

CHAMPLAIN AREA TRAILS

SAVING LAND  MAKING TRAILS

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

“Seriously fun conservation” describes our mission of saving land and making trails. Yes, saving land is serious business and it is joyful to know that a property is conserved and open for people to share outdoor pleasures with friends and family. That is what CATS is about—bringing happiness to people on nature’s paths.

We consistently look ahead for opportunities to create new trails, save more land, connect people with nature, and promote the local economy. So, while this annual report describes last year’s accomplishments, it is like taking a picture from a fast-moving train—enjoy the image but get ready because there is more to see around the bend.

Before reading about our 2012 accomplishments, please join in celebrating our purchase last month of an 87-acre parcel connecting Coon Mountain and Split Rock Wild Forest. This, our first land acquisition, is serious because we saved a key link in the Split Rock Wildway connecting Lake Champlain to the Adirondack Mountains and joyful because it allows for people, and wildlife, to walk between these two popular natural areas and to the communities beyond.

We have great aspirations for 2013 and coming years:

to create more off-road parts of the Westport to Essex Trail Loop; start on trails connecting Essex to Willsboro; find routes to Port Henry; explore opportunities around Willsboro; go along the Boquet River; and more. In short, advance the vision of people arriving on the ferry

or on trains, walking to neighboring towns, and visiting the communities’ businesses.

Working with Open Space Institute and other partners, we’ll save farms, help new farmers get started, and conserve more wildlife habitat and corridors. We will begin implementing the outdoor education plan, step up our community involvement, and, to attract visitors, we will host a photo contest and the 2013 travel-writing contest.

On a recent trail project, four-year-old Otis Van Deusen carried a branch off the trail. His dad had just cut it and his mom took a picture. It showed his pride in helping and the happiness of being outside with those he loved. That is what you create through your participation, ideas, and support. We thank you and hope you enjoy reading our third annual report.

Chris Maron, Executive Director
Katharine Preston, Chair



2012 Achievements

2012 INCOME STATEMENT

Revenue	
Donations	\$64,828
Grants	\$33,065
Contracts	\$8,333
Events	\$4,158
Other	\$2,405
Transfer from Reserve Funds	\$14,181
Transfer from Restricted funds	\$20,331
Total Revenue	\$147,987

Expenses	
Program Services	\$114,690
Fundraising	\$18,054
Mgt/Admin	\$15,243
Total Expenses	\$147,987

Net Operating Surplus (Deficit)	– (\$14,181)
Easement endowment donations	\$13,680
Change in net assets	(\$501)

2012 BALANCE SHEET

Assets	
Operating Balance	\$60,433
Restricted Funds	\$48,905
Stewardship Endowment	\$13,680
Land Protection Fund Loan	\$83,500
Total Assets	\$ 206,518

Liabilities	
Land Protection Fund Loan	\$83,500

Net Assets	\$123,018
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THE CHAMPLAIN AREA TRAILS mission

is “to create a network of hiking/skiing trails in New York’s Champlain Valley that links communities, connects people to nature, enhances economic vitality and protects habitat, farmland, clean water, and scenic vistas.” We envision the Champlain Valley with conserved forests and farmland surrounding vibrant hamlets with people hiking and skiing between communities and patronizing local businesses. The key to success is conservation of the landscape so natural and scenic resources sustain local communities, attract visitors and new residents, and provide habitat for native plants and animals.

**CATS SAVES 319 ACRES
IN WILLSBORO WITH
CONSERVATION EASEMENT**

**2012 Achievements:
Saving Land**

CHAMPLAIN AREA TRAILS calls its land protection program the “Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership” to emphasize that cooperation is the key to conservation – it amplifies individual actions, broadens the base of support, and leads to success.

CATS SECOND PROJECT – THE DENEALE FARM & FOREST

319 Acres, Willsboro – On December 20, 2012 CATS completed its second land protection project when Dick and Leanna DeNeale donated a conservation easement to protect their beloved property on Essex Road between Willsboro and Essex. Our partnership with the DeNeales conserved biologically diverse woodlands featuring “clayplain forest,” large wetlands with beaver ponds, and productive farmland used for an organic beef operation. You can soon see this beautiful property on the hiking/skiing trail the DeNeales provided for in the easement.



The DeNeale Property features fields, forest, wetlands, a beaver pond, and three streams.

LEANNA DENEALE wrote, “I grew up in eastern Ohio where I realized we all need a connection to nature to recharge our psyche. After graduating from Ohio State, Dick and I moved to West Plattsburgh where we outgrew our small suburban lot and began looking for a farm. When we visited our Willsboro homestead, it was love at first sight and we bought this little piece of paradise. As years passed and we saw farms converted into housing developments, we determined that was not the legacy we wanted—that we needed a conservation easement to protect our woods and encourage best agricultural management practices. Everyone involved in putting the easement in place, especially Chris Maron and CATS, were wonderful. We are pleased that our neighbor, Daniel Arbour, purchased the southern fields for his organic beef farm knowing that the easement’s restrictions are permanent. Finally, we’re happy that people will connect with nature and recharge their psyche as they enjoy the trail and the property’s white pine ‘cathedral’ forest.”



By donating the conservation easement, Dick and Leanna DeNeale are eligible for federal and state tax benefits.

2012 Achievements: Making Trails

CATS OPENS THE NEW HIDDEN QUARRY TRAIL IN WESTPORT

We are creating a network of hiking/skiing trails to connect communities in New York's Champlain Valley. We depend on private landowners to allow trails on their properties so we were pleased when Jim and Caroline Carlisle contacted us about having a trail through their fields and forest near Lake Champlain. It was a pleasant surprise to find and then route the trail by an old quarry that provided rocks for the base layer of nearby Rte 22/9N. On a splendid day in July, a large volunteer crew created the trail which we featured in a late fall introductory hike enjoyed by over 40 people. The trail offers a short, easy hike for people of all ages and abilities.



The Hidden Quarry has a shallow pond frequented by migrating ducks and waterfowl.



More than forty people enjoyed the introductory hike at the Hidden Quarry Trail.

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.

THANK YOU TO THE PRIVATE LANDOWNERS WHO ALLOW CATS TO HAVE TRAILS ON THEIR PROPERTIES.

Jim and Caroline Carlisle • The Eddy Foundation • Frank and Mary Walls
Shirley Forest • Steve Feinbloom and Rose Chanler • Matt Foley and Liz Rapalee
Tommy Conley • Robert and Mary Lou Thall (Three Creeks Farm LLC) • The Lee Trust
James and Carol Meaker • Jeff Allott, et al • Full and By Farm • Lakeside School
Peter Jerdo • Richard and Leanna DeNeale
George Davis and Susan Bacot-Davis • Francesca Irwin

**CATS WORKS WITH WILLSBORO
FOR NEW TRAIL AT ITS
RECREATION PARK**

**2012 Achievements:
Making Trails**

Across Route 22 from Noblewood Park, the Town of Willsboro is creating a recreation park on its 40-acre property. Town officials built tennis courts, developed plans for a soccer field, and then contacted CATS for help creating a nature trail in the woods. We hiked through the property many times to locate attractive features like big trees, the old stone wall, the clear streams, and the “magical” pine forest. Because the property is mostly a “flatwoods” with seasonally wet areas where hiking is impractical, it took a great effort to find a dry route to showcase the features and avoid the wetlands. Then we organized several volunteer projects to create the trail whose opening is delayed until the Town settles a boundary discrepancy with one of the neighbors. Stay tuned for an announcement of the trail’s opening—it offers opportunities to see the beautiful red cardinal flowers in late summer.



Willsboro Park’s “magical” pine forest.

CATS VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION!



Cleaning up the Cheney Mt. Trailhead on EarthDay.



Two teens helped our trail committee find a route through fields and forest for the trail that will connect Essex and Westport.

2012 Achievements: Education & Award

OUTDOOR EDUCATION PLAN CATS WINS AWARD FOR TRAVEL WRITING CONTESTS



CATS COMPLETES OUTDOOR EDUCATION PLAN

CATS completed the *Central Champlain Valley Outdoor Education Action Plan for All Ages*. The purpose of the Plan is to increase people’s knowledge of the local environment so they better appreciate their natural surroundings and share more time outdoors with friends and family. It was created by over 65 people who took part in two series of workshops, the first focusing on youth and the other on adults and families.

The Plan, funded by a J.C. Kellogg Foundation grant, focuses on people of all ages because outdoor education programs usually concentrate on children. Adults would also benefit from knowing more about their environment because it would increase their enjoyment of nature, build pride in their local landscape, and promote land use decisions that value the natural habitat, wildlife corridors, and public access to the outdoors.

It’s not often that you get an award for giving awards...yet that happened when the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism awarded its “Destination Award” to CATS for our travel-writing contests. In accepting the prize, Chris Maron said “This award shows how trails are increasingly important for the Champlain Valley’s economy.” CATS held two contests in 2012 with many excellent entries that you can see on our website.



ELIZABETH LEE of Westport earned a first-place prize for her story comparing the Paris Montmartre neighborhood to Coon Mountain. She wrote “Montmartre, like Coon Mt., is a landmark that anchors us and watches over our daily errands, witnessing our troubles and happiness.”

JEN ZAHORCHAK won the People’s Choice Prize for “Turtle Crossing” which describes how her family decided to move to Westport and into a house where turtles cross the road. She concluded “we came for the wilderness but stayed for the community. And the turtles.”

PAULA CASTNER of Lancaster, Mass., won a first-place prize for an article describing how the Champlain Valley converted her from being a “comfort-loving, city-bred gal” to one who wants her city friends to “walk with me as I go to all these great local places.”

JULIA DIXON, a high school freshman from Lake Forest, IL, won the People’s Choice Award. Julia has been spending summers at her grandparents in Westport “since I was born.” She wrote of hiking Coon Mountain where she “allowed my senses to absorb the world around me.”

CATS GETS STAFFING GRANT
 CATS AND OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE
 PARTNER TO PROTECT LAND

2012 Achievements:
 Grants & Partnerships

CATS was one of only five land trusts to receive the coveted “Professional Development” grant through the New York State’s Conservation Partnership Program. The \$50,000 grant, spread over two years, enabled us to hire Gail Testa as Operations and Development Manager and Jen Zahorchak to be the Communications Manager.



Gail Testa, Operations and Development Manager.



Jen Zahorchak, Communications Manager.

The New York State Conservation Partnership Program helps local land trusts around the state sustain and expand community and landowner outreach, land conservation, stewardship and education programs. The grants advance regional economic development goals, create land trust jobs and strengthen partnerships with local and state governments while advancing efforts to preserve farmland, conserve natural areas, and protect scenic vistas.



When a generous donor to CATS and the Open Space Institute (OSI) suggested we collaborate to protect land in the central Champlain Valley, we proposed a partnership to establish a land preservation initiative. Working together, CATS, with its knowledge of local partners and landowners and OSI, with its expertise in protecting land, leveraging resources, and facilitating cooperative ventures, could save more land. This led to a \$1.2 million donation to OSI spread over five years to work with CATS to conserve land and assist new farmers.

**THE CATS-OSI CENTRAL
 CHAMPLAIN VALLEY LAND
 PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP
 HAS THESE GOALS:**

- 🐾 Preserve habitat, farms, & views
- 🐾 Promote local agriculture and help new farmers acquire farmland
- 🐾 Expand public access to the outdoors



The CATS-OSI partnership has already conserved three farms and enabled four young farmers to begin working the land.

WE SINCERELY THANK THE 2012 DONORS TO Champlain Area Trails

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