

## 2010 Annual Report

### Presidents Message

2010 was a banner year for the Plateau Alliance. The big story was the proposal by NYS DEC to create a Rensselaer Plateau Forest Legacy Area. DEC announced this proposal on March 12 with the public comment period ending at the end of April. Their application was sent to the US Forest Service shortly thereafter. Word was finally received in late Dec that the US Forest Service approved the Forest Legacy Area. We worked very hard during the public comment period to demonstrate grass roots support for this win-win proposal. We are extremely pleased with the decision to designate Rensselaer Plateau a Forest Legacy site, for it recognizes the unique and special character of this region and provides access to an important tool to both conserve natural resources and a way of life in the region. The program provides opportunity for qualifying landowners within the region to permanently conserve forest lands with conservation easements that maintain the traditional uses of the land while conserving open space. The program's reliance upon willing sellers and its respect for landowner rights and home-rule make this a great addition to conservation tools available to landowners and towns.

Forest Legacy may have dominated the news in 2010 but there is a story that speaks even more strongly to the dedication of the all-volunteer board of the Plateau Alliance. We have been trying since June 2008 to find funding to help develop a Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan. This as of the end of 2010 had been unsuccessful. Our volunteers being undaunted in August decided to take the bull by the horns and move forward on an almost entirely volunteer basis. Dr. David Hunt offered to do all of the ecology work as a volunteer. An ecologist with a Ph.D. and his credentials might expect to earn \$150,000 for the same amount of work. Rachel Riemann, (Research Forester/Geographer for the US Forest Service by day), offered to do all of the work to put the ecology, community values and other data into GIS (Geographic Information Systems) as a volunteer. Bob Stegemann, who just joined us this year volunteered to head up our outreach and work with the towns. Bob has an impressive resume and extensive experience working with local officials. Bob worked for many year for International Paper and represented them in the 260,000 acre land conservation deal in the Adirondacks. He has also worked for the Tug Hill Commission and is past president of the Empire State Forest Products Association.

Karen Strong of the Hudson River Estuary Program said that she and the Estuary Program would head up a community engagement and community values mapping effort. The rest of our directors will be jumping in where needed to help run meetings and forums, to communicate with local officials and to help write documents. The bottom line is that this group agreed to take on a huge project without any funding. I am and continue to be entirely astounded and amazed by the dedication of this amazing group of people.

On December 28<sup>th</sup> we were awarded a grant from the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program to fund the development of the Conservation Plan and we move forward with the ability to deliver a more comprehensive, polished and timely project.

Jim Bonesteel, President

## Our Vision Statement (Adopted June 7, 2010)

### Vision of the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

*The Rensselaer Plateau Alliance envisions all human activities on the Plateau guided by consideration for the Plateau as a whole. The Alliance, a coalition of organizations and individuals, recognizes that the Plateau is greater than the sum of its parts. Our members will foster communication about the value of natural resources and other common values held by the communities of the region and, in concert, help to advance those values on a regional scale. Our vision will be realized when each of the wide range of human activities that occurs on the Plateau leaves the Plateau in better harmony with the ecological whole.*

### OUR VISION FOR THE PLATEAU

*(100 years from today)*

The Rensselaer Plateau remains a large unfragmented forest with abundant lakes, wetlands and streams that run with high quality water which helps provide the entire County with drinking water. The land consists of a patchwork of private and public properties that has been voluntarily protected by landowners and municipalities that are fully aware of the benefits of forested land and open space. The local economy thrives with recreation based businesses, tourism and locally grown forest products. People can hike, ski, bike, horseback ride and snowmobile on a trail system that connects the far corners of the Plateau. Wildlife abounds. There are healthy populations of large mammals such as moose, black bear, bobcat, forest interior bird species and an abundance of native fish such as brook trout. Native plant and animal species that existed on the Plateau in 2010 still thrive.

People visit the Plateau not only for its recreation and scenic beauty but to enjoy the hunting and fishing which have seen resurgence in popularity. A large percentage of the Plateau remains working forest providing valuable timber resources. There are core areas that have been left as wildlands and are now old growth forests supporting species such as Northern Goshawks. Visitors marvel at the large trees and undisturbed surroundings.

Well-planned development on the Plateau has resulted in a high quality of life and higher property values. It has minimized the cost of municipal services resulting in lower residential property taxes. Children have natural areas where they can play and explore freely, feeling as comfortable in the woods as anywhere. The residents that live on or near the Plateau share a special community and are proud of their forests, lakes and streams. Residents have excellent sources of information about tools that help them keep their land in forest and understand the ways they can live that minimize their impact on the ecological resources of the Plateau. The communities on the Plateau support land owners and are fully aware of the benefits of forested land and open space.

The surrounding cities and towns are proud to have the Rensselaer Plateau nearby and continue to find more ways to make green connections, wildlife and recreation corridors between the Plateau and other existing protected areas. The Plateau is an intact, functioning, unstressed ecosystem with the dynamic buffering capacity to sustain itself in the face of large scale natural disturbances.

## Mission Statement

The Rensselaer Plateau Alliance promotes and facilitates the protection of the Rensselaer Plateau's undeveloped and unfragmented forests. These possess many significant natural features and provide natural habitats for plants and animals; forest products, recreation and most important, water and air quality.

## 2010 Accomplishments

In January and February we used the time normally allotted for educational talks at the beginning of our meetings to focus on strategic planning. We identified a number of goals and developed a Vision Statement which was adopted on June 7<sup>th</sup>.

March 3 – DEC Sent letters to towns announcing the proposed Rensselaer Plateau Forest Legacy Area. The public comment period ended on April 16<sup>th</sup>. DEC had an informational meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup>. During this time we were very busy contacting our local officials and conducting a grass roots campaign to demonstrate support for this proposal. We were told by DEC that the overwhelming majority of comments for the proposal were positive. When the proposal was first announced, Kathy Jimino the Rensselaer County Executive was uncertain whether to support it but after learning more about it and seeing the remarkable grassroots support she did support it; "In Rensselaer County government, we realize the value of the Plateau for sporting and recreational opportunities, the local forest industry, tourism, and wildlife habitat as well as the role it plays in ensuring clean air and clean water. The Rensselaer Plateau is a tremendous asset that is enjoyed by or provides benefits to the vast majority of people in Rensselaer County." (Kathy Jimino, Rensselaer County Executive, 4/27/2010, from The Green Blog by Brian Nearing, Albany Times Union Staff Writer). Other municipal support included a Resolution of Support from the Town of Poestenkill. More information about the Forest Legacy Area can be found on our web site at <http://www.renssealerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/ForestLegacy.aspx>

March 20 - *The Future of Your Woods and Wildlife* Workshop. This workshop had 60 participants from across the plateau area. These participants owned a total of 6,246 acres on the Plateau. The workshop was put together and sponsored by the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell Cooperative Extension Biodiversity Program Work Team. It was cosponsored by RPA, Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Rensselaer and Greene Counties and by Audubon New York. Lectures included Forest and Wildlife Ecology, Managing Your Forest for Bird Diversity, Invasive Plants and Insects in Your Woods, Resources and Programs to Support Landowners, (480a Tax Law and Stewardship Plans, Conservation Easements and USDA NRCS Farm Bill Programs). Almost half of the participants indicated that they had never attended a natural resource management workshop before.





April 12 & 13 – We held 2 Community Forums on the Future of the Rensselaer Plateau. These were hosted by the New York Forest Owners Association (Capital District Chapter), Trout Unlimited (Home Waters Chapter), Black River Raiders and the RPA. They were facilitated by Nancy Bell of the Conservation Fund. We served free pizza and beverages. On the 12<sup>th</sup> the meeting was held at the Stephentown Fire Hall and we had 57 participants. On the 13<sup>th</sup> it was at the Grafton Fire Hall and we had 75 participants. The results of these meetings can be found at

[http://rensselaerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/Public%20Files/Community\\_Forum\\_Results\\_April2010\\_Rev1\\_sig.pdf](http://rensselaerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/Public%20Files/Community_Forum_Results_April2010_Rev1_sig.pdf)

April 24 – Woods walk at Dyken Pond, 12 participants. Participants had a choice of Vernal Ponds with Lisa Hoyt, Director of the Dyken Pond Center, Evaluate Your Woodlot with Carl Wiedemann, Forester, and Children's Woods Walk, exploring ponds with Rachel Riemann of the US Forest Service.

May 8 – Woods walk at Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area. Participants had the choice of Wetlands Ecology with David Hunt, PhD Ecologist, Forest Observation - Historic Perspective with Walter Kersch, Master Forest Owner, Woods' Wildflowers, and Plants with Bill Hoffman, DEC Wildlife Tech, or Children's Woods Walk Exploration.

June 6 -- Woods walk at Pineridge. Participants had the choice of Wood Lot Improvement Visit with Mike Greason, Forester (Travel to Blue Factory Road), A Look Inside The Capital District Wildlife Management Area - Unique natural features, historic sites, etc with Lloyd Barnhart, MS, Retired College Professor and Outdoor Educator), Streams Ecology with David Hunt, PhD Ecologist (Poestenkill Creek) or Children's Woods Walk with Rachel Riemann, US Forest Service

Sept 9 – Cycle the Rensselaer Plateau bike ride as part of the Hudson River Valley Ramble. Shari Gibbs organized this event but was unable to lead it due to injury. The ride was led by her husband Dick Gibbs. This was described as a challenging 50-mile loop during which you'll pass natural and historic sites such as Taborton's Bowman Ponds, the Old Dutch Church, Dyken Pond Dam, Grafton Peace Pagoda, Dickinson Hill Fire Tower, Grafton Lakes State Park, and the Barbersville Falls.



Sept 25, 26 Was the first annual Hike Across the Rensselaer Plateau also known as the Plateau Traverse Hike. Participants could join us for one or both days. We met Saturday morning at the Dyken Pond Center and were shuttled to the Pittstown State Forest where 15 hikers ascended the steep escarpment of the plateau and hiked south to the Dyken Pond Center led in turn by Nick Conrad (of the Rensselaer Land Trust and the Friends of Dyken Pond), Rachel Riemann, and Lisa Hoyt. The route took us through the Pittstown State Forest, Grafton Lakes State Park and the Dyken Pond Center as well as a number of privately held lands for which we had obtained permission. Saturday's hike as 11 miles. After arriving at the Dyken Pond Center we enjoyed a barbeque and pot luck dinner and a bonfire. Some hikers who hiked both days camped in tents at the Center. On Sunday 13 hikers left the Dyken Pond Center and hiked to the bottom of the steep southern escarpment of the Plateau in Stephentown led by Jim Bonesteel. We passed through lands of the Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area, the Capital District Wildlife Management Area and a number of private landowners from whom we had obtained permission. We started hiking at 8:30 am and finished on Garfield Road in Stephentown at 6:30 pm a total of 22 miles.

The seven hikers walked the entire route from the northern escarpment to the southern, (33 miles in 2 days) were:

Jim Bonesteel  
Fred DeMay  
Dan Frament  
David Hunt  
Christine Loveless  
Jill Rembetski  
Rachel Riemann



Nov 20 – Conference on the Environment Thayer Hotel, West Point. RPA President, Jim Bonesteel was one of 4 presenters for the session, *Creating the Region*. Jim spoke about how the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance has successfully created a regional identity for the Rensselaer Plateau in just 4 short years. We hope to recreate this presentation and have it available as an online video in the near future.

Dec 27 – DEC announces US Forest Service approval of the Rensselaer Plateau Forest Legacy Area.

Throughout the year David Hunt PhD continued his ongoing work to advance ecological/biodiversity information for the plateau including two presentations given to RPA on 1) forming a biodiversity conservation portfolio and 2) important ecosystems of the plateau. The working ecosystem document was extensively updated as part of this effort. Other ecological features work specifically done for the plan included convening a first meeting of a scientific working group consisting of (David Hunt, Nick Conrad and Rachel Riemann), drafting guidelines for animal information prioritization and collection, and mapping communities throughout the entire route of the Plateau Traverse Hike.

## 2010 Thank You

Thank you to everyone who donated funds, time or products. Your contributions have helped us work to keep the forests of the Rensselaer Plateau in forest.

### Volunteers and non-cash Donors

Nate Simms - for his generous donation of many more beautiful photographs. We will use these on our web site, in presentations, publications and perhaps in some products that we will make available to our supporters. <http://www.natesimms.com/>

Lynne Allard for work toward developing our new logo.

Mike Greason and Lloyd Barnhart for leading educational woods walks.

Bill Kelly for presenting Geology of the Rensselaer Plateau

Cornell University for organizing and running the Forestland Owners Workshop.

Hudson River Estuary Program for helping with a wide variety of things.

Nancy Bell of the Vermont Conservation Fund for facilitating our Community Values Forums

Fred Cashmere (Roasters Whim) for donation coffee for the Plateau Traverse Hike

Nick Conrad for helping to lead our Plateau Traverse Hike.

Rensselaer County for the use of their vans for our Plateau Traverse Hike.

Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area for hosting all of our business meetings.

Thank you to all the private landowners who gave us permission to hike across their land for the Plateau Traverse Hike:

Saturday	Sunday
Mike & Maryann Salway	Stan and June Hmielenski
Rob & Teresa Swider	Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area
Forest Lake Association	Cowee Forest Products
	Kent Goodermote
	Donald Rathbun
	Monica McGuinty
	Fred Haley
	Tim Hay & Diana Feeser

Last but not least, thank you to our all-volunteer board who continue to accomplish an extraordinary amount on a very small budget.



The newly restored historic Dickinson Hill Fire Tower

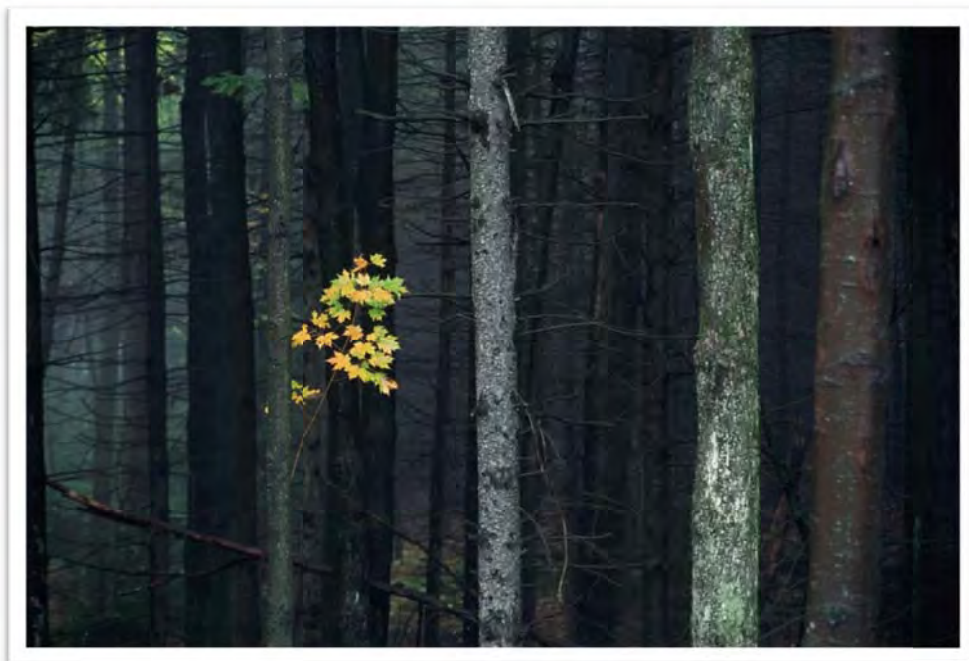
## Donors

Thank you to the individuals and businesses that supported us financially.

Norcross Wildlife Foundation  
Black River Raiders  
Mike Greason  
Jim Bonesteel & Jill Rembetski  
Svetlana Pavlovic  
Jeanine Meyer  
James Gumaer  
Stephen Fry  
Samuel Whaley  
Selmer Bringsjord  
James Forbes  
Trout Unlimited  
Christine Young  
Richard & Shari Gibbs  
Rachel Riemann  
Robert Juenger  
Andy Beers  
Don Anthony  
Fred DeMay  
Stephen Pentak

Bob Stegemann  
Paul Hicok  
The Nature Conservancy  
John Meierhoffer  
Michael Palumbo  
Friends of Dyken Pond  
Babcock Lake Estates  
Berlin Mountain Fish and Game Club  
Doree Cox  
The McCarthy Charities  
John & Stephanie Deyo  
Robert Juenger  
Paul Gregory  
Maureen Hoffman  
Norman Hecker  
Constance Cooper  
John & Elizabeth Siedhoff  
Jack Middleton

We also received miscellaneous cash contributions at various events for which we do not have records of donor names. We thank those who gave cash and are otherwise unrecognized.



Nate Simms

## How You Can Help

### Help us Develop the Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan

We will be holding a number of public meetings and workshops throughout 2011 and 2012 to develop a community based, grassroots, from the ground up, regional conservation plan. Please help us by attending these meetings. We need the input and involvement of as many people as possible. Please also bring your friends and neighbors even if, (or especially if), they have divergent views from you. We want to hear from everyone who lives, works or play on the Plateau or benefits from the things it provides such as clean drinking water or local forest products.

### Stay Informed/Keep Us Informed

Stay informed. Sign up for our e-mail list.

Let us know if:

- If you see or hear something about us in the press? This information helps us keep track of how well we are doing getting our word out.
- If you know of anything that is happening on the Plateau that you think we should know about.

### Volunteer

Join us as a participating member or just volunteer. Do you have any special skills? We are in need of people with experience in the areas of:

- writing/editing,
- grant writing
- fundraising (of course),
- photography
- videography

### Support Us

Support us financially.

Spread the word.

### Wish List

Photographs of people enjoying recreational activities on the Plateau.

Photographs of people working in the forests of the Plateau.



# Financial Reports

## Profit and Loss

				Jan - Dec 10
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>				
	<b>Income</b>			
	<b>Direct Public Support</b>			
		<b>Corporate Contributions</b>		3,000.00
		<b>Individual &amp; Bus Contributions</b>		1,810.00
		<b>Direct Public Support - Other</b>		2,080.00
		<b>Total Direct Public Support</b>		6,890.00
	<b>Other Types of Income</b>			
		<b>Miscellaneous Revenue</b>		20.00
		<b>Other Types of Income - Other</b>		500.00
		<b>Total Other Types of Income</b>		520.00
	<b>Total Income</b>			7,410.00
	<b>Expense</b>			
	<b>Bank Charge</b>			
		<b>Credit Card Processing Fee</b>		46.05
		<b>Total Bank Charge</b>		46.05
	<b>Contract Services</b>			
		<b>Legal Fees</b>		35.00
		<b>Total Contract Services</b>		35.00
	<b>Equipment</b>			895.29
	<b>Facilities and Equipment</b>			
		<b>Rent, Parking, Utilities</b>		350.00
		<b>Total Facilities and Equipment</b>		350.00
	<b>Operations</b>			
		<b>Postage, Mailing Service</b>		6.45
		<b>Printing and Copying</b>		74.00
		<b>Supplies</b>		230.21
		<b>Total Operations</b>		310.66
	<b>Other Types of Expenses</b>			
		<b>Insurance - Liability, D and O</b>		25.00
		<b>Other Costs</b>		525.60
		<b>Total Other Types of Expenses</b>		550.60
	<b>Programs</b>			
		<b>Educational Materials</b>		170.00
		<b>Programs - Other</b>		44.00
		<b>Total Programs</b>		214.00
		<b>software</b>		505.00
	<b>Total Expense</b>			2,906.60
	<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>			4,503.40
<b>Net Income</b>				<b>4,503.40</b>

## Balance Sheet

					Dec 31, 10	Dec 31, 09	\$ Change	% Change	
ASSETS									
	Current Assets								
	Checking/Savings								
	Checking (First Niagara)								
		Fund - Conservation Plan			380.00	0.00	380.00	100.0%	
		Checking (First Niagara) - Other			3,161.00	392.45	2,768.55	705.45%	
	Total Checking (First Niagara)				3,541.00	392.45	3,148.55	802.28%	
	Total Checking/Savings				3,541.00	392.45	3,148.55	802.28%	
	Total Current Assets				3,541.00	392.45	3,148.55	802.28%	
Fixed Assets									
	Equipment and Software				1,354.85	0.00	1,354.85	100.0%	
	Total Fixed Assets				1,354.85	0.00	1,354.85	100.0%	
TOTAL ASSETS					4,895.85	392.45	4,503.40	1,147.51%	
LIABILITIES & EQUITY									
	Equity								
	Unrestricted Net Assets				392.45	250.00	142.45	56.98%	
	Net Income				4,503.40	142.45	4,360.95	3,061.39%	
	Total Equity				4,895.85	392.45	4,503.40	1,147.51%	
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY					4,895.85	392.45	4,503.40	1,147.51%	

## Directors

In 2010, we were joined by 2 new Participating Members (directors), Bob Stegemann and Fred DeMay.

### List of Directors

Director	Address	Term End Date (officers)
Jim Bonesteel	167 Brainard Road Averill Park, NY 12018	President Dec 2012
Bob Stegemann	37 Holloway Lane Averill Park, NY 12018	Vice President Dec 2012
Jim de Waal Malefyt	Bayberry Circle Poestenkill, NY 12140	Secretary Dec 2012
Walter Kersch	1509 Plank Road Petersburg, NY 12138	Treasurer Dec 2012
Doree Cox	104 Dutch Church Rd Petersburgh, NY 12138	
Fred DeMay	327 Taborton Rd Sand Lake, NY 12153	
Rachel Riemann Akera	27 Homestead Way Cropseyville, NY 12052	
Fran Egbert	50 Maple Trail Sand Lake, NY 12153	Secretary 2008 - 2010
Richard E. Gibbs	287 Hidley Rd. Wynantskill, NY 12198	
Sharon Gibbs	287 Hidley Rd. Wynantskill, NY 12198	Vice President 2008 - 2010
Lawrence Howard	PO Box 1000 Averill Park, NY 12018	
Lisa Hoyt	62 Dyken Pond Road Cropseyville,, NY 12052	
David Hunt	348 Jay Hakes Road Cropseyville, NY 12052	
Yvonne Keefe	PO BOX 368 Averill Park NY 12018	
Steve Pentak	1242 Garfield Road Stephentown, NY 12168	
Mark Wehnau	213 Old Rt 66 Averill Park 12018	

We added 2 new directors in 2010:

**Robert Stegemann** – Bob’s career has focused on the policy and legislative arenas for conservation and management of natural resources. He had a long career with International Paper as Regional Manager of Government Affairs and Manager of Sustainability. He has been involved in many land conservation deals in the Adirondacks, and guided the creation of International Paper Dillon Park, a wilderness park of people with disabilities. Bob previously worked as Executive Director of the Empire State Forest Products Association and for the Tug Hill Commission in Watertown, NY. He was a long time trustee of the Adirondack Nature Conservancy and Land Trust. Bob holds a MS in Resources Management and a BA in Economics. Bob and his wife, Eileen, live in Poestenkill and have two children.

**Fred DeMay** – Fred and his wife Mona have lived on the Rensselaer Plateau in the Taborton area for almost 30 years. Professionally, Fred is an independent educational consultant after recently retiring from the NYS Education Department where he was the State Coordinator for Special Education Policy, Program Development and Interagency Collaboration. Fred’s interest and involvement with the RPA grew from his love of outdoor activities such as hiking and climbing, camping, trail-running, snowshoeing, Telemark and XC skiing, kayaking, scuba, biking, boating, golf and the care and stewardship of their 74 acre homestead. Their 150 year-old house has been renovated for efficiency and comfort, gardens established for produce and beauty, natural rock transformed into walls and features for landscaping, and the forest managed for wildlife habitat, wood products and recreation. Fred is a member of The Friends of Dyken Pond, ADK, ADK 46ers, NY Forest Owners Association, and the Mohawk-Hudson Cycling Club. He is also active as the Chair of the Sand Lake Fire District #3 (Taborton) Board of Fire Commissioners and the Mayfield Yacht Club Board of Directors. When not busy on the trails, Fred builds and restores boats and is a U.S. Coast Guard licensed Captain.

For bios of all of our directors visit the About Us page of our web site.



## Membership

At the beginning of 2010 our Alliance Members consisted of:

- Rensselaer Land Trust
- Friends of the Dyken Pond Center
- Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park
- Grafton Trail Riders
- Mohawk-Hudson Cycling Club
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Conservation Fund
- Babcock Lake Estates
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Village of East Nassau
- Berlin Mountain Fish & Game Club
- New York Forest Owners Association (CDC)
- Audubon New York
- Black River Raiders
- Spring Lake Association

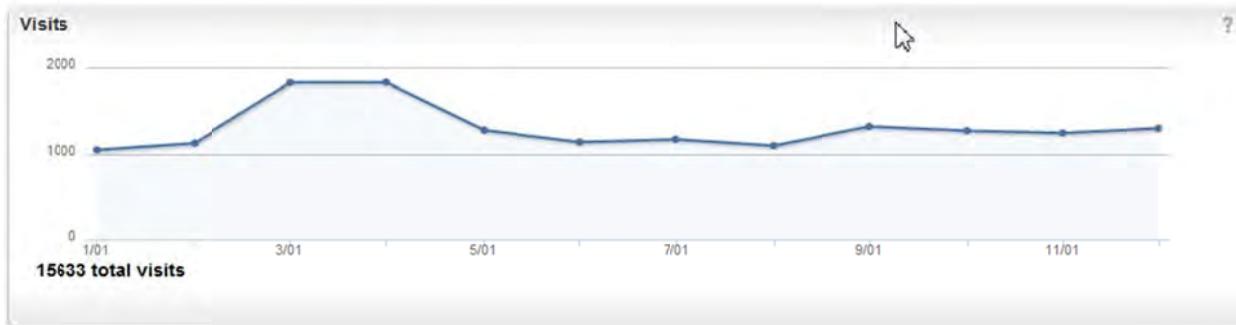
We welcomed 2 new Alliance Members (organizations) in 2010:

- Trout Unlimited (Home-Waters Chapter)
- Northeastern Cave Conservancy

## Web Presence

### Web Site

#### 2010 Visits Report



#### 2009 Visits Report

