



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HHLT Partners with NY-NJ Trail Conference on
Breakneck Ridge Stewardship**

*Trail Steward Program will continue to teach hikers
best stewardship practices on publicly-accessible conserved lands*

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) today announced a new partnership with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's (NYNJTC's) Breakneck Ridge Trail Steward Program for the 2018 season. The program aims to educate and assist the public in the safe, responsible and enjoyable use of the trails and parkland of Breakneck Ridge, recently named as the most popular hiking destination in the country. HHLT will provide financial sponsorship of the program and help facilitate steward trainings that promote conservation ethics and proper stewardship practices.

Michelle Smith, HHLT's Executive Director said, "The Trail Steward Program has had such a positive impact in our area under the leadership of NYNJTC and State Parks. We wanted to provide ongoing financial support as this terrific program grows and to facilitate the education of our many visitors in good land stewardship practices."

Breakneck Ridge, which is within Hudson Highlands State Park in Putnam and Dutchess Counties, has experienced an upsurge in popularity over the past five years. NYNJTC estimates more than 100,000 people visit the mountain each year, with many visitation records broken during the 2017 season, including the most visitors in a single day (2,087) and a single hour (525). Ecological degradation is an unintended consequence of this trail overuse that is becoming of increasing concern.

The Trail Steward Program, started in 2013, runs every year on weekends and holidays between Memorial Day through Thanksgiving. Stewards provide helpful information to visitors about park regulations, hiker safety, preparedness and other best practices. In

addition to readying hikers, Stewards also help to discourage and mitigate misuse of the trails and surrounding land through their educational work.

“The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is pleased to join forces with the Hudson Highlands Land Trust,” said Hank Osborn, Regional Programs Manager and East Hudson Program Coordinator for NYNJTC. “The partnership allows us to expand the Breakneck Ridge Trail Stewards Program in new and exciting ways—including longer days, a longer season, more stewards and extended Leave-No-Trace and natural resource protection training.”

ABOUT HHLT

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust is a community-based, accredited, non-profit conservation organization with a mission to protect and preserve the natural resources, rural character and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands. www.hhlt.org

ABOUT NYNJTC

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is the region’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to building, maintaining and protecting trails and the lands they traverse. Powered by volunteers, the NYNJTC connects outdoor-loving people with stewardship opportunities to preserve the integrity of trails and natural areas and inspire a deeper appreciation for the care that open space requires. www.nynjtc.org

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