

**To: Summit Steward Program Partners, Supporters, and Friends**  
**From: Julia Goren & Kayla White**  
**Date: 10/20/2016**

## 2016 Summit Steward End of Season Report

---



On a beautiful Columbus Day, I say atop Wright Peak, talking with hikers, admiring the rime ice on the trees and the brilliant color of the maples down in the valley. A beautiful, but busy, day, which sums up well the **27<sup>th</sup> year of the Summit Steward program**. The hottest and driest summer on record brought record numbers of hikers and the opportunity to help those hikers connect with the beauty of the High Peaks. Using any metric, 2016 was a year of

milestones. We spoke with **36,355 hikers** in 2016, nearly **5,000** more than in 2015 (about a 16% increase), despite having one fewer crew member. A new record was set for contacts made in a single day (**665 on Cascade**) as well as a new record for contacts made in a single weekend (**2,755**). To contextualize these numbers, since 2011 the number of contacts we make in a year has just about doubled. And yet, despite these increases in use, the alpine vegetation continues to thrive. These staggering usage numbers highlight the importance and necessity of the Summit Steward program.

After eight years as Summit Steward Coordinator, including two doublings as Coordinator and ADK's Education Director, I'm thrilled to announce that Kayla White will be stepping into the Coordinator role. Between the increasing visitation, expanding volunteer program, and growing needs, the program needs to have a Coordinator solely focused on the Summit Steward Program. With three years of stewarding experience, including two as Chief Steward, Kayla brings a wealth of experience, enthusiasm, and fresh ideas to the position. Kayla's leadership over the past two years has enabled the program to continue to thrive. I'll continue to work with Kayla and the stewards on training, supervision, research, and program fundraising.

It is thanks to your generosity that we were able to bring this position back, and particular thanks to the Adirondack 46ers (<http://adk46er.org/>), whose generosity both for the 2016 and 2017 season made fielding a full crew and this position possible.

This year we had a stellar crew of five paid summit stewards and twenty volunteers. Their unending patience and unwavering devotion to the program made these contact numbers possible. A substantial donation was given by the 46ers to be able to bridge the gap in funding for this year. We would not have

been able to have a full crew without their generous support. Another thank you goes to the ADKhighpeaks Foundation (<http://www.adkhighpeaksfoundation.org>) whose support provides regular coverage of Cascade Mountain for a seventh year in a row. The Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund ([www.watermanfund.org](http://www.watermanfund.org)) also granted funds to help cover one steward salary through the regular season.

While hiker ethics have changed dramatically in the past 27 years and some visitors to the summit have met stewards before or are familiar with the message, we still have many new hikers to the area. There are always new people to educate and to enlist in the cause of alpine stewardship!

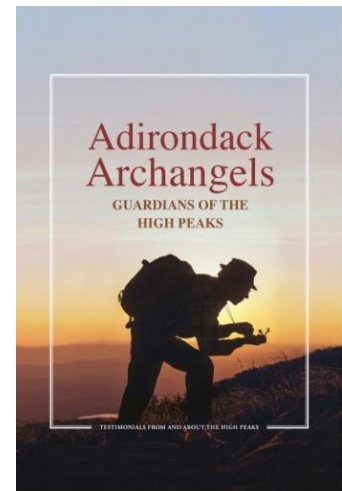
### **State of the Summit Steward Program:**

Every year, I include in this report a list of projects that I'd like to work on in the upcoming year and spend some time reflecting upon the past season's accomplishments.

Below you can see the 2015 project list in *italics*.

#### **❑ *Continuing to work on the Summit Steward Program strategic plan***

As mentioned in the 2015 End of Season report, one of the outgrowths of the strategic planning session was the creation of the #507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship Program and to generate funding through the release of the book Adirondack Archangels: Guardians of the High Peaks. We are happy to announce that the #507 fund has given its first grant to help fund stewardship of Giant Mountain and provide food and housing for one summit steward position. We continue to work to raise awareness about this endowment and other ways to assist with funding the Summit Steward Program. More information about it, including ways to donate, can be found here: <http://507fund.org/>



#### **❑ *Working with organizations to suggest alternative hikes to try to divert hikers away from overcrowded trails and using social media as an educational tool***

ADK has been working with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to discuss ways to get out important information to hikers including alternate hikes for busy holiday weekends. At the end of last year we made a brochure suggesting alternate hikes for when the Loj parking lot is full. This year the DEC added a page to their website giving similar recommendations. Furthermore, ADK worked with DEC and the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) and the Lake Placid Visitor's Bureau (<http://www.adkalert.com/>) to send out an email to let hikers know when the HPIC parking lot was full.

ADK has also been utilizing the Public Service Announcement videos that were created last year to try to educate hikers on human waste and mud season. Together, these videos have had over 55,000 views. These videos can be viewed here: <https://www.facebook.com/AdirondackMountainClub/>. Going forward we hope create more educational videos including one focused on the work of the summit stewards.

- ❑ *Spending more time team stewarding, both in the beginning and throughout the season, and incorporating written coaching*

Team stewarding continues to be an important and extremely valuable experience with both volunteers and our professional crew. With three new crew members and five new volunteers, team stewarding with Kayla and Julia gave the stewards an opportunity to see different stewarding styles. Tyra Olstad, returning for her third season, also stepped up to the plate to help with team stewarding. We team steward with each crew member a minimum of two times early in the season and two-three times with each new volunteer throughout the season. This year that meant eight days team stewarding with each seasonal steward during the months of June and early July, and approximately fourteen days team stewarding with volunteer stewards throughout June, July, and August.

- ❑ *Continuing to work with our volunteers to improve the program and expand coverage*

With our dedicated volunteers we were able to increase our coverage. Kayla and I held a training in May for six new volunteers at Ray Brook. We have twenty volunteers who spent 65 days on the mountains and spoke to a total of 9,593 people. That means that our volunteer stewards spoke to an average of 148 contacts a day!

We were able to increase coverage on Cascade Mountain this year to 49 days, meaning we were able to talk to 11,818 people on Cascade alone (3,748 more than last year). Volunteers covered 29 of the 49 days on Cascade, enabling the paid crew to spend time on other locations, such as Colden, and on other projects, such as trail work. We are contacted frequently by people who either want to know more about the Summit Steward program or are interested in volunteering.

- ❑ *Analyzing the data from our Photopoint Monitoring project*

In 2015 we retook all 60 photopoint pictures that are spread across nine summits as part of our long-term Photopoint Monitoring project. This project has allowed us to compare specific alpine images from the past with images from today to compare for signs of regrowth, habitat change, and vegetation loss.

This project is extremely important because it has given us quantitative data that shows that stewarded peaks are showing signs of substantial vegetative regrowth compared to summits that do not have summit stewards. This winter Kayla and I will analyze the images to see what kinds of changes are visible.

- ❑ *Continuing group project days to accomplish more trail work*

On top of our research projects, the summit stewards accomplished 29 days of trail work.



Figure 1. Rock Packing on Colden



Projects ranged from cairn rebuilding to installing new signs, as well as the routine maintenance of brushing, scree wall, and rock packing. Over the course of the season, we brushed in 3,192 feet of herd paths, built or repaired 2,319 feet of scree walls, rock packed 607 square feet of eroding soil, built or repaired 47 cairns, built 5 privies, dug 16 drainages, and set 8 stepping stones. The DEC was kind enough to drop several tons of rock on Colden and Gothics that we used up for scree walls and rock packing.



Figure 2. New privy on Cascade

Another focus has been the human waste issue that has been plaguing our overused trails. This year we built 5 privies at higher elevation on Marcy, Algonquin, and Cascade. This season we accomplished major and minor projects on Marcy, Algonquin, Wright, Cascade, Colden, Giant, Iroquois, Gothics, Dix, and Haystack.

❑ *Trying to incorporate botany information throughout the year.*

Summit stewards need to know not only botany but an array of topics that hikers might ask about. Those questions could range from regulations, Adirondack history, ornithology, or how to go the bathroom in the woods. Kayla gave required reading throughout the season for the stewards to read on various topics such as botany, geology, and nephology. We hope to continue doing these readings to keep stewards informed with a diverse set of knowledge at their fingertips. I also feel that incorporating a botany mid-season refresher would also be very valuable.

❑ *Conducting more public outreach programs throughout the year to expand our visibility (and please contact us if you're interested in having a program!)*

Since the end of last season, Kayla or I have done over 15 outreach programs, ranging from public presentations to lectures for college classes, research presentations, and conference programs. I currently have several more planned for this fall. Doing these programs are such a great way to get the message out to people before they visit our area. It's also a way to recruit people who want to volunteer, become a paid steward, or just donate to help protect a beautiful ecosystem they may never have visited.

### **Personnel and Scheduling**

The 2016 Summit Stewards are a cheerful crew. They are hard-working, inspiring educators who have a firm understanding of conservation and stewardship. This year's crew is a mixed bunch of returning and new stewards which creates a wonderful and fresh dynamic.

Kayla White— This is Kay's third year as a summit steward and her second in the role of chief steward. Kay is very much at home on the peaks and with the program. She brings dedication, drive, and thoughtfulness to everything that she does.

Tyra Olstad— Tyra has returned from a brief hiatus from stewarding to join us back for a third year. She is never to be found without a smile on her face and a sketch pad in her bag. Tyra is fascinated by clouds, mountain weather, and connection to place. She brings her experience (from Petrified Forest to Denali), her thoughtful perspective, her enthusiasm for the alpine, and her artistry to all her interactions, both with fellow stewards and visitors.

Addie Clayton—Addie is new to stewarding but not to ADK. She was a Summer Naturalist last year and couldn't stay away. She just got back from a conservation internship in Patagonia where she collected data on both flora and fauna of the area. She is finishing up her last year at University of Vermont in Environmental Studies and Forestry with a concentration in Ecology and Conservation. Addie brings with her a passion for wilderness and wild places wherever she goes.

Ryan Nerp—Ryan is brand new to the stewardship program but not to the area. As a Paul Smith's alumn, Ryan has worked and went to school in the Adirondacks for the past five years. When not chatting with hikers on the mountains, you can find Ryan paddling on some Adirondack body of water or working the ropes course at Paul Smith's. On the mountain, he is always happy to point out alpine plants or eagerly listening to a hiker tell of his or her latest adventure.



Figure 2: 2016 Crew: L to R (front): Wade Bastian, Addie Clayton, Ryan Nerp, Kayla White, and Tyra Olstad

Wade Bastian—Wade is another new summit steward and Paul Smith's graduate. He's just returning to the area after working at a resort in Alaska. An avid hiker and 46er, Wade brings not only a knowledge of the area but a passion for everything outdoors. Whether he is excitedly chatting to hikers or hard at work brushing in herd paths, you can always find Wade with a grin on his face.

Julia Goren—I've been a part of the summit steward program since 2006. I'm so grateful for this amazing crew!

**Volunteer Stewards:** There aren't words to describe how amazing our Volunteer Stewards are—their dedication is unmatched. Volunteers have provided **65 coverage days this season!**

Ian Ellbogen— Ian has been with the volunteer program for seven years. When not stewarding, you can find Ian taking his grandchildren hiking, and in the winter, you're sure to find him skiing.

David Warfield— This is Dave's sixth year with the steward program. He has spent a great deal of time hiking above treeline here and in the White Mountains. He has climbed Chamonix, Mt. Blanc, and Mt. Rainier, and can frequently be found cycling the area.

Mike Cady—Mike is back for a fourth season of volunteering. He is a member of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a professional photographer, a 46er in summer and winter, and a Saranac Lake Ultra 6er. Mike recently completed his second round of the 46 with his son Eli, who just completed his first round.

Jack Coleman—Jack is also back for his fourth season as a volunteer. Jack is treasurer of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er and winter 46er, an inspirational hiker who helps leads challenge hikes for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and he is never to be found without a smile on his face.

Mary Lamb—Mary is returning for a fourth season as a hard core steward volunteer. We're thrilled to have her back after last summer's ACL surgery. Mary is also a member of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er, winter 46er, and boundlessly energetic.

Bob Rock—Bob is also returning for a fourth season as a volunteer. He, too, comes to the program through the ADKhighpeaks Forum and as a 46er. Bob has the endless patience that comes, among other things, with years of experience as a Boy Scout troop leader.

John Wood—John is also returning for his fourth year. John is a former student of Dr. Ketchledge; he did some of the first trail work on these summits to help protect the alpine plants. John has the incredible patience to spend hours combing the summits looking for tiny nails as part of our photopoint monitoring project.

Chrissy Dagenais—Chrissy is returning for her third year. She is an enthusiastic hiker, paddler, and cyclist. She is a 46er and trip leader for the Cornwall Outing Club.

Stephanie Gaudons—Stephanie is returning for a third year. She is a very experienced hiker, a 46er, a Leave No Trace Master Educator, and is ADK's Young Adults Outreach Coordinator.

Dan Kane—Dan is returning for a third year. He is a familiar face around the Loj, having served as Campground Host for four years. Dan's previous experiences are too numerous to name, but include teaching, interning at the APA, and regional planning. Among many other interests, Dan is an enthusiastic hiker and 46er.

Vin Maresco—Vin is returning for his second year. He is a geologist, avid hiker, ski patroller, and former JBL hut crew member. He brings tremendous enthusiasm and energy to the program.

Larry Lepak—Larry is also returning for his second year. He's a recently retired botanist for NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and can always be seen with a smile on his face.

Sam Boese—Sam is a new volunteer this year. He just graduated from the University at Buffalo with a degree in Civil Engineering. Sam is passionate about the outdoors and hopes to do environmental engineering in the future. He loves exploring and recently took a trip to Iceland.

Lois Dannenberg—Lois is a new volunteer this year. She has a passion for botany and currently works for a tree and lawn care company. She just finished becoming a 46er and brings her love of the outdoors to everything she does.

Chuck Pacer—Chuck is an enthusiastic new addition to the Summit Steward program. He is very knowledgeable of the area and of the outdoor gear you'll need for the hike. His energy and willingness to share his experiences makes him a friendly face to find on the mountain.

Annie Fogarty—Annie is a new volunteer this year. She is very active in the Genesee Valley chapter and hikes frequently in the Adirondacks. Ann has a friendly demeanor and loves talking to hikers about doing the 46 High Peaks.

Jen Maguder—This is Jen's first year volunteering but her face is a familiar one at ADK. Jen was a summit steward the previous two years and brings enthusiasm, knowledge, and positivity to the program. Her dedication to the mountains is extremely admirable.

Patrick Murphy—Pat is another previous summit steward turned volunteer. Pat was a steward in 2012 and a botany steward in 2013. He has a wealth of knowledge of the alpine vegetation, the High Peaks area, and anything outdoors related. He is currently employed at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake.

Borno Zaman—Borno is a new volunteer to the program. He recently graduated from Ithaca College and has been working for several years in web design. Borno has an easy going disposition and dry humor that makes spending time on the mountain with him a treat.

Andrew Wood—Andrew is another new addition to the Summit Steward program. He went to school for Global Economics. His indoor job makes him want to come and explore the Adirondacks in his free time. He is a natural at stewarding and a great conversationalist on the peaks.

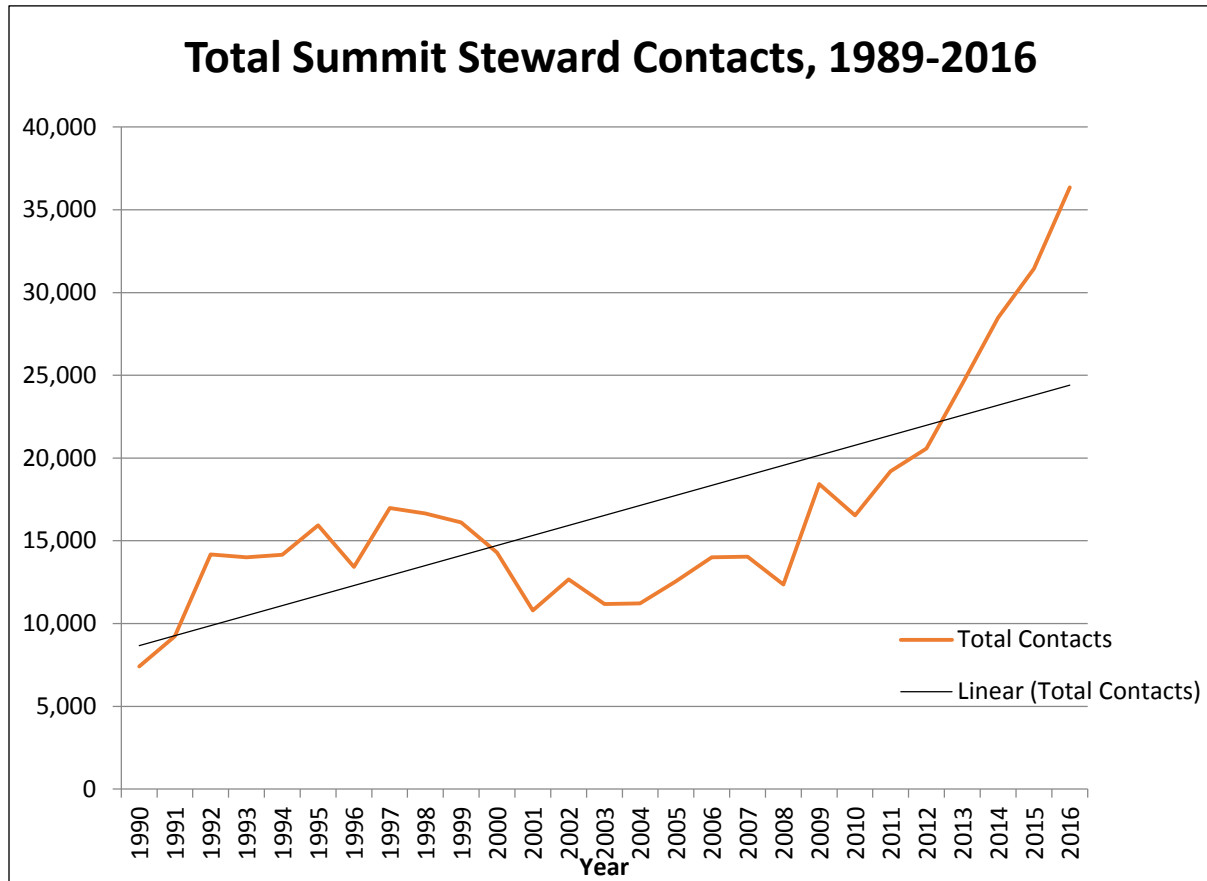
#### **Education: Usage and Outreach**

Year	Total Contacts	Days Covered	Average
<b>2016</b>	<b>36,355</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>109</b>
2015	31,440	344	91
2014	28,488	312	91
2013	23,804	305	78
2012	20,567	269	77
2011	19,211	275	70
2010	15,639	238	65.7
2009	18,420	283	65
2008	12,350	198	62.4
2007	14,005	199	70.3
2006	14,004	242	57.9
2005	12,022	195	61.7
2004	10,436	152	68.7
<b>Total Contacts 1990-2015: 446,614</b>			

With such good weather this year, it isn't surprising that the number of visitors to the High Peaks has again skyrocketed. As noted above, this is the sixth year in a row to set a record for the number of contacts made. To put a 36,355 person year in context, when the Summit Steward program started in 1990, stewards spoke with just over 7,000 hikers.

This year saw a fivefold increase over that season.

As the graph of total steward contacts shows, the trend is toward increasing numbers of visitors, with a particularly sharp rise in the past 6 seasons.



A continuing goal has been to increase the amount of outreach that we do to groups before they arrive at the summits. This year I gave pre-season presentations to ADK's Binghamton Chapter, North Country Community College, and Gordon College's La Vida Program. I also represented the Summit Steward Program at the University of Vermont's Northeast Mountain Science Conference in April. I also conducted training for the Catskill Summit Steward Program, the Hurricane Mountain Firetower Steward Program, the 46ers Trailhead Education program, and we were also joined by stewards from the Green Mountain Club. During the summer, I've also given a presentation at the Adirondack Museum in conjunction with the release of the book Adirondack Archangels. Kayla has given presentations on the Summit Steward Program at Johns Brook Lodge, to ADK staff, to Paul Smiths College, and to Antioch University.



### Botany and Research Projects:

This year we collected 120 vials of ants mainly in and around the alpine summits to help develop a species list for the High Peaks. Finding colonies was harder than predicted and for the future we hope to hire a summit steward whose main focus would be on collecting ants. Little is known about the ant



species in New York so we are excited to contribute data to Dr. Aaron Ellison's research. Aaron is the Senior Research Fellow at Harvard Forest and an Adjunct Research Professor at University of Massachusetts. He recently co-wrote [A Field Guide to the Ants of New England](#) and spent time last summer working on collecting ants on Maine's Katahdin.

This year marks the ninth year of our participation in the AMC Mountain Watch phenology program. We monitor the phenological stages of four species: Bigelow's Sedge, Diapensia, Labrador Tea, and Bilberry. These species are monitored at standardized monitoring areas. The AMC switched the way they collected their data to be in line with the National Phenology Network (NPN). This will

ensure the data can be used in broader studies that look at global trends. AMC uses this data to analyze long term trends in the timing of the different phenological stages, which could be an indication of the effects of climate change on the alpine ecosystem. We collected 106 observations for this project over the course of the summer.

### Trail Work and Project Days:

This year's crew was highly motivated and extremely dedicated to accomplishing trail projects! During the season we were able to accomplish both minor and major work on Marcy, Wright, Colden, Giant, Algonquin, Haystack, Cascade, Iroquois, Dix, and Gothics.

	Scree Wall	Brush	Rock Pack	Cairn repair	Drainages
<b>Marcy</b>	536	1153	117	17	16
<b>Algonquin</b>	630	709	143	17	
<b>Wright</b>	300	243	60	11	
<b>Cascade</b>	415	195	67	1	
<b>Colden</b>	190	290	90		

<b>Gothics</b>	160	30	110		
<b>Haystack</b>	68	97	13		
<b>Iroquois</b>	20	50	3	1	
<b>Giant</b>		340	3		
<b>Dix</b>		85	1		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2319</b>	<b>3192</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>(feet)</b>	<b>(feet)</b>	<b>(square feet)</b>		

This fall, Wade Bastian, Ryan Nerp, and Kayla were able to accomplish much needed brushing, rock packing, and scree wall work on Colden, Haystack, Giant, and Gothics. We also were able to install high elevation privies on Marcy and Cascade.

### Equipment and Campsites:

As is to be expected, our equipment receives heavy use and something is always in need of repair or replacement. Many thanks go to the companies that provide us with equipment and clothing for supporting the Summit Steward program. Stalwart program sustainers, such as Vasque, and Outdoor Research helped to improve the program and the experience of the stewards through their donations of equipment and gear. We are very grateful for the support!

Outdoor Research donated new rain jackets, fleece jackets, moisture wicking shirts, pants, and hats. We are so grateful for the support of Jaeger Shaw and the fine folks at OR—whether it's blistering cold or sweltering hot, OR provides the most amazing gear to keep the stewards comfortable and cozy.

Darn Tough donated socks and Vasque donated boots to the stewards. Even in a dry summer, extra socks and waterproof boots are a must!



Figure 4. The crew proudly displaying their Kestrel on a soaked in day on Whiteface

The Will Cummer Gear Fund was established to honor the memory of Will Cummer who was an avid hiker who loved gadgets. Thanks to this Fund, the Summit Steward program was able to purchase much needed and long-wanted supplies, including a Kestrel unit that allows us to accurately measure wind speed and temperature on the summits.

Andrew Flynn from Arete designed and donated moisture wicking shirts for the professional and volunteer summit stewards to wear. A portion of the proceeds from sales of the shirt are being donated to the Adirondack Mountain Club.

For next year, we will replace rain pants, jackets, and pack covers that are no longer waterproof. Furthermore, fleece gloves and mittens that are easily misplaced will also need to be purchased.

Special thanks go to Wade, Ryan, Kayla, and Seth Jones for setting up and taking down Marcy and Algonquin camps.

#### **Future recommendations:**

Here are a few things that I look forward to doing in the upcoming year:

- ❑ Finishing the Summit Steward Program strategic plan
- ❑ Working to educate more hikers before they arrive at the trailhead through outreach and social media
- ❑ Working with the DEC to devise ways to get information out on suggested alternative hikes to try to divert some of the less prepared tourists away from Cascade and other severely damaged trails
- ❑ Spending more time team stewarding, both in the beginning and throughout the season, and incorporating written coaching
- ❑ Analyzing the photopoint images from this past year
- ❑ Continuing to expand and improve the volunteer program
- ❑ Building group project days to accomplish more high quality trail work
- ❑ Continuing to incorporate botany information throughout the season
- ❑ Conducting more public outreach programs throughout the year to expand our visibility (and please contact me if you're interested in having a program!)

#### **Thank you!**

As always, the summit steward program would not be possible without the support and funding of a number of various organizations and individuals. We'd like to thank the following organizations:

- ❑ NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- ❑ Adirondack Chapter of the Nature Conservancy
- ❑ The Adirondack 46ers
- ❑ ADKhighpeaks Foundation
- ❑ Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund
- ❑ Will Cummer Gear Fund
- ❑ ORDA and the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center for access to the summit of Whiteface via the Memorial Highway
- ❑ Brooklyn Camp Supply
- ❑ The Mountaineer
- ❑ Vasque for boots for the stewards
- ❑ Outdoor Research
- ❑ Darn Tough Socks
- ❑ Arete

And individuals:

Wes Lampman (ADK), Mary Thill (TNC), Jim Giglinto (DEC), Tate Connor (DEC), Jack Coleman (ADKhighpeaks Foundation), Christine Bourjade, Alex Radmanovich, Wilson Cumber, Ian Ellbogen, David Warfield, Mary Lamb, Bob Rock, Stephanie Gaudons, Chrissy Dagenais, Dan Kane, Vin Maresco, Larry Lepak, John Wood, Seth Jones, Brendan Wiltse, Tim Howard (NYNHP), Sean Robinson (SUNY Oneonta), Dr. Mary Roden-Tice (SUNY Plattsburgh), Paul Casson (ASRC), Vinny McClelland, Chuck Bruja and the entire staff of The Mountaineer, Bill O'Donnell, Jaeger Shaw, Hal Elmes, and Tom Manitta.

It has been a great season! It is a privilege to be a part of this unique conservation program; we can't imagine a better place to work or more satisfying work to do. The alpine zone is a remarkable ecosystem, and everyone should be proud to be a part of protecting it. Please feel free to contact either Kayla ([chiefsteward@adk.org](mailto:chiefsteward@adk.org)) or Julia ([summit@adk.org](mailto:summit@adk.org)) at any time for help or with questions, suggestions, or opportunities for the program.

Sincerely,

Julia Goren  
Education Director  
[summit@adk.org](mailto:summit@adk.org)

and

Kayla White  
Summit Steward Coordinator  
[chiefsteward@adk.org](mailto:chiefsteward@adk.org)