MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jeff Senterman

Since 1969 the Catskill Center has been dedicated to making a difference across the Catskills, and every year we see many accomplishments. With that said, in 2018 we saw new programs take shape and continuous growth in our efforts.

2018 FOLLOWED A TRANSFORMATIVE 2017 IN WHICH WE ADOPTED AND BEGAN IMPLEMENTING A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CATSKILL CENTER. THIS NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUSES ON OUR EFFORTS TO INSPIRE, STEWARD AND COLLABORATE ACROSS THE REGION.

In order to realize the long-term goal of creating an outstanding visitor center for the Catskill Park and a gateway to the entire Catskills region, 2017 saw considerable investment in the Catskill Interpretive Center (known today as the Catskills Visitor Center). Thanks to funding from New York State (that the Catskill Center successfully advocated for), the Catskill Center continued investment in a design process to reimagine the exhibits of the Catskills Visitor Center.
The exhibits are now in the creation process and installation will be complete by the end of 2019. The improvements will allow the Visitor Center to better inspire an understanding and appreciation for our wonderful Catskills. In 2018 we also saw the completed construction of a new pavilion, which provides public picnic space and allows us to host events and activities in a beautiful and functional outdoor environment. The Catskill Center also announced that, in 2019, New York State will be constructing a fire tower on the Catskills Visitor Center site.

Last year, new staff joined our team at the Catskills Visitor Center. Kelli Huggins and Olivia Bernard joined us as the first full-time Visitor Experience Coordinators at the Visitor Center. In addition to ensuring visitors to the Visitor Center are warmly greeted and have all of their questions answered, Kelli and Olivia are assisting in creating new handouts for visitors, managing major events and facilitating the fabrication and installation of new exhibits for the Visitor Center.

We also welcomed Andy Mossey to our team as our first Catskill Steward at the Peekamoose Blue Hole and currently as our Advocacy & Stewardship Coordinator. Lastly, Eva Fox joined us as our new Administrative Assistant.

The Catskill Steward Program was launched in 2018. Two seasonal, full-time stewards were stationed at the Peekamoose Blue Hole where they interacted with more than 15,000 visitors. The Stewards worked closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to reduce visitor impacts, teach sustainable Leave No Trace Principles, and help implement a new day-use permit system designed to reduce the number of visitors to the Peekamoose Blue Hole. Based on 2018 successes, the program in 2019 will expand to three locations, Kaaterskill Falls, the Platte Clove Preserve and the Peekamoose Blue Hole.

The Streamside Acquisition Program continued to grow in 2018 with a full staff and a close working relationship with our partner in the program, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. We worked with New York City on an extension of the current pilot program in the Schoharie Creek Watershed and look forward to its eventual expansion into the entire New York City West-of-Hudson Watershed.
Members of the Catskill Center now enjoy a number of benefits, including discounts at Catskill Center shops (the Erpf Center and the Catskills Visitor Center) and local retailers, the printed quarterly newsletter, access to the exclusive membership lecture and education program series, invites to special events, and more. Members are the backbone of the Catskill Center, and we celebrate being better able to show our appreciation and recognize their support.

2018 saw the Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) continue to grow and evolve. As host to CRISP, the Catskill Center leads efforts to combat and manage invasive species that threaten our native ecosystems throughout a 3.3-million-acre region.

We also saw success in many of our continuing efforts, including our advocacy work in Albany to bring more resources to the Catskill Park. In 2018, 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, safety improvements at Kaaterskill Falls, upgrades and repairs at State Campgrounds, and much more.

Our Artist-In-Residence Program at the Platte Clove Preserve celebrated its 20th year with more than a dozen artists enjoying the solitude of Platte Clove and the uniqueness of our rugged Artist’s Cabin for one week each. We saw multiple shows celebrating Catskill artists at the Erpf Gallery and visitors walked the Sculpture Trail at the Catskills Visitor Center, which showcased artists who have been influenced by the Catskills.

In partnership with the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, we opened a new stop on the Hudson River School Art Trail at Platte Clove Preserve. Thanks to the support and generosity of the Friends of Platte Clove, improvements were made to the interior of the cabin for Artists in Residence to better enjoy their stay, and planning work began on efforts to rehabilitate the cabin and create space for a future visitor center on the site.

Thanks to a collection of generous donors, we began a multi-year process to improve public access to the Thorn Preserve in Woodstock. This work started with the design and construction of a new public parking area at the Thorn Preserve in 2018. Future work will include new fencing, informational signage and new
trails.
With the support of the Board of Directors, work continued on
becoming an accredited land trust, with accreditation expected in 2019.
Accreditation certifies that the Catskill Center meets strict standards of
ethical and financially responsible operation which will enhance grant

ALL OF THIS WORK REPRESENTS OUR COMBINED EFFORTS ACROSS THE
CATSKILLS. FROM THE GROUND UP, THIS WORK IS ABOUT THE CATSKILLS
AND FOR THE CATSKILLS. THE CATSKILL CENTER WORKS TIRELESSLY TO
PRESERVE, ENHANCE AND ENRICH THE ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND
CULTURAL WELL-BEING OF THE CATSKILLS REGION.

and foundation funding opportunities.

As we enter our 50th year of service in 2019, we know it’s not just about
what we have done, but what we will do moving ahead. If 2018 is any
indication, the possibilities of the Catskill Center are vast when our
members, supporters, board and staff all look ahead and complete the
important work that needs to be done.

JEFF SENTERMAN
Executive Director
The Catskill Center’s last fiscal year was from January 1 through December 31, 2018, during which time operating revenue totaled $1,879,169. 60% of this revenue came from contracts ($1,132,053), 17% from investment allocation for operations ($320,000), 8% from contributions and membership ($173,555), and 6% from rent, program income and other sources ($112,463).

Operating expenses totaled $1,854,425, of which 83% was for program activities ($1,548,377), 9% for organizational administration and overhead ($166,532), and 8% for fundraising ($139,516).

Financial Structure

The Catskill Center maintains one investment account (market value of $3,030,624 on December 31, 2018). 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 was a loss of $16,705 in 2018.

Each year the Board sets a spending rate for operating purposes from the investment fund, which was set at $320,000 for 2018.

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