

A Capital Campaign on the Rensselaer Plateau

Lessons from the Rensselaer Plateau

Really?



A Capital Campaign on the Rensselaer Plateau

The Project

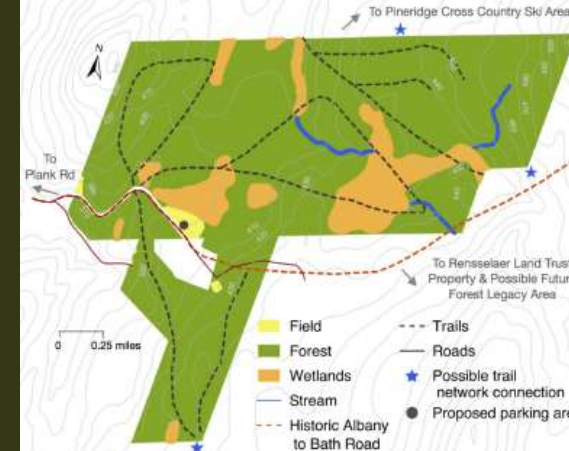
Rensselaer Plateau Community Forest

Goal: \$450,000 in 2 years

(\$320k land, \$130 infrastructure & programs)

Sept 2014 - Present

Rensselaer Plateau Community Forest Property Information



Location

A 350-acre forest, in Poestenkill, New York, adjacent to 750-acre cross-country ski area and proposed forest legacy projects. Located within a 20-minute drive of the Albany-Troy metropolitan area.

Characteristics

The forest consists of 95 percent forested area including a mix of hemlock, soft maple, hard maple, cherry, ash, beech, and conifers; 15-20 acres of open and forested wetlands; seasonal freshets and brooks. The property includes an extensive network of old logging roads that will be the basis for a trail system, remnants of the colonial era Albany-Boston Post Road, and numerous stone walls that defined pastures and fields from a bygone era of subsistence farming.



Wildlife

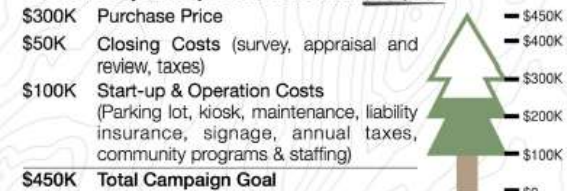
Moose, fox, bobcat, fisher, hare, turkey, hawk, ruffed grouse, duck, songbirds, turtle, native brook trout, and other wildlife call the Plateau their home.

Partners

Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center, Rensselaer Land Trust, Empire State Forest Products Assoc., New York Logger Training, Inc., Empire State Forestry Foundation, US Geological Survey, New York Forest Owners Association: Capital District Chapter, Tamokoce Wilderness Programs.

Campaign Goal: \$450,000

With more than \$250,000 already raised we are well on our way, but we need your **help to raise the final \$200,000:**



We have raised \$250,000:

- \$150K US Forest Service Grant (Community Forest & Open Space Program)
- \$100K Gift from Callanan Industries, Inc. (seller)



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Challenges

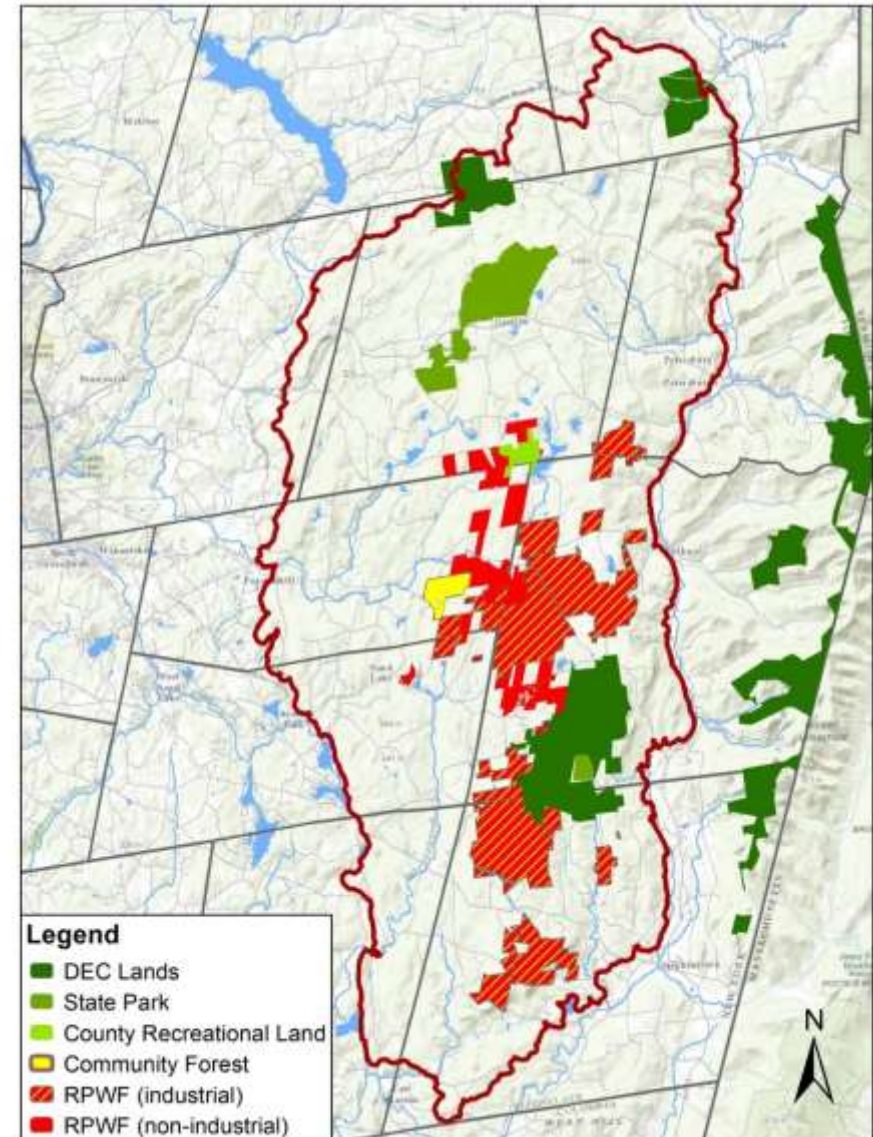
Are we an RCP or not?

Working Forest Initiative

(NYS DEC, Hudson River Estuary Program, Rensselaer Land Trust, Agricultural Stewardship)

★ Community Forest Partners

(Environmental Education Center, NY Forest Owners, Empire State Forest Products, NY Logger Training, Rensselaer Land Trust, etc.)



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Challenges

An all volunteer board that got involved to work on projects and has little experience or interest in “fund raising”.

Difficult to identify affluent people with an interest in conservation in a relatively non-affluent geographic region.

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Tactics & Strategies

Tactic	Goal	
USFS Grant	\$150,000	
Seller Gifting	\$100,000	
NYSCPP Transaction Grant	\$40,000	
Major Donors (> \$1,000)	\$123,000/year	
Mid-Level Donors (> \$240)	\$18,270/year	
Low-Level Donors	\$11,620/year	
Help from Partners	\$30,000	
Bulk mail County residents	\$10,000	
Timber Stand Improvement Cut	\$30,000	
Totals	\$515,000	



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Tactics & Strategies

👍 A+

Tactic	Goal	
USFS Grant	\$150,000	\$150,000
Seller Gifting	\$100,000	\$100,000
NYSCPP Transaction Grant	\$40,000	\$0
Major Donors (> \$1,000)	\$123,000/year	
Mid-Level Donors (> \$240)	\$18,270/year	
Low-Level Donors	\$11,620/year	
Help from Partners	\$30,000	
Bulk mail County residents	\$10,000	
Timber Stand Improvement Cut	\$30,000	
Totals	\$515,000	\$250,000

Welcome to the
**Rensselaer Plateau
Community Forest**

A project of the
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

With funding and support from:



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Tactics & Strategies

👍 👎 B- or C+

Tactic	Goal	
USFS Grant	\$150,000	\$150,000
Seller Gifting	\$100,000	\$100,000
NYSCPP Transaction Grant	\$40,000	\$0
Major Donors (> \$1,000)	\$123,000/year	\$33,000
Mid-Level Donors (> \$240)	\$18,270/year	\$9,000
Low-Level Donors	\$11,620/year	\$5,015
Help from Partners	\$30,000	
Bulk mail County residents	\$10,000	??
Timber Stand Improvement Cut	\$30,000	
Totals	\$515,000	\$297,015



"There was supposed to be an Earth shattering kaboom!"

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Our grade,
not our
partner's

Tactics & Strategies

D (Help from Partner's)

Tactic	Goal	
USFS Grant	\$150,000	\$150,000
Seller Gifting	\$100,000	\$100,000
NYSCPP Transaction Grant	\$40,000	\$0
Major Donors (> \$1,000)	\$123,000/year	\$33,000
Mid-Level Donors (> \$240)	\$18,270/year	\$9,000
Low-Level Donors	\$11,620/year	\$6,395
Help from Partners	\$30,000	(\$6,500) \$1,580
Bulk mail County residents	\$10,000	??
Timber Stand Improvement Cut	\$30,000	Nothing yet
Totals	\$515,000	\$299,595

20+ Partners were asked to help in some way.

3 agreed to send an appeal to their membership. In the end only 1 did this.

1 introduced us to an individual large donor.

Several agreed to help in other ways.

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Today (14 months into the campaign)

\$20,000 left to pay off \$230,000 loan.

Nothing so far for infrastructure and programming.

Huge volunteer & community involvement.



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What worked

Capital Campaign Training was key.

- Form a good development committee,
- Learn how to identify potential donors (feasibility studies),
- Learn how to meet with top donors,
- Create a top quality case statement

Grants

Relationship with Seller



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Lessons Learned (General)

External Feasibility Assessment (skipped it)

Development Committee needs a task master.

To the extent possible find the right people for your Development Committee. (we still don't know how to do this)



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Lessons Learned (partners)

- Plan early for how to involve and communicate with partners.
- Involve partners early.
- Partners need ownership if you expect substantial help.
- Careful communications.



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