

Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

Conservation Through Community

Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Inc. 2011 Annual Report

Presidents Message

The year ended on a sad (or I should say bittersweet) note for me. In December our very active vice president Bob Stegemann turned in his resignation to take an appointment as the DEC Regional Director for Region 5 in the Adirondacks. While I was happy for Bob I felt a great loss for the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance as he had brought so much to our small volunteer organization. Here is part of what Bob wrote in his resignation letter:

If I may, I'd like to provide you some of my observations of the RPA in the few years I've been involved. This group is an amazing group of dedicated and diverse interests. I'm astonished at the resources it has attracted and the work that is getting done by volunteers. This can-do attitude and common interest to conserve the plateau is aided by an openness to ideas and views about how to accomplish a conservation goal that is appreciative of the region's environmental and economic condition. It is this openness and respect for different approaches and views that is helping the RPA's efforts gain traction with communities and landowners, and it will be this same grassroots and bottom up involvement that will set the stage for support and use of a conservation plan by communities and landowners. There is a respect for others that speaks volumes to observers and stakeholders in the process. This helps draw people and communities into the discussion, opens up possibilities and takes the fear out of a community based effort to conserve the plateau.

As I think about the loss of Bob moving on to bigger things it strikes me that I might have titled this message, "what we learned from Bob Stegemann". Bob built bridges with the towns that remain today and left us with slightly adjusted core values and an even greater respect for the importance of the forest products industry to our forests. I was asked at one of our public workshops, "how do you reconcile the fact that you want to conserve the forests and are yet supporting the forest products industry and working forests?" My reply was that the only reason that some of the forests are still here on the Plateau was that the forest products industry had kept them as forest and that the only way that some landowners would be able to afford to keep their land and pay property taxes is if they are able to earn some income from the land. I was gratified that her response to me was, "that was a really good answer". Bob came from a career in the forest products industry. He spent many years working for International Paper and brought a perspective to us at the RPA that we have held on to. I should note that while at International Paper Bob was their key representative in brokering a deal with New York State to conserve 260,000 acres of forestland in the Adirondacks. His forest industry perspective was also a conservation perspective. He showed us that those are not two separate perspectives but a single perspective that takes into account the health of the forests, the wildlife and the local economy as they are all intertwined together. Bob will be sorely missed but has left us a stronger organization.

Jim Bonesteel,
President

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 2011 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.

2011 Accomplishments

In 2011 we began work on the Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan with Behan Planning after receiving a grant of \$60,000 from the Hudson River Estuary Program in December of 2010. Guest speaker John Bartow, Executive Director of the Tug Hill Commission spoke to directors about working with town officials and citizen groups to develop a working partnership as development of the conservation plan begins. We also participated with an outreach table at the Grafton State Park Winterfest.

In January and February we met with most of the supervisors of the 10 towns and one village to provide an overview of RPA and the intent of the conservation plan. Supervisors were assured that the intent of the plan development process was to involve stakeholders, solicit their input and to develop a plan that would serve their needs.

March 19 - *The Future of Your Woods and Wildlife Workshop*. This workshop had 75 participants from across the plateau area. It was planned and sponsored by the Hudson River Estuary Program and the 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).

The Rensselaer Landowner workshop was a success, both in terms of turnout and results. Karen Strong of the Hudson River Estuary Program said, "I thought we had a terrific program, even though we were packed like sardines." Landowners were enthusiastic about what they heard, and by the end were already asking about next year!

A summary of evaluations submitted by the attendees indicated: Landowners, including large landowners (over 125 acres) attending owned nearly 6,000 acres of land in Rensselaer County. More than half of the attendees (56%) had never taken a natural resources workshop before. This demonstrates that we still have a large demand for introductory workshops on the Plateau.

Participants reported that they learned the most from Shorna Allred's presentation on Estate Planning, followed closely by Josh's presentation on stewardship planning, and Jason Cass's presentation on conservation programs.

Most respondents intended to seek out more information (90%) and take some management action on their property in the next year (75%). Additional feedback gave us some perspective on how to improve workshop quality and what we can cover in future workshops.

Additional impact of the workshop was indicated by Dan Gaidasz of DEC, who reported that eight participant landowners have since contacted him about stewardship plans.

Town Supervisor Meeting on April 5th brought supervisors from most of the plateau towns together to begin a discussion of the Regional Conservation Plan and to elicit their concerns and recommendations regarding proposed content of the plan. This was the first time many of the Supervisors for the RP municipalities had been together.

Open House for Landowners occurred on April 26 at the Old Daley Inn on Crooked Lake. Landowners on the plateau were invited to meet with a variety of organizations (Rensselaer Land Trust, New York Forest Owners Association, Master Forest Owner Program, USDA NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service, NYS DEC Region 4, Lawrence

Howard, Esq and the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance). to discuss and learn about options for conserving their land. Participants reported that it was a very successful event. The event was set up around the edge of the large banquet hall along the windows looking out over the lake. It was an absolutely beautiful venue. Our final tally was 66 people not counting presenters.



Open house for landowners at the beautiful and historic Crooked Lake House – April 6, 2011

April 16—RPA participated in the **Taborton Earth Day at Zion's Taborton Church**. RPA set up an information booth while David Hunt and Walter Kersch led woods walks.

May 14 – Jim Bonesteel was interviewed by Brian Nearing on the Capital Green Scene radio show on WVCR, 88.3. Jim provided an overview of the RPA and the activities underway to develop a Regional Conservation Plan. A recording of this interview is available on the events page of our web site.

<http://rensselaerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/InTheMedia.aspx>

May 17 and May 25 – Petersburg and Poestenskill -Public Community Values Workshops. The intent of these workshops, facilitated by Karen Strong of the Hudson River Estuary Program, was to collect and analyze public perceptions about the Rensselaer Plateau as a starting point for the development of the regional conservation plan. The workshops focused groups of participants around Rensselaer Plateau maps to elicit input about areas and features of the plateau which they value most. The workshops went very well and provided a wealth of data that was summarized for use in the regional conservation plan in the form of a narrative report and GIS maps (which are available on the RPA website).

June 8. Jim Bonesteel spoke at Hudson River Estuary Advisory Committee meeting at Norrie Point about the Conservation Plan Project.



Participants in the 2nd Annual Rensselaer Plateau Traverse Hike

Sept 10, 11 –The 2nd Annual Plateau Traverse Hike. This event was part of the Hudson River Valley Ramble and was cosponsored by the Dyken Pond Center, Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area, The Rensselaer Land Trust, The Friends of Dyken Pond and the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance. 23 people participated with 18 on Saturday and 18 on Sunday. 13 participants hiked the entire route from Pittstown to Garfield Road in Stephentown. We hiked a total of 30.9 miles, 13.4 on Saturday and 17.5 on Sunday. We had a total accent of 4800 feet and we received permission from 21 private land owners. The thirteen hikers walked the entire route from the northern escarpment to the southern, (31 miles in 2 days) were:

Dale Blanchet
Jim Bonesteel
Sam Brown
Nick Conrad
Fred DeMay
Fran Egbert
Dan Frament

John Habermehl
David Hunt
Rachel Riemann
Susan Roberts
Bob Stegemann
Brian Swain.

The October 2011 issue of the Conservationist featured an article about the 2010 traverse which was written by Fred DeMay and brought some great state wide attention to the recreational opportunities on the plateau and the work of

the Plateau Alliance. The full article can be read at
http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/1011hikerensselaerplat.pdf

Sept 13, Jim Bonesteel spoke at Stephentown Historical Society giving a general presentation about the Rensselaer Plateau, and the RPA with a smattering of Plateau history.

Sept 17 This year's "Cycle the RP" was a terrific success; cyclists toured 50 miles on the plateau to explore Dyken Pond, the Peace Pagoda, the Fire Tower and Barberville Falls, some riders for the first time, and were impressed with the beauty of the Rensselaer Plateau and the challenging terrain. One cyclist even made a donation for the continued preservation of the Dickenson Fire Tower!

In September, submitted and were awarded a grant to Greenways Community Grant Program with cosponsors Town of Nassau and Town of Sand Lake to complete an Economic Study for the Rensselaer Plateau Conservation Plan.

November, acted as the fiscal sponsor for grants for Capital Region Nordic Association and Saratoga Mountain Bike Association to help build their capacity and become 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations.

December 6th First Public Workshop for the Regional Plateau Conservation Plan held at the Poestenkill Fire Station. This was the first public workshop for the Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan project. Approximately 45 people attended the meeting which was facilitated by Behan Planning and Design. Jim Bonesteel, President of the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA) started the meeting by introducing the members of the RPA present at the meeting. Following introductions, Mike Welti from Behan Planning and Design gave a PowerPoint Presentation that introduced the project, gave an overview of the Plateau and the RPA, and explained what makes up a conservation plan and how the plan will be developed. The full report can be found at,
http://rensselaerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/Public%20Files/PublicWorkshop_No1_Meeting_Summary.pdf

December 12, Dave Hunt, ecologist working on data convened a group of regional experts to review data on rare plants on the plateau which will be incorporated into the conservation plan. Throughout the year David Hunt continued his ongoing work of collecting and ecological data.

2011 Thank You Volunteers

Thank you to everyone who donated their time or products:

Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell Cooperative Extension Biodiversity Program Work Team for sponsoring “The Future of Woods and Wildlife Workshop” and also cosponsors Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Rensselaer and Greene Counties and by Audubon New York.

Karen Strong at Hudson River Estuary Program for a wide variety of things including running the Community Value Mapping workshops.

Fred Cashmere (Roasters Whim) for donation of coffee

Fred and Mona DeMay for providing an RPA information booth at the Grafton Winter Fest.

John Bartow Executive Director Tug Hill Commission- educational talk given on community involvement with conservation plan

Sara Schuman Averill Park School District- educational talk given on service learning/character education

Nick Conrad for helping to lead our Plateau Traverse Hike and working with David Hunt on scientific peer review of the ecological study.

Walter Kersch for leading an educational woods walk

Shari Gibbs for leading “Cycle the Plateau”

Old Daley Inn on Crooked Lake for use of their facilities. (Paul Schroeder for facilitating)

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	Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area
Rob & Teresa Swider	Mike Denué
Forest Lake Association	Steve Valenti (of Valenti Lumber)
Stan and June Hmielenski	Rynard Gundrum (of Gundrum Logging & Lumber)
	Ralph Timber
	The Berlin Mountain Fish and Game Club
	Suzanne and John Momrow
	Arthur Herman *
	The Forestland Group (former Cowee lands)
	Kent Goodermote *
	Donald Rathbun *
	Tim Hay & Diana Feeser *
	Allan & Irene Brill
	Dan Cedar (of Snows Farm)
	Jim Forbes
	Peter Sentz
	Jim Martin *
	Ken James

* Several landowners gave permission before we finalized our route. In several of these cases the final route did not travel through their land. We extend our thanks just the same.

A special thank you to our all-volunteer board who continue to accomplish an extraordinary amount of work with minimal financial resources

Donors

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

Walter Kersch
Edward and Christina Blanchard
Michael Greason
Edward Kompass
Danielle Cordier
Robert Stegemann
Lynn and Michael Bammann
Jim Bonesteel
Michael Schwarz and Tanja Eise
Jim and Dianne Forbes
Agricultural Stewardship Association
Alice LeBlanc
Russ Myer
Steven Pentak
Spring Lake Holding Corp.
Neil and Susan Roberts
Bob Mayo
Black River Raiders Snowmobile Club
Alice and Harold Howard
Judy Doesschate
Brian Baker
Nadine Baumgarten

Diane DeBlois and Robert Harris
John Bailly Jr
Alan Opresko
Dr Irving Bennett
Justin Schultz and Justine Wagner
Thomas and Nancy Forster
Kathryn Hardy
Flora and Thomas Fasoldt
Linda Bennett
Renee and Robert Phaneuf
I.M. Haettenschwiller
Bill and Regina Andrews
Marcia and Richard Anderson
Neil and Susan Roberts
Richard Connell
Drs Robert and Sandra Hardt
Don Anthony
Richard and Shari Gibbs
Christine Blanchard
Stephen Fry
Beth Cioffi
Pineridge Cross Country Ski Center

Thank you to all who donated at events and anonymously in support of our mission.

How You Can Help

Help us Develop the Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan

We will continue to hold public meetings in 2012 as we bring to the community new data on development of the plan. We are looking to you for feedback on what is most important to your community, what will help you as landowners and town officials in your concerns about the plateau. We want to hear from everyone who works, lives or plays on or near the plateau.

Stay Informed/Keep Us Informed

Sign up for our e-mail list and keep updated on development of the Conservation Plan, outings and other programs

Volunteer

Join us as a participating member or volunteer. Meetings are the first Monday of the month at Pineridge Cross Country Ski Center and all are welcome.

We need people with experience in:

- Writing/editing
- Grant writing
- Fundraising
- Photograph
- Videography
- Leading Outings
- Coordinating membership data

Support Us

- Support us financially
- Spread the word about RPA

Wish List

- Computer Speakers

Financial Reports

Profit and Loss

7:49 AM
12/03/12
Cash Basis

Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Inc. Profit & Loss January through December 2011

	Jan - Dec 11
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Direct Public Support	3,910.00
donations	1,440.00
H R E Grant	15,000.00
Other Types of Income	
Miscellaneous Revenue	66.29
Total Other Types of Income	66.29
Program Income	60.00
Total Income	20,476.29
Expense	
Bank Charge	
Credit Card Processing Fee	27.00
Total Bank Charge	27.00
Contract Services	
Legal Fees	35.00
Outside Contract Services	
H R E Grant	12,739.00
Total Outside Contract Services	12,739.00
Total Contract Services	12,774.00
Equipment	162.80
Facilities and Equipment	
Rent, Parking, Utilities	80.40
Total Facilities and Equipment	80.40
Operations	
Postage, Mailing Service	649.92
Printing and Copying	
H R E Grant	26.00
Printing and Copying - Other	225.00
Total Printing and Copying	251.00
Operations - Other	98.70
Total Operations	999.62
Other Types of Expenses	
Other Costs	52.50
Total Other Types of Expenses	52.50
Programs	
H R E Grant	92.45
Programs - Other	1,106.70
Total Programs	1,199.15
software	
H R E Grant	225.00
software - Other	501.25
Total software	726.25
Travel and Meetings	230.23
Total Expense	16,251.95
Net Ordinary Income	4,224.34
Net Income	4,224.34

Balance Sheet

12:39 PM
12/03/12
Cash Basis

Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Inc.
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2011

	<u>Dec 31, 11</u>
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Checking (First Niagara)	
Fund - Conservation Plan	380.00
Checking (First Niagara) - Other	7,385.34
Total Checking (First Niagara)	<u>7,765.34</u>
Total Checking/Savings	<u>7,765.34</u>
Total Current Assets	7,765.34
Fixed Assets	
Equipment and Software	69.00
Total Fixed Assets	<u>69.00</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>7,834.34</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Equity	
Unrestricted Net Assets	3,610.00
Net Income	4,224.34
Total Equity	<u>7,834.34</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>7,834.34</u>

Directors

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	
Fran Egbert	50 Maple Trail Sand Lake, NY 12153	
Rachel Riemann Akera	27 Homestead Way Cropseyville, NY 12052	
Richard E. Gibbs	287 Hidley Rd. Wynantskill, NY 12198	
Sharon Gibbs	287 Hidley Rd. Wynantskill, NY 12198	
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	

Membership

At the beginning of 2011 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
- Trout Unlimited (Home-Waters Chapter)

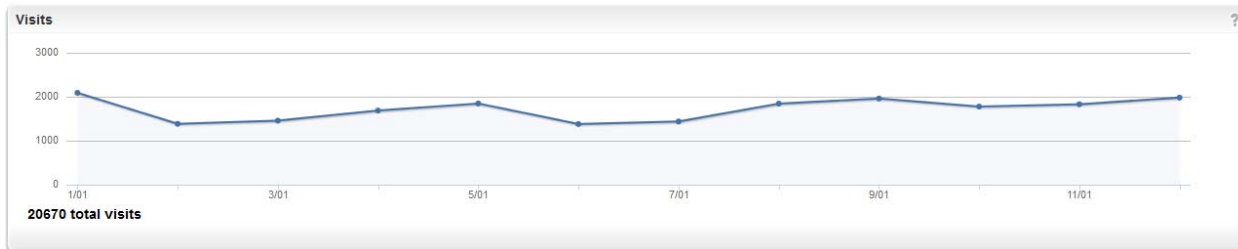
We welcomed 7 new Alliance Members (organization) in 2011:

- Taconic Hiking Club
- New York Flora Association
- Northeastern Cave Conservancy
- Friends of Cherry Plain State Park
- Capital Region Nordic Alliance
- Saratoga Mountain Bike Association

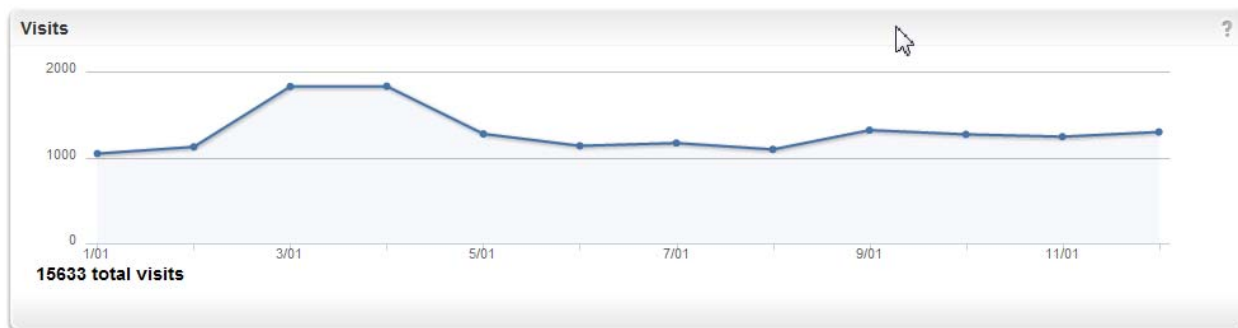
Web Presence

Web Site

2011 Visits Report



2010 Visits Report



2009 Visits Report

