2019 ANNUAL REPORT



1969 - 2019





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# CATSKILLCENTER

# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jeff Senterman



Since 1969 the Catskill Center has been dedicated to ensuring the bright future of the Catskill region. Together with our members, donors, business partners, community, and supporters, we see many accomplishments each year.

# 2019 MARKED 50 YEARS OF THE CATSKILL CENTER AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THE CATSKILLS.

Throughout 2019 we reveled in 50 years of stewardship, advocacy, and preservation, while furthering new goals and fostering growth for the next 50 years and beyond.

In 2019, the Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey Catskills Visitor Center (CVC) in Mount Tremper, the gateway to the Catskills region, assisted nearly 12,000 visitors throughout the year. We seek to inspire an understanding and appreciation for our wondrous Catskills for these visitors and began renovations to install cutting-edge exhibits.

In August 2019, the newest addition to the Catskill Park's fire towers—the Upper Esopus Fire Tower—was completed. Relocated from Florida, the 80-foot tower now stands on the CVC property. A climb to the cabin rewards visitors with gorgeous, panoramic views of the Catskill high peaks without the challenging hike needed to access the other towers in the Catskills.

The Catskill Stewards Program's 2019 season, the program's second, was a big one. Seasonal, full-time stewards interacted with nearly 11,000 visitors at the Peekamoose Blue Hole. Stewards were also stationed at Platte Clove Preserve and Kaaterskill Falls and interacted with and educated nearly 40,000 visitors at Kaaterskill Falls alone. At Platte Clove, stewards engaged nearly 3,000 Preserve visitors. The Catskill Stewards Program continues to work closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to reduce visitor impacts, teach sustainable Leave No Trace Principles, and assist the implementation of a first-of-its-kind day use permit system (designed to reduce the number of visitors to the Peekamoose Blue Hole and reduce the impact on its vulnerable flora and fauna).

Our Streamside Acquisition Program (SAP) expanded its capabilities in 2019 with the addition of two new staff positions: a program manager and a financial manager. The team doubled its completed land protection projects in 2019, protecting eight properties with critical stream, floodplain, wetland, and streamside forest habitats. In July we received the good news from our partners in the New York City Department of Environmental



Protection (DEP) that the SAP pilot program had been extended through 2022. This extension adds \$3 million for our continued work in the Schoharie Basin. We are hopeful that in the future, in accordance with the 2017 Filtration Avoidance Determination issued to New York City, the program will be expanded into the entire New York City West-of-Hudson Watershed.

In 2019, the Catskill Center was awarded a \$63,000, three-year DEC Invasive Species Grant to perform invasive species surveys and removals on DEC campgrounds and other sites. A Catskills Strike Team (with two seasonal positions) was created to perform the work. Over the course of the year, Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) staff and the Strike Team surveyed more than a thousand acres for invasive species. A total of 49 acres of invasives were mapped and six acres were treated across 17 sites.

THE COMPLETION OF THE UPPER ESOPUS FIRE TOWER AT THE CATSKILLS VISI

Through 70 trainings, educational programs, and events, CRISP connected with 20,217 people in 2019. A total of 188 volunteers were trained to perform invasives identification, reporting, or management. The giant hogweed control program eradicated giant hogweed at two sites and decreased the number of plants by 30%. CRISP facilitated three "Who's Doing What in Invasive Species Management in the Catskills" workshops in 2019, during which 38 people collaboratively developed an invasive species action plan. CRISP Watershed Stewards inspected more than 8,000 watercraft and prevented at least 300 invasive plants and animals from entering or leaving CRISP water bodies.

Last year the Catskill Center welcomed new staff to the organization. The Streamside Acquisition Program expanded with the addition of SAP Manager, Lee Alexander, and Brian Sechler as Real Estate Project Manager. We also welcomed Marc Neves as Financial Manager and Noelle Martin joined in 2019 as Executive Assistant.

Our continuing efforts, including our advocacy work in Albany to bring more resources to the Catskill Park, saw success in 2019. In addition to Catskill Park Day, the Catskill Center participated in other advocacy days for conservation and Catskills issues including Environmental Protection Fund Lobby Day, Tick and Lyme Day, and Catskill/Adirondack Forest Preserve Lobby Day. In 2019, thanks to the efforts of the Catskill Park Coalition (which the Catskill Center co-chairs), we saw more than \$10 million in investment from New York State in the Catskill Park, including new access points, improved parking, upgrades and repairs at State Campgrounds, and much more.



Members are the backbone of the Catskill Center and 2019 saw the continued increase of membership and donations. Members of the Catskill Center enjoy a number of benefits, including a year of Catskills Magazine, discounts at the Erpf Center and Catskills Visitor Center (as well as local retailers), access to the Catskill Center archives at the Erpf Center in Arkville, member-only invites to special events, and more.

At the Platte Clove Preserve Artist-In-Residence (AIR) Program, artists from New York, Texas, Michigan, and Nevada were hosted last year. The Catskill Center welcomed the return of filmmaker David Becker and Textile Artist Victoria van der Laan. Two painters, four writers, three visual artists, a photographer, and a botanical illustrator rounded out the AIR season. Each 2019 resident enjoyed a week of solitude at Platte Clove and the unique and inspiring experience of lodging and creating at the rugged Artist's Cabin.



The Friends of Platte Clove helped complete projects at Platte Clove, such as the installation of new cooking and heat stoves. The improvement of the stone steps to the Artists' Cabin is currently in the planning stage. 2019 saw the inaugural group of Invitational Artists of the Friends of Platte Clove. Selected by the Friends, four diverse artists were invited to reside at the Cabin.

OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY WAS CELEBRATED WITH THE PUBLICATION OF A BOOK, *NATURAL RESOURCES: 50 STEWARDS OF THE CATSKILLS.* IN IT, 50 INDIVIDUALS ARE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR DEEP WORK IN THE CATSKILLS' ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY, AND CULTURE.

Finally in 2019, the Catskill Center gained national recognition for becoming an accredited Land Trust by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Accreditation certifies that we meet strict standards of ethically and financially responsible operations and signifies the Commission's confidence that the Catskill Center is worthy of the public trust and its promise to forever protect our conserved lands. The Catskill Center provided extensive documentation and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction.

All of these victories were possible because of combined efforts across the Catskills. As we navigate our way through 2020, we celebrate all the Catskill Center was able to achieve in our 50th year and reimagine how we may best achieve our mission in the future. Together we commit to a vision of an environmentally and economically thriving Catskills and focus our work on creating that reality.

JEFF SENTERMAN

**Executive Director** 



# **CATSKILL**CENTER **FINANCIAL OVERVIEW**

The Catskill Center's last fiscal year was from January 1 through December 31, 2019, during which time operating revenue totaled \$2,811,434. 68% of this revenue came from contracts (\$1,906,312), 17% from investment allocation for operations (\$490,000), 5% from grant revenue (\$152,503), 5% from contributions and membership (\$144,686), and 4% from rent, program income and other sources (\$117,933).

Operating expenses totaled \$2,658,938 of which 84% was for program activities (\$2,242,772), 9% for organizational administration and overhead (\$249,467), and 6% for fundraising and development (\$166,699).

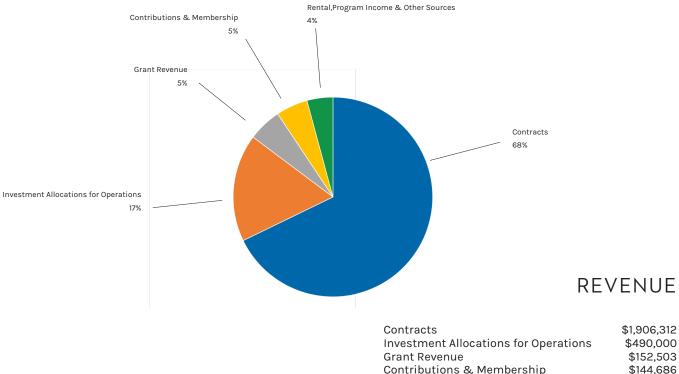
ONLY TOGETHER CAN WE CONTINUE TO PRESERVE, ENHANCE, AND ENRICH THE ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL WELL-BEING OF THE CATSKILL REGION.

Financial Structure The Catskill Center maintains one investment account (market value of \$3,163,024 on December 31, 2019).

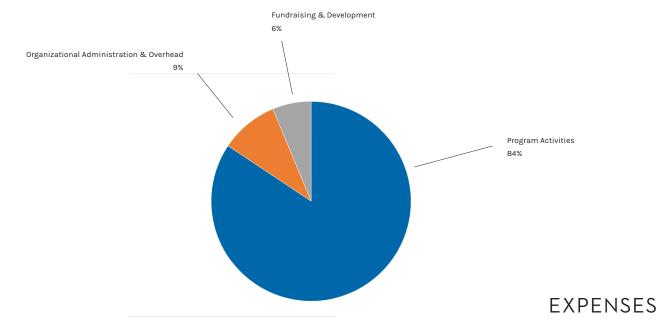
This account is used to support capital costs and expenses related to the Erpf House and the Center's other properties, and as a Board designated fund for general operating expenses. The assets are pooled in a diversified portfolio supervised by the Audit and Finance Committee. Total investment return in 2019 was a gain of \$614,089.

Each year the Board sets a spending rate for operating purposes from the investment fund, which amounted to \$490,000 for 2019.

The Board engages Mostert, Manzanero & Scott LLP to perform an independent audit.



Rental, Investments & Other Sources **Total Revenue** \$2,811,434



**Program Activities** \$2,242,772 Organizational Administration & Overhead \$249,467 Fundraising & Development \$166,532 Total Expenses \$2,658,938

\$117,933



# **DEAR MEMBERS**, THANK YOU. WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.

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