years and built 78 miles of scenic and fun trails to enjoy. Our vision of connecting communities through these trails inspires us to embark on new projects that advance our mission to save land, make trails, connect people with nature, and promote economic vitality.



In this report, I am excited to share recent highlights and accomplishments. First, I'd like to share the national recognition we received on an NPR's *All Things Considered* story that aired this July. You can scan the QR code to listen or visit the news section on our website.

**We were also honored with the Adirondack Council's "2023 Special Recognition Award" at their July 15th Forever Wild Day "for advancing conservation and recreation in the Champlain Valley and Adirondacks."**

**Your support has been instrumental in achieving this recognition, and we are truly grateful.**

While we focus on looking forward, let's take this moment to look back and see the difference we're making.

**Making Trails:** On July 8th, we and our Long Pond Conservancy Program hosted the Grand Opening hike of the new 4.5-mile Long Pond Trail in Willsboro. You'll read a great article by Tim Rowland about this trail on the following pages. We also worked to open five miles of trails at SUNY's Twin Valleys Property in Lewis/Essex, created a trail connecting the Wildway Overlook Trail and the North Boquet Mountain Trails, made the 1.2-mile round trip Sherman Trail in Westport, and more.

**Protecting Land:** We are working to acquire Coot Hill in Moriah/Crown Point to ensure its popular trail is permanently available for public use and to protect its ecological, geological, and ornithological (hawk-watching) features. You can learn more about supporting this project on page 3 and by visiting our website.

**Connecting People to Nature:** Thanks to a grant from New York State's Environmental Protection Fund, we hired Torey Patenaude as our first Community Engagement and Outreach Manager (a.k.a. "Director of Fun") to coordinate our hikes, events, outdoor education programs, and volunteers. *This position enables us to link people closer to the valley's amazing environment and increase opportunities for people to help make and maintain our trails.*

We hosted the 14-mile CATS Grand Hike from Willsboro to Westport. It was a huge success, with over 300 participants hiking and attending the *Après* hike party. It was heartwarming to see people from all over come together for the event, including Montreal, Saratoga, and Rochester. *It's great to gain new CATS friends, some of whom were first-time visitors to the Champlain Valley.*

**Here's something really special!** On National Trails Day, June 4th, we partnered with Piano by Nature to host the first "Piano in Nature" concert at our Essex Quarry Nature Preserve. We placed a grand piano in the center of the quarry, where pianist Ben Cosgrove provided a stunning musical performance for over 150 people. It was wonderful to see people of all ages appreciate the natural beauty of the quarry and the sounds that filled the air. Children were also catching and releasing bullfrogs, which added to the fun. *It was about making connections between music, people, and nature.*

**Promoting Economic Vitality:** Our hiking trails, nature preserves, and outdoor events are major attractions for visitors. *As a result, they frequent our communities and contribute to the local economy by spending their money on food, accommodations, and other activities.*

Lastly, as you may know, I will retire at the end of 2024. I am very proud of what we have achieved at Champlain Area Trails and know there is so much more to do. Please read through these pages and take pride in what you have made possible by supporting CATS. Together, we will continue to preserve and protect the natural beauty of the Champlain Valley for future generations to enjoy while hiking on CATS trails.

Thank you for your continued generosity. You've made this all possible.

Happy Trails,



Chris Maron  
Executive Director





## Thank You, Tim Barnett (1940-2022)

When I (Chris Maron) moved here in 2001 from Indiana to work for the Nature Conservancy, Tim took me to Middle Road in Essex. He pointed toward Westport, his Adirondack hometown, and as he rotated in a circle, said,

**“There’s been a dream of a 30-mile loop trail from Westport to Essex, going along the lake through Split Rock Wild Forest and then back along Boquet Mountain.”**

We began acting on that dream in 2006 when Steven Kellogg and Bruce Klink of Essex were both reading the chapter in Bill McKibben’s *Wandering Home* about walking through Essex and Westport. It inspired them to gather friends to make trails here, and CATS was born. In 2009, we became a non-profit organization with a mission to create trails that link communities, connect people with nature, and promote economic vitality. and soon became an accredited land trust that protects natural communities, farmland, scenic vistas, and clean water.

Tim’s vision lives on at CATS with 52 trails covering 78 miles and 983 preserved acres of land, including five nature preserves. He’d be especially happy to know we’ve completed about 20 miles of the 30-mile trail system he envisioned—it’s where people walk on our Grand Hike annually.

In 2024, CATS will celebrate our 15th birthday, and we’ll have many opportunities for you to participate in realizing Tim’s vision. Thank you, Tim. You’ve inspired action to make a long-held dream come true.





View from Coot Hill



# CATS Saves Land

**We invite you to help make the popular Coot Hill/Big Hollow Trail permanent and protect a historic and ecologically significant site.**

Coot Hill is a prominent landscape feature straddling the Moriah/Crown Point town line that features an extremely popular hiking destination, tourist attraction, and well-known hawk-watching site. Like many of our trails, it's on private property through a revocable trail agreement. We are working through a complicated process to purchase this property and make the trail permanent.

The steep ravine of Big Hollow and the cliffs that make Coot Hill an impressive visual feature in the landscape also creates thermal updrafts that hawks use to gain and sustain altitude during spring migration. Coot Hill provides outstanding opportunities for visitors to picnic at the summit, watch birds, and enjoy the sweeping view of Bulwagga Bay and Lake Champlain to the east and the High Peaks to the west. It is easily accessible on a long-time trail that CATS maintains.

Purchasing this property will provide public access to the trail and view forever. It will protect this crucial hawk-watching site on the Lake Champlain Birding Trail, where ornithologists have collected data for over three decades. It is also where Rogers' Rangers posted lookouts to warn Fort Ticonderoga of any approaching war boats.

Conserving Coot Hill will enhance tourism that supports the economic vitality of local communities. For example, the Moriah Chamber of Commerce includes Coot Hill as one of the four trails people hike to earn a patch in its popular "Moriah Challenge."

Acquiring Coot Hill also conserves part of the biologically rich West Champlain Hills, a series of Adirondack Low Peaks that skirt the west side of Lake Champlain. This dynamic region has fewer acres of public land than the vast, higher-elevation mountain region to the west.

The great naturalist and conservationist Jerry Jenkins, author of the *Northern Forest Atlas*, studied the West Champlain Hills for four years. He found the area to be one of the most remarkable in North America and home to the most ecologically specialized species in Northern New York. Coot Hill is included in Jenkins' *Adirondack Forest Hotspot Report* published in 2008. Many of these rugged Low Peaks are not under conservation protection, making Coot Hill an inspiring and visionary project for the benefit of people and nature.

**Contact us to protect this important land at [Info@champlanareatrails.com](mailto:Info@champlanareatrails.com) or (518) 962-2287.**

**Scan to donate and help protect this fabulous site!**



# CATS Makes Trails

## CATS Adds Long Pond to the Champlain Valley Trail Network

By Tim Rowland

*This article appeared in its entirety in the Adirondack Explorer on July 6, 2023*

Rattlesnake Mountain in Willsboro might be the most popular trail in the Champlain Valley. Its first lookout is back to the southwest, where a pond glistens prominently, nestled amidst the low hills. This is Long Pond, and for years Champlain Area Trails and the Long Pond Conservancy have been working on a trail along its western shoreline.

In trail building, sometimes the political work is harder than the sawing and digging, so satisfying all existing constituencies in this somewhat populated area has taken time. On Saturday, though, the trail finally had its grand opening, and all the clichés about being worth the wait apply.

The trailhead is reached by turning off Route 22 on Carver Road, five miles north of Willsboro or three miles south of the Northway's Willsboro exit.

The parking lot is not quite a mile up Carver, on the right and is identifiable by a small lot with a kiosk. The trail is easy hiking — total elevation gain is only about 150 feet over 4.5 miles — and has a couple of loops making it not strictly an out-and-back.

CATS Executive Director, Chris Maron said the Long Pond Conservancy was formed in partnership with CATS to ensure the western lakeshore remained undeveloped. According to the Conservancy, Long Pond was originally called Rattlesnake Pond, and the mountain took its name from the pond, which at one time was populated with water snakes mistaken for rattlers.

As we walked along the even trail on an old logging road we passed a “drowned forest” where a beaver impoundment had swamped a small valley of trees. It is now rich in life, as we were serenaded by sparrows, bullfrogs, thrush and of course red-eyed vireo, the Abba (c. 1978) of the bird world. Nothing against the red-eyed vireo, or Abba for that matter, but after the ten



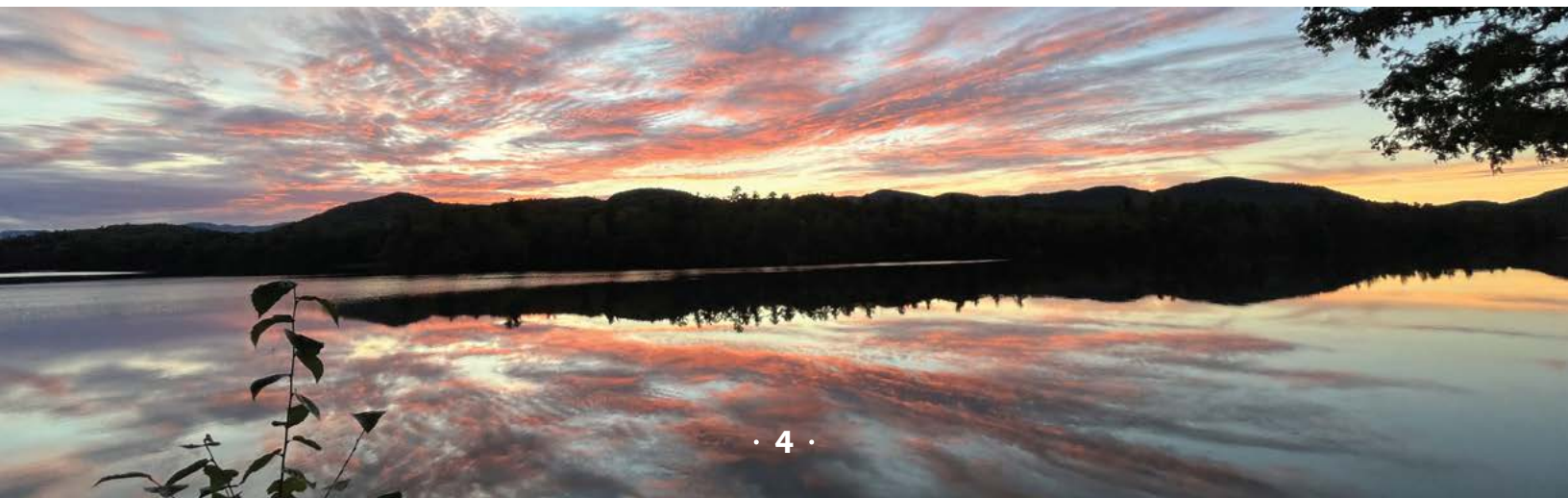
thousandth time you heard “Dancing Queen” come on the radio you were ready for a little variety, even if it meant disco.

At eight tenths of a mile, the trail crosses a woods road and enters a tract that has been rather heavily logged, but has regenerated in great stands of ostrich ferns and is not at all unattractive.

The trail reaches the pond at 1.3 miles and then skirts the shoreline for more than half a mile with attractive views all along the way, including a good perspective of the cliffs on Rattlesnake.

At the end of the shoreline reach there is a wooded loop for those wanting to add to their hike, and another loop on the return that deviates from the trail you came in on and is worth it for the interesting stone walls and corrals serving as a reminder that this forest was once farmland.

Overall, the trail is easy, scenic and accesses a wide variety of interesting habitats. It took us about two hours to complete, with plenty of gawking and lollygagging factored in. And best of all, no rattlesnakes.





## THE NUMBERS

Total # of Trails: 52

Total Mileage of Trails: 78

### SUNY Plattsburgh and CATS Collaborate to Open Trails

In the first week in October, a group of fourteen dedicated volunteers descended upon Twin Valleys. This stunning 600-acre property, nestled in the heart of the Champlain Valley and owned by SUNY Plattsburgh, had fallen into disrepair due to various challenges, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with SUNY Plattsburgh, we transformed the trails at Twin Valleys. Leveraging the power of the Vacation Volunteers Program, organized by the American Hiking Society, trail enthusiasts worldwide connect with sites needing their assistance. This marked the ninth time Volunteer Vacationers have partnered with CATS, and the impact of their efforts is awe-inspiring.

The Volunteer Vacation program is a win-win because we complete crucial trail improvements and promote regional tourism by introducing people to the breathtaking Champlain Valley. Volunteer vacationers get to give back to the trails they love while immersing themselves in nature's beauty.

Under the expert guidance of Tony Thoman, CATS' Director of Trails and Land Management, the volunteers left an indelible mark on Twin Valleys. Over the course of a week, they poured an incredible 336 hours into their mission. Their efforts included clearing overgrown trails and skillfully developing new routes to scenic overlooks. Through their tireless work, these passionate individuals breathed new life into the trails, allowing visitors to experience the wonders of Twin Valleys once again.

Barbara Roedel, a volunteer vacationer hailing from Illinois, was captivated by the beauty of the Adirondacks and Lake Champlain, which she had never seen before. She marveled at the picturesque valleys, with leaves ablaze in vibrant shades of red, orange, and gold, reflecting the essence of autumn.

As the volunteers bid farewell to Twin Valleys, they left behind a transformed landscape. Thanks to them, these trails flourish once again, eagerly awaiting the arrival of hikers, nature enthusiasts, and adventurers to explore the beauty of Twin Valleys.

**Volunteer vacationers  
celebrate on Horseshoe Ledge**







HIKE, SWIM & SIP



OWL PROWL



LEAF-PEEPING HIKES



CATSWOMEN



THE GRAND HIKE



MUSHROOM HIKE

## THE NUMBERS

# of events: 51

# of people engaged in our events: 675

# of people engaged on our trails: 20,000

# CATS Connects People with Nature

**Champlain Area Trails provides numerous volunteer opportunities, hikes, and outdoor education outings.** Our trails and these activities attract thousands of visitors and engage community members while showcasing our trails and nature preserves as free public resources. They also promote a healthy and active lifestyle and appreciation for the sublime beauty of the Champlain Valley.

*In 2022, the Grand Hike made a comeback. We also organized the CATSWomen group and monthly hikes. These included the popular “Hike, Sip, & Swim” during summer, a Mushroom Hike, the Owl Prowl, and a series of weekly Leaf-Peeing hikes in October.*

## VOLUNTEERS

**CATS depends on the power of many generous volunteers.** From making new trails to stuffing envelopes, CATS volunteers help us manage the 983 acres we’ve protected and **the 52 trails we’ve built over the last 14 years. In 2023 alone, CATS volunteers donated over 920 hours in total.**

We are thrilled that thanks to dedicated teams of volunteers, we’ve completed developing three incredible trails: Twin Valleys, Long Pond, and Essex Gateway. And there’s more – volunteers created a brand-new connector trail that links Wildway Overlook Trail and the North Boquet Mountain Trail Network! As if that isn’t enough, CATS is working to open two more trails in Clinton County in 2024. *We look forward to exploring these amazing outdoor spaces with you!*





# ADIRONDACK HARVEST FESTIVAL

*“Champlain Area Trails has been integral to the Adirondack Harvest Festival for years. The Festival draws thousands of people to the Champlain Valley each year. It is an economic stimulus as much as it is a community celebration. The annual hike CATS offers during the Festival provides a unique opportunity for people to engage with Adirondack farmland and wildlands. The CATS hike is a fun part of the Festival for local community members and visitors alike.”*

— Laurie Davis of Adirondack Harvest Festival



**The Adirondack Harvest Festival always begins with a CATS Hike.**

## CATS Promotes Economic Vitality

**The Champlain Area Trails are a highly sought-after destination for locals and tourists in the Champlain Valley.** Our hiking trails, nature preserves, and outdoor events bring in many people who hike the trails and then explore local restaurants, accommodations, and other businesses. With approximately 20,000 individuals hiking, walking, and skiing the extensive 78-mile network of gentle, low-peak CATS trails, the regional economy benefits as they spend their money in our communities.

## Summer Land Steward Internships

Interning with Champlain Area Trails helps enrich Adirondack Park communities by attracting and retaining young people who gain valuable career experiences while contributing to the Champlain Valley's economic, environmental, and community well-being.



**Mina Weymouth-Little**

*Outdoor Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension*



**Charlotte Staats**

*Trails Manager at the Adirondack Mountain Club*



**Thomas Firkins**

*District Technician at Essex County Soil and Water*

**CATS recent interns are now the next generation of conservation and trail leaders in the Adirondacks.**





**2023 BOARD MEMBERS**

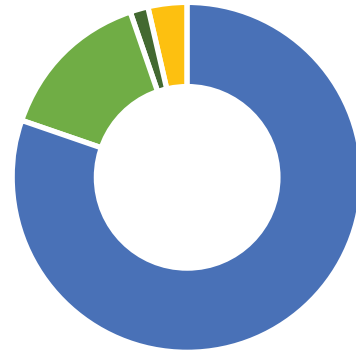
- Dan Keegan, *Chair*
- Annie McKinley, *Vice Chair*
- Steven Shepstone, *Treasurer*
- Martha Smiles, *Secretary*
- Jackie Bowen
- John Davis
- Mike Derrick
- Vincent Dupont
- Cynthia Ford-Johnston
- Genevieve Griffin
- Ray Johnson
- Steven Kellogg
- Ana Maria Moore
- Hannah Provost

**2023 STAFF MEMBERS**

- Chris Maron  
*Executive Director*
- Torey Patenaude  
*Community Engagement and Outreach Manager*
- Amber Adamson  
*Development and Communications Director*
- Christina Vaughan  
*Operations Manager*
- Matt Baillargeon  
*Trail Junction Sign Steward*
- Tony Thoman  
*Director of Trails and Land Management*
- Jonathan Marshall  
*Summer Land Steward*
- Ben Huston  
*Summer Land Steward*

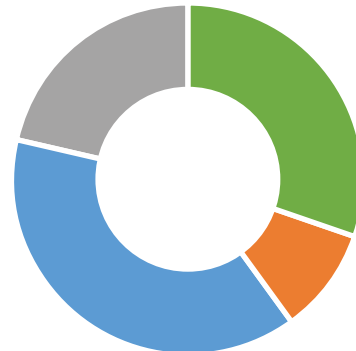
# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## 2022 Revenue



<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Unrestricted Gifts	\$456,661	85%
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Grants & Restricted Gifts	\$63,745	12%
<span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> Gifts to Stewardship Reserve	\$3,412	1%
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Investment and Other Income	\$8,392	2%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$532,210</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 2022 Expenses



<span style="color: green;">■</span> Conservation & Trail Operations	\$145,947	30%
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Fundraising	\$45,626	10%
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Program Management & Administration	\$184,360	39%
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> Outreach & Communication	\$102,064	21%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$477,996</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Note: These are preliminary unaudited figures. Please get in touch with us at [info@champlainareatrails.com](mailto:info@champlainareatrails.com) for a full financial statement.*

**Net Surplus \$54,214**

Champlain Area Trails (CATS) is proud to be an accredited land trust, a distinction showing we follow the highest standards and practices as we make trails and save land, all in the public interest.





# There Are Many Ways to Support Champlain Area Trails

We are happy to assist you in finding the best way to support Champlain Area Trails. Please get in touch with us for confidential discussions regarding your giving options at (518) 962-2287 or [info@champlainareatrails.com](mailto:info@champlainareatrails.com).



## Plan a gift for future generations

Join our Legacy Society with a planned gift that will leave a significant, meaningful legacy. Planned gifts can include naming *Champlain Area Trails* in your will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy. You can also plan a gift of real estate.

## Endowment

By donating to our Endowment, you will help us advance our mission for future generations. Our endowment is housed at the Adirondack Foundation and supports CATS' mission now and in the future.

## Spirit Sanctuary

Champlain Area Trails is a proud partner of the Spirit Sanctuary green cemetery in the heart of the Split Rock Wildway in Essex. At Spirit Sanctuary, people are buried in a way that allows them to become part of the earth and nourish a regenerating forest. By including CATS in your estate planning, you can become a resident of Spirit Sanctuary and leave an environmental legacy. Please reach out to us to learn more.

## Give back with a Qualified Charitable Distribution

If you are 70½ or older, you can donate up to \$100,000 tax-free from your IRA to CATS each year.

## Join the Bobcat Club

You can make a huge difference with monthly gifts – \$10, \$25, \$100, or more! - as they help us protect land and make trails.

## Donate Stock

A gift of stock advances our mission and provides you with financial and tax benefits.

## Volunteer

Give back to your community by building or maintaining trails, sharing your talents to lead an outing, or doing office work.

## Donate Today!

Call us at 518-962-2287, visit [champlainareatrails.com](http://champlainareatrails.com), or scan this QR code to donate today to support our work of saving land, making trails, connecting people to nature, and promoting economic vitality in the Champlain Valley!







**[champlainareatrails.com](http://champlainareatrails.com)**

CATS has protected almost 1,000 acres of land, made 52 trails totaling 78+ miles, held innumerable hikes and outdoor education outings, and annually published comprehensive trail maps – all promoting economic vitality in New York’s Champlain Valley.