



Champlain Area Trails 2019 Annual Report



A Barred Owl is perched on a thick, grey branch. The owl has a white face with dark eyes and a yellow beak. Its body is covered in brown and white barred feathers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus forest scene with grey and green tones.

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 education outings, the Champlain Valley is a place that people enjoy, where its communities and businesses thrive, and everyone benefits from outdoor recreation and tourism.

A Barred Owl patiently hunts at CATS' Ancient Oaks Trail in Willsboro.

Dear Friends of Champlain Area Trails,

It is a different world yet one thing remains the same—the importance of having nearby trails and open space where you can experience the wonders of nature, breathe clean air and enjoy the company of family and friends.

Before CATS began, there were few hiking trails in the Champlain Valley. Now, 11 years later, thanks to your support, we have created 39 trails totaling 60 miles and protected 927 acres of land, all of which are enjoyed by the community. Those numbers are increasing as we work on exciting new projects and celebrate with grand trail openings.

People find the trails on the popular maps we've published annually since 2009. Until this year, those maps were of the central Champlain Valley, which is logical because that is where CATS began. But now we've expanded north by printing the first trails map for the northern valley so you can "hike the lake" in this spectacular landscape of farms, forests, wetlands and lake shore. We'll soon make trails there, like we did in the central valley, and provide the benefits of having easy access to nature.

We're especially proud of the Essex Quarry Nature Park which we purchased to conserve its amazing natural features and trail opportunities. It's a perfect example of how saving land, making trails, connecting people with nature, and promoting economic vitality are interrelated and good for our communities.

In these uncertain times, we've learned our trails are more important than ever. People find solace as families create new hiking traditions, kids and adults learn to explore nature, regular hikers stay physically and mentally fit, and trail goes shop at our local businesses. We don't know what the future holds but it's clear that people need natural areas where they can walk, hike, feel nature, and find comfort. You make that happen when you donate to Champlain Area Trails.

I know the uncertainty complicates doing that yet please think of and act on the positive future your generosity will create.

Happy Trails,



Chris Maron



CATS Saves Land

Building a Community Nature Park in Downtown Essex: Essex Quarry Phase 1 Complete

It began with a simple phone call from Terry Dinnan, co-owner of Essex Quarry. He said it was time to sell the 35-acre property and asked if CATS was interested in exploring how it could benefit Essex and the Champlain Valley. We now thank him for the foresight and generosity in making this inspiring community project come to life. And we thank the residents in Essex and other Champlain Valley communities who rallied together and donated the funds so CATS could purchase and create the Essex Quarry Nature Park.

When I imagine Essex in fifty years, this unique property will serve a diverse population and offer easy access to nature's calming powers. Champlain Area Trails has been a great choice to manage the process of creating a new purpose for this site. CATS' experience and proven stewardship of natural areas is well established so I see a great future for Essex Quarry and the people who will enjoy its special features.

—Terry Dinnan



New York's Champlain Valley is the most biologically rich part of the Adirondack Park. It was the last region added to the park so there is little public land in a landscape of privately owned farms, forests, wetlands, and waterways. CATS conserves land to create

permanent trails, protect natural communities, save farmland for present and future food production, and preserve the beautiful scenic vistas people see as they hike the trails, bike the roads, and travel between the historic communities.



Morning reflection at the Essex Quarry Nature Park

CATS Makes Trails

Raise the Money and Build the Trails: Essex Quarry Phase 2 Begins

Essex Quarry features a rare “limestone woodland,” ancient fossils, fascinating geology, and a unique look into Essex’s history. To showcase these qualities, CATS is making new trails, improving the existing paths, and designing interpretive signs we will install so people can learn about this spectacular site. The trailhead will feature a plaque thanking major donors, a listing of all who contributed, and an illustrated history of the site. Essex Quarry will be a welcoming place for families, friends, residents and visitors who can connect with nature while experiencing the charm of downtown Essex.

Essex Quarry Nature Park will be wonderful. Residents and visitors to Essex will walk a short distance through town to the Nature Park where they’ll explore its forest and see what a working quarry looked like. An added plus are the fossils which will impress young and old alike. Thank you CATS for your work to make trails, save land, and connect people with nature. You are benefitting our communities!

—Ken Hughes, Supervisor, Town of Essex, NY

MAKING
TRAILS



A lone hiker enjoys a sunrise snowshoe in the West Champlain Hills.

In addition to making public trails on the land we protect, Champlain Area Trails works with private landowners to allow trails on their properties. The trails go through woods, fields, and along streams, some venture up to scenic overlooks, and most advance the goal of having town-to-town trails that link our Champlain Valley communities. Access to nature on trails benefits everyone’s quality of life, boosts outdoor tourism, and fosters an appreciation for conserving the lands and waters of the Champlain Valley.

CATS Makes More Trails

The Broughton Ledges Trail in Moriah

You walk along the base of a mountain, then wind upward along a trail that passes through, around, and over rock ledges to where it levels off and wanders placidly along an old logging road. You come to a wetland and gaze across it to the steep and rocky Broughton Ledges, hike closer to them and then return via a route that looks over the pristine Parch Pond.

In October, we worked with a fantastic group from the American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations Program to develop the first two miles of this 4-mile trail west of Port Henry. The Broughton Ledges Trail is located on preserved land owned by the Eddy Foundation, one of CATS' partner organizations. We plan to finish it by fall for a grand opening hike. Stay tuned.

The forests, wetlands and rocky hillsides of the Champlain Valley provide critical habitat for an array of wildlife species such as bobcats.



CATS Connects People with Nature

The Positive Feedback Loop: Trails, Land, and Public Support

People hike trails, connect with nature, want more trails, then support protecting land for trails, views, wildlife, and clean water. This leads to more trails, hikes, and conserved land.

The 2019 Grand Hike: Celebrating the Champlain Valley

324 people rambled 15 miles through fields and forests and by rivers and streams from Westport to Essex. It was an incredible day to soak in the scenery, enjoy the company of family and friends, and experience the CATS vision of a Champlain Valley where outdoor recreation and tourism encourage healthy living, strong communities, and thriving businesses. We are optimistic that we will be able to host the 2020 Grand Hike this fall. And if we can, we hope you will come celebrate with us! Stay tuned!

CONNECTING
PEOPLE WITH
NATURE



CATS' trails, organized hikes, and outdoor education activities get people outside where they walk through forests and fields, pause along streams and wetlands, and look at spectacular views. They see, hear, smell, and touch nature in myriad ways—from looking out at a large landscape to hearing water gurgle through rocks to observing a dragonfly swoop among woodland sunflowers. The physical and mental benefits of these experiences are incredible—they elevate moods, relieve stress, increase awareness, improve eyesight and even enhance social skills. All this cultivates a love for nature, brings happiness, and builds community connections.

A Year in Hikes

- Winter ski at Poko
- Snowshoe hike at Sophie's Lair
- Views of E'town from Blueberry Hill
- Hawks at Coot Hill
- Birds on Bobcat Trail
- Edible plants at P'burg's Rugar Woods
- History at Mt. Defiance
- Mushroom, mosses, ferns
- Harvestfest Hike
- Photographing nature
- Winter birds at Wickham
- Nature at Crown Point
- Plus weekly working hikes on many of our trails

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I've come across the lake from Vermont for CATS outdoor education hikes on topics ranging from fossils to fungi and mosses to birds. They provide great opportunities to learn from experts, meet people who share your passion and tune in to the natural world.

—Cindy Sprague, Huntington, VT



Young explorers learn about the birds of the Champlain Valley. CATS works with people of all ages to make vital connections to nature.

CATS Promotes Economic Vitality

CATS Publishes the First Northern Champlain Valley Trail Map

For 10 years, CATS has published the central Champlain Valley Trail Map that attracts people to hike and patronize local businesses. To advance the goals of creating trails and fostering healthy communities throughout the Valley we took the next big step—we expanded into Clinton County by publishing the first map of trails in the northern valley. We also began hosting hikes and education programs there, while simultaneously promoting our partners’ outdoor initiatives. This is all designed to expand the economic success of our work northward. Thank you to the NYS Conservation Partnership Program administered by the Land Trust Alliance for a grant to initiate the project, to David Thomas-Train for assembling the trail information, Gwen Vogel for her design work, and all of you for hiking CATS trails and supporting our work.

CATS Hike Kicks Off Adirondack Harvest Festival

Five years ago, when Jim McKenna of the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism said to Chris Maron, “We need to celebrate CATS trails and new farms in the Champlain Valley with a huge farmer’s market and one of your fabulous hikes,” Chris jumped at the idea. Thus began the Adirondack Harvest Festival where local farmers sell their produce, food trucks provide “home”-cooked meals, and regional breweries offer tasty brews as music is played and people attend farm-related workshops. And it all begins with a CATS hike.

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As a real estate professional working with buyers from all over the country, my biggest challenge is “selling” the area as a whole. Lately, I’ve noticed that talking about the CATS trails is a big plus, especially describing how they provide a perfect way for people of all ages and physical abilities to get outside throughout the year to take in the stunning beauty of the Champlain Valley.

—Janine D’Angelo, Associate Real Estate Broker,
Covered Bridge Realty

PROMOTING
ECONOMIC
VITALITY



Economic vitality is essential for thriving, healthy communities. CATS’ trails, lands, hikes, and education programs add to the region’s quality of life, attract visitors who spend their dollars here, and benefit residents. Before CATS started making trails, people bypassed the Champlain Valley to hike elsewhere. Now the valley is becoming a hiking destination and that helps our businesses and communities.





CATS, only in existence for a little over one of my seven decades-long love affair with the Champlain Valley and the Adirondacks, has transformed my experience of this special part of the world. It has opened my eyes to see more deeply the precious, the remote, the bucolic, and the wild of this special part of the Adirondacks. I have watched CATS grow amazingly in its mission to protect this country of forest, field and meadow, wetland and grand vista, to make it accessible, and to nourish wonder and a will to preserve its irreplaceable networks of life. CATS is a model for how committed and creative local citizenry can make an extraordinary difference in the immense undertaking of fostering respect and love for our natural heritage. One would hope this model could be replicated throughout the State, our country, and the world for it is a real and special answer to our time's greatest challenge. And because it works.

—Mark Gibson, CATS Supporter

Financial Statement

Sources of Operation Funds

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| Donations | \$217,193 |
| Grants | \$62,000 |
| Other income | \$20,857 |

Subtotal Operations Income \$300,050

Project Revenue

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Essex Quarry Donations/Grants | \$95,172 |
| Viall's Crossing Donations | \$34,270 |
| Easement Stewardship Fund | \$5,000 |
| Long Pond Conservancy Donations | \$44,506 |

Subtotal Project Revenue \$178,948

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Total Sources of Funds (Income) \$478,998

Uses of Funds

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Administration | \$32,516 |
| Programs | \$210,704 |
| Fundraising | \$61,127 |

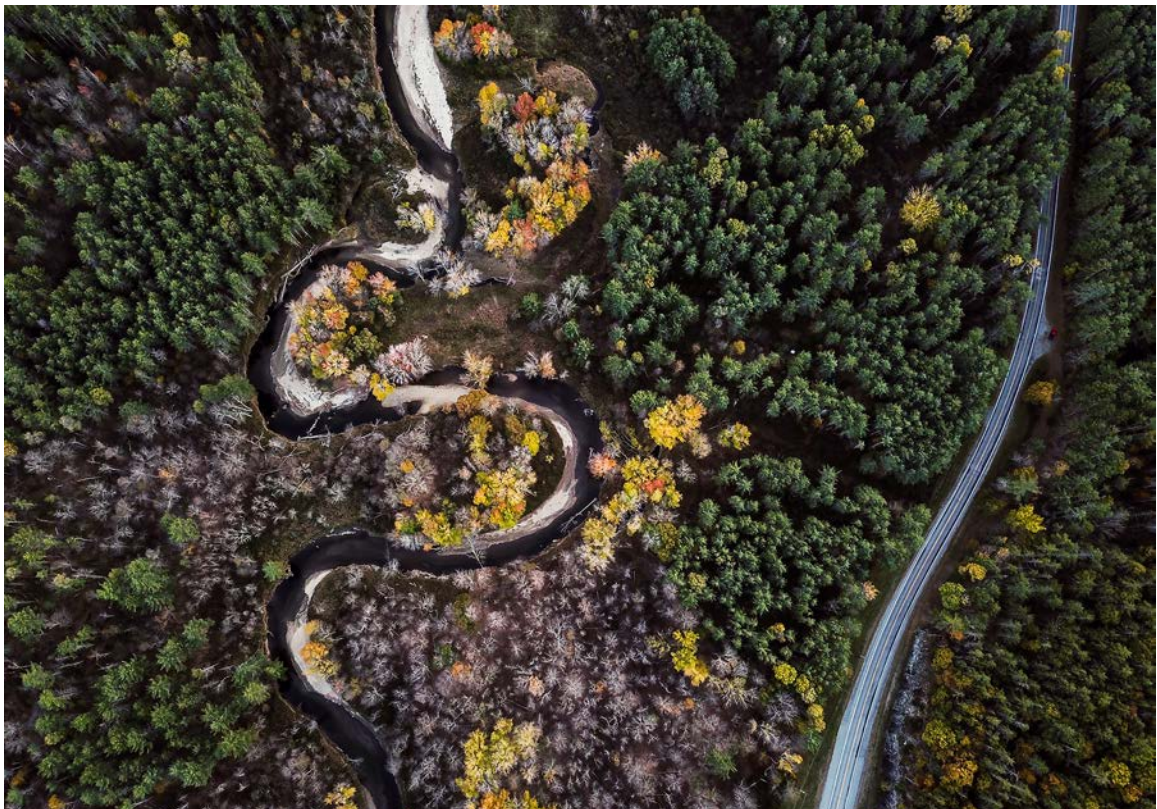
Subtotal Operations Expenses \$304,347

Project Expenses

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Essex Quarry Purchase | \$75,000 |
| Essex Quarry Expenses | \$10,704 |
| Long Pond West Shoreline Project | \$6,319 |

Subtotal Project Expenses \$92,023

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Total Uses of Funds (Expenses) \$396,370



Champlain Area Trails expresses its deepest gratitude

to the landowners who allow CATS trails on their properties and to you—our grantors, business sponsors, supporters, and volunteers. You are truly responsible for enabling our important programs to succeed. You inspire and energize us every day and we are forever grateful for what you've done for this amazing community and landscape. Thank you for creating a bright future for the Champlain Valley with joyful, lasting memories shared by the children, families and friends who care for and protect this magnificent resource for future generations.

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In Honor of

All CATS Staff, board members, and donors who have done the hard work of creating trails
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Earth's beauty
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The Nature Conservancy
All of the towns & counties in the Champlain Valley who generously host hikers on their trails and land

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Thank you to CATS outgoing board members

As CATS welcomes its newest board members, Mike Derrick, Janet Mallon and Steven Shepstone, we thank former board members Evan George, Sharp Swan and Delia Thompson for their dedicated service to Champlain Area Trails and for working to build a healthy Champlain Valley community filled with new opportunities for enjoying the outdoors.

.....

I find CATS to be unique among land use organizations. CATS has nearly 60 miles of trails, ranging from short hikes and many options to connect longer distances. The mostly gentle terrain is available for everybody. No matter what physical shape you're in, we have trails for you. What's more, CATS has guided hikes and educational events to help people learn about and protect our beautiful Adirondacks.

—Rob Powell, CATS Board Member

Champlain Area Trails

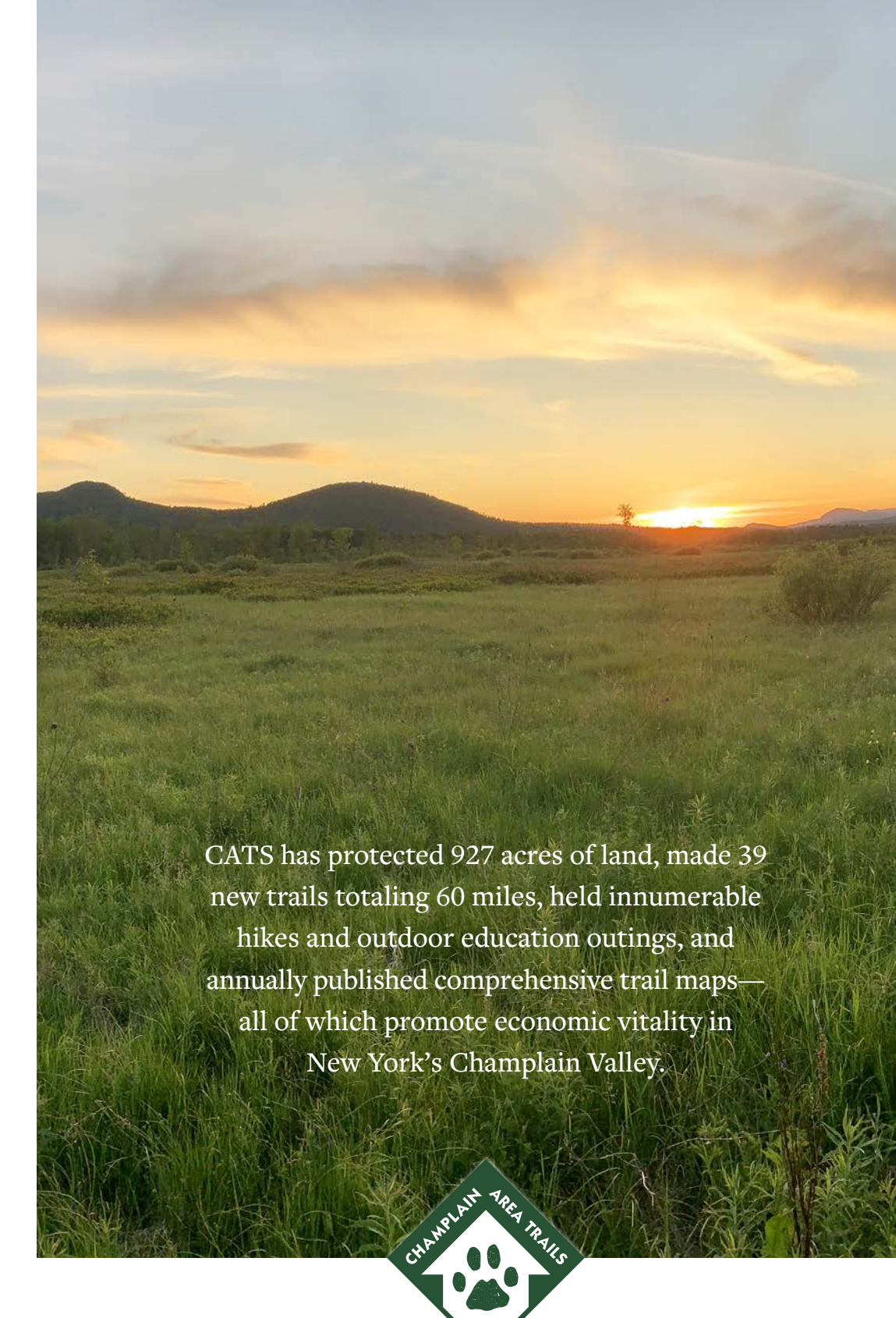
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Champlain Area Trails (CATS) is proud to be an accredited land trust, a distinction showing we follow the highest standards and practices as we make trails and save land, all in the public interest.



- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship



CATS has protected 927 acres of land, made 39 new trails totaling 60 miles, held innumerable hikes and outdoor education outings, and annually published comprehensive trail maps—all of which promote economic vitality in New York's Champlain Valley.



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