

# Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

## POESTENKILL COMMUNITY FOREST

### NOTABLE BENEFITS



RECREATION



FOREST-BASED PRODUCTS



EDUCATION

ACRES: 350

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2014

OWNERSHIP: Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

MANAGEMENT: Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

COMMUNITY SERVED: Town of Poestenkill, New York

POPULATION: 4,490

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST: \$2,011,000

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:



■ Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

■ Cost Share

For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits provided by this forest and others, go to the full report at [www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests](http://www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests)



**Rensselaer Plateau Alliance** (RPA) is an organization that works with the community to conserve forests and other ecologically important areas on the Rensselaer Plateau. RPA has developed two community forests in the region, the first of which was Poestenkill Community Forest (PCF). In 2012, RPA identified the desire to create a community forest and established a committee to proactively search for a parcel of land that would maximize the benefits to the community. In 2014, RPA acquired the 350-acre parcel PCF. The acquisition was funded by a U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP) grant of \$150,000, a \$100,000 bargain sale donation from the seller, and an \$80,000 loan from The Conservation Fund which was paid off on schedule with contributions from over 100 donors, two private foundations, and timber harvest revenue.

PCF is a successful example of how the CFP supports local community-driven initiatives to protect forestland for the benefit of communities. The forest serves as a demonstration area of best management practices for forest stewardship, provides recreational trails for residents and visitors, and is a venue for a variety of other educational programs for adults and children.



**Supporting the forest products industry:** PCF protects an important swath of the forested Rensselaer Plateau, which is comprised mostly of privately owned land. RPA developed a Forest Management Plan for the forest in 2016, to guide its use as a demonstration forest and training site for best forestry practices. A recent harvest that was focused on timber stand improvement in PCF and AFCF yielded **\$16,550** in revenue, which will be reinvested back into the larger RPA community forest portfolio, along with the revenue from sustainable harvests on RPA's community forest lands in the future.

**Enabling recreation:** The PCF contains an old network of logging roads and newly built trails that are used for hiking, dog walking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and orienteering as well as a children's fairy house trail that was developed by a local Eagle Scout. RPA estimates about 800 people use these trails in a typical year, mostly from Rensselaer County, providing **\$12,000** in recreational value to residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to an uptick in visitation, which generates a higher level of benefits. There is also vast potential to expand the opportunities available through connections to other recreation lands, like the adjacent 750-acre Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area.

**Enhancing education:** PCF is used for educational events, naturalist programs, woods walks, and a children's journey stick program, as well as chainsaw safety and logger rescue training, with vocational classes being planned in partnership with the New York Forest Owners Association, Empire State Forest Products Association and New York Logger Training, Inc. The Dyken Pond Environmental Center uses the PCF to promote service learning and citizen science projects with local school districts. Rensselaer Youth Outdoors also uses PCF for the Forest Conservation Corps program, a week-long service-learning program that combines volunteer work with professional development training to prepare teens to enter the work force, perform community service, and apply for college programs.



MARGARET HAINES

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The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

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