

## 2019 Trails Report

### **Trails Department Staff:**

Andrew Hamlin, Trails Coordinator

### Volunteer Trail Crew Leaders:

Andrew Williams & Nora Sackett

### Professional Trail Crew:

Charlotte Staats

Tom Schafer

Adeline Clayton

Devon Kline

Dakota Wienman

Liza Berg

Mathew Ford

Caitlin Kelly

Jay Kepes

Anastasia Rodak

The Adirondack Mountain Club's Trails Program has pivoted from working exclusively on Forest Preserve land, to transitioning towards taking care of its trails at the Heart Lake Program Center. We will still have a robust presence on public lands, but have also been making a concerted effort to improve our property trails. In 2019, over 50 volunteers participated in side cutting and removing blowdown on all of the ADK trails. Bridges were built on the Southwest Corner Ski Trail. New drainages and rock structures were built on the Mt. Jo Short Trail. The West Side Speedway trail was improved; what was once a 6-foot-wide alpine ski trail is now a 20-30-foot-wide glade trail with mature red and sugar maples dotted throughout.

Looking towards 2020, we are planning on hosting our National Trails Day event here at Heart Lake. All of the projects will be directed at improving our property trails. One of the biggest projects that we'll tackle is the re-route of the Mt. Jo Long Trail. Another big picture objective for improving our trail system is to reimagine our Nordic ski trails so that they are more user friendly. I am also looking to create other purpose-built trails to increase recreational opportunities for potential guests.

The ADK Professional Trail Crew (Pro Crew) completed many exciting projects in 2019. They spent a total of three weeks teaming up with the Summit Stewards to improve the cairns on Haystack and Skylight. This was an incredibly rewarding project for our crew members, as they are usually working in the mud below tree line. Speaking of which the crew worked for a total of five weeks on the Avalanche Pass trail. The focus of this work was to harden wet sections of trail with stone turnpiking. Rock steps were also installed to give hikers an easy and clear route through the pass. It should be understood that these rock steps are not installed principally for the ease of travel. Rather, they are built to protect the natural resources. When hiking on the trail corridor becomes too cumbersome, hikers will always choose to trample the surrounding vegetation. Despite the fact that our professional trail crew was operating without a contract from the DEC, we still were able to partner with other conservation organizations to fund our Pro Crew. The Adirondack 46ers hired our Professional Trail Crew to work on Avalanche Pass, and on Mt. Colden. The Waterman Fund awarded us a grant to work on the summits of Skylight and Haystack. The Finger Lakes Land Trust hired us to work just outside Ithaca and Canandaigua.

Our Professional Trail Crew's leadership was outstanding on 2019. Charlotte Staats was one of the best Crew Boss's our trails program has had since my tenure. Our crew leaders had a total of 27 years of experience working for the ADK trail crew. This highly skilled crew was able to complete some incredible trail work. Another benefit of our leadership was that we were able to pass down knowledge to the next generation of rock slingers.