

2019 Summit Stewardship Report

Summit Stewardship Department Staff:

Kayla White, Summit Steward Coordinator

The Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program accomplished its mission in 2019 by educating approximately **40,000 hikers** in alpine stewardship and Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics, hosting the Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering and expanding the knowledge of New York's alpine zone by finishing the third round of sampling for our alpine population study. This program is a partnership of ADK, the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

It is in the one-on-one interactions that may seem small at the time, but add up to create a movement of stewardship. Summit stewards reached a new contact record this year, partly due to higher coverage thanks to our amazing volunteers. To put a 40,000-person year in context, we have doubled the number of seasonal hiker contacts from a decade ago. Having a 200-400 hiker contact day has become the new normal. To keep the quality of hiker interactions high, we place two summit stewards on Cascade Mountain for busy holiday weekends. This enables stewards the ability to relay the important message of staying on bare rocks and off alpine plants while also having time to answer any questions hikers may have.

October 25-27 at the High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid, we co-hosted the 2019 Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering with The Waterman Fund. This Gathering is an opportunity for alpine researchers, planners, land managers, hiking clubs, stewards, and interested parties to meet to share information and improve the understanding and management of the alpine areas of the Northeastern U.S. and Canada. This was partly a celebration of the **30th anniversary** of the Summit Stewardship Program. We had 107 attendees spanning the Northeast, ranging from Quebec to West Virginia. This three-day conference was packed with presentations on alpine research, visitor use, stewardship, climate change, wilderness ethics, Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics and ecological monitoring. Kayla White, ADK's Summit Steward Coordinator, received The Waterman Fund's Emerging Alpine Steward Award. The conference was a great success thanks to our partners, sponsors and committee members.

Last year we started our third round of alpine population sampling, hiring two botany stewards. This year we finished that sampling by hiring Dr. Norton Miller botany steward Ryan Nerp. In 2006-2007, we collected baseline population data on 20 rare, threatened and endangered alpine plants through a stratified random sampling procedure. With this data, we could model population densities and estimate population sizes. This sampling was done again in 2013 to test for any divergence in population. Botany stewards have to travel to remote parts of each mountain to find their sampling plots. Once at the sampling point, they lay down a 5 x 5-meter plot with string and then count stems, plants and estimated square meters of clumps. This project is done in partnership with Tim Howard from the New York Natural Heritage Program. He was able to conduct a preliminary analysis on this data and expects to finalize the analysis in spring. Tim and Kayla presented the preliminary findings at the Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering. We look forward to continuing this collaboration into the future.