

2010 Annual Report
Champlain Area Trails, Inc.
Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership
“Saving land and making trails!”



Champlain Area Trails is a non-profit conservation organization focused on creating a network of hiking/skiing trails in New York’s Champlain Valley that links communities, connects people to nature, and enhances economic vitality. To preserve the landscape through which the trails pass, CATS established the *Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership* Program to protect habitat, biodiversity, farmland, clean water, and scenic vistas.



Our work advances a vision of the Champlain Valley where conserved forests and farmland surround vibrant hamlets with people hiking and skiing on a network of trails and using the communities’ products and services in ways that enhance local economies. The key to success is conservation of the landscape so that the natural and scenic resources sustain local communities, attract visitors and new residents, and provide habitat for native plants and animals.

From the President and Executive Director: Simply put, Champlain Area Trails, and our *Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership* program, save land and make trails. We also make people happy—smiling children running on the trail, families out for a Sunday afternoon hike, grandparents holding hands in the woods, a lone Rambler standing on a rock marveling at the view.

Please enjoy our first Annual Report and take special pride in the accomplishments you make happen when you donate time, money, and footsteps to trails connecting our towns and lives.

As we make trails, we also focus on conserving forests for wildlife, farmland for farmers and local food, streams and wetlands for clean water, and scenic vistas for us all. We participate in local planning to encourage growth near hamlets and not scattered across the landscape. Attaining our goals depends on people being connected with the local landscape, so we have initiated a program focused on our local Champlain Valley, to increase outdoor education for all ages.

Every passing day moves us farther down the trail. Thank you for your support.

Katharine Preston, President and Chris Maron, Executive Director

“CATS is a great program – Keep up the good work!” Lynn Scott and Matt Johnson, Willsboro

History:

- 1980’s – An idea develops about making a trail system between Essex and Westport.
- 1992 – US/UK Country Exchange recommends establishing trails to connect communities.
- 2006 – Champlain Area Trails (CATS) formed by the Founders of CATS (see below) who were inspired by the Bill McKibbin’s book, Wandering Home.
- 2009 – CATS incorporates as a non-profit organization; completes first trail
 - Several CATS board members form *Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership (CVCP)* to be the local land trust to save land.
- 2010 – *CVCP* conserves three properties; CATS completes its eighth mile of trails.
 - CATS and *CVCP* merge.

2010 Unaudited Results

Beginning balance	\$1,450
Income	\$172,228
Expenses	\$59,961
<u>Liabilities (designated grant funds)</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>
Balance	\$63,717



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CATS Board of Directors

- Katharine Preston – President
- Bill Amadon – Treasurer
- Donna Lou Sonnett – Secretary
- Sheri Amsel
- George Davis
- John Davis
- Mike Davis
- Steven Kellogg
- Bruce Klink
- James Phillips

The Founders of Champlain Area Trails

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Pat Aiken | Leah Nelson |
| Bill Amadon | Bruce Klink |
| Sheri Amsel | Chris Maron |
| Charlie Cammack | Patricia Parsons |
| John Davis | Amanda Perez |
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| Todd Goff | Margie Reuther |
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| Meredith Hanna | Ed Smith |
| Frisky Irwin | Robin Ulmer |
| Steven Kellogg | Denise Wilson |

● **2010 Achievements** ●
Champlain Area Trails - Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership

Land Conservation

- **Full and By Farm**; 105 acres, Essex – partnered with Eddy Foundation to conserve with a conservation easement preserving the farm and protecting the Boquet River.
- **Brookfield Headwaters Preserve**; 81 acres, Essex – partnered with Northeast Wilderness Trust to acquire this property; we initiated landowner contact, negotiated the transaction, and helped raise funds for the acquisition cost.
- **Brookfield Headwaters / Maloney Forest and Farm**; 100 acres, Essex – partnered with Eddy Foundation (EF) to conserve 90 acres of forest in EF ownership and a 10-acre farmstead with a conservation easement.

“The *conservation values* of the Champlain Valley are high and their *conservation needs* are substantial.” – Jerry Jenkins, ecologist and author.



New York’s Champlain Valley is a beautiful landscape of farms, forests, low mountains, wetlands, historic hamlets, and breathtaking views. It has the greatest diversity of plants, animals, and natural communities in northern New York due to the warmer climate, rich soils, abundant water, and numerous habitat types.

“A healthy Lake Champlain and a vibrant agricultural sector are both vital to sustaining the Champlain Valley's economy and way of life.” – NY’s Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman

Trails – Connecting People to Nature

- Created eight miles of new trails.
- Developed new entry trails for Bobcat and Beaver Flow Trails.
- Updated and printed second and third editions of the CATS brochure.
- Held monthly volunteer work projects and hikes.



“Cats trail to South Boquet Mountain is quite nice. Thanks! Took a nice group of youngsters up in August. Everyone enjoyed the farmland, lake and VT view.” – Dr. Tom Doolittle, Albany



Photo by Betsy Bacot-Aigner

As the last addition to the Adirondack Park, the Champlain Valley has little public land which limits hiking and skiing opportunities. CATS is addressing this by developing trails so people can enjoy the outdoors, experience the local environment, and stay healthy.

Events to honor trails, increase awareness of conservation issues, and have fun

- *Split Rock Wildway Celebration*, in partnership with Northeast Wilderness Trust, Eddy Foundation, and Adirondack Council.
- *Celebrate Champlain Area Trails* on National Trails Day, June 5.
- *A Discussion with Jerry Jenkins*, author of *Climate Change in the Adirondacks*, in partnership with Wildlife Conservation Society and Adirondack Council.
- *Keeping Track Wildlife Event*, in partnership with Adirondack Council, NE Wilderness Trust, Elizabeth Lee - Outdoor Guide, Champlain National Bank, and Dogwood Bakery.



Event photos by George Davis

Lake Champlain Water Quality

After years of inaction, our letter to Senator Leahy urging action to address 14,000 gallons of diesel fuel thought to be in a sunken tugboat north of Willsboro since 1963 prompted the EPA to dispatch an underwater vessel to determine if the fuel is still on board, and if it is, to remove it.

Public Relations

CATS was featured in Adirondack Life's 2010 Outdoor Guide and on the front page of the Plattsburgh Press Republican. The Valley News and Press Republican consistently cover CATS trail projects and events.

● **2011 – 2012 Initiatives** ●

Champlain Area Trails – *Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership*

Protecting Natural Habitat, Farmland, Clean Water, and Scenic Vistas

We plan to complete four gifts of conservation easements protecting over 563 acres which includes forest, Lake Champlain shoreline, clean water, farmland, and Corbeau Creek, a tributary of the Great Chazy River. In addition, we are now working with various partners on twelve projects, a number that consistently increases as new opportunities arise. These properties include scenic farms, large forests, river and lake shorelines, and important forested tracts in the Split Rock Wildway, a wildlife corridor connecting Lake Champlain to the Adirondacks.



Creating Trails that Provide Healthy Outdoor Recreation for Everyone

We have an inspiring goal: To develop an integrated hiking/skiing trail network that links Champlain Valley communities so residents and visitors can connect with nature and enjoy our beautiful landscape. We are working to complete the initial 30-mile loop connecting Westport and Essex as we explore opportunities to extend into the surrounding Towns of Willsboro, Lewis, Elizabethtown, and Moriah. We welcome the participation of the many volunteers who help plan, clear, and maintain the trails.



Connecting People to Nature through Outdoor Education

The CATS *Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership* Program is developing an Outdoor Education Action Plan, funded by a J.C. Kellogg Foundation grant, to identify opportunities, barriers, ideas and strategies for increasing outdoor education for all ages in the central Champlain Valley.



Promoting Economic Vitality

CATS is developing a multi-media campaign to increase outdoor recreation-based tourism in the Central Champlain Valley.



**We sincerely thank the Charter Donors to
Champlain Area Trails – Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership**

Dr. Robert and Ann Akeret	John and Sandy Goodroe	Northeast Wilderness Trust
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