



December 2023 Newsletter



Winter Solstice Firepit 2022

Because of You

I want to express our deepest gratitude to you for being part of our incredible community this year. Whether you donated funds, volunteered time, contributed in-kind gifts, or participated in events, it's **because of you** that Steep Rock has been so successful. **Because of you**-- we realized a dream by adding 206 strategic conservation acres to our Hidden Valley Preserve. **Because of you**—over 40 rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants and animals find safe refuge in our preserves. **Because of you**—our rapid response team was able to keep trails safe and clear after volatile storms impacted the area. **Because of you**—we rehabilitated the iconic River's Edge (Goat) Trail and added a new trail at Hillside Farm. **Because of you**—Judea Garden celebrated 15 seasons of growing and giving over 50,000lbs of organic produce to those in need. **Because of you**—hundreds of school students were able to play in our fields and experience the joys of the natural world. And **because of you**—Steep Rock continues to build on its 100-year legacy of protecting what you love in the

Litchfield Hills. **In recognition of you**, I hope you'll take a moment to view our [>2023 Gratitude Report](#) . On behalf of all of us at Steep Rock, thank you for being an essential part of our success. We wish you a happy and healthy holiday season and a year of abundance in 2024. See you on our trails!

Brian Hagenbuch, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Featured Highlights



Steep Rockers Transform Meeker Trail

The "Steep Rockers"--a highly trained group of SRA staff and volunteers skilled in advanced rockwork--began creating a series of stone steps in 2022. Phase 1 of the project, totaling 20 stone steps, was completed this year and is now open to hikers. Rocks of all sizes, shapes, and weights are "harvested" from the surrounding forest then carefully moved, shaped, and set into the trail. Phase 2, including another 8-10 steps, is slated for

completion in 2024. The steps will significantly reduce trail compaction and erosion, protect tree root systems, and enhance hiker safety for generations to come. Special thanks to Artie Hidalgo and Kent Stivers of the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew for offering the specialized training. [\[more\]](#)



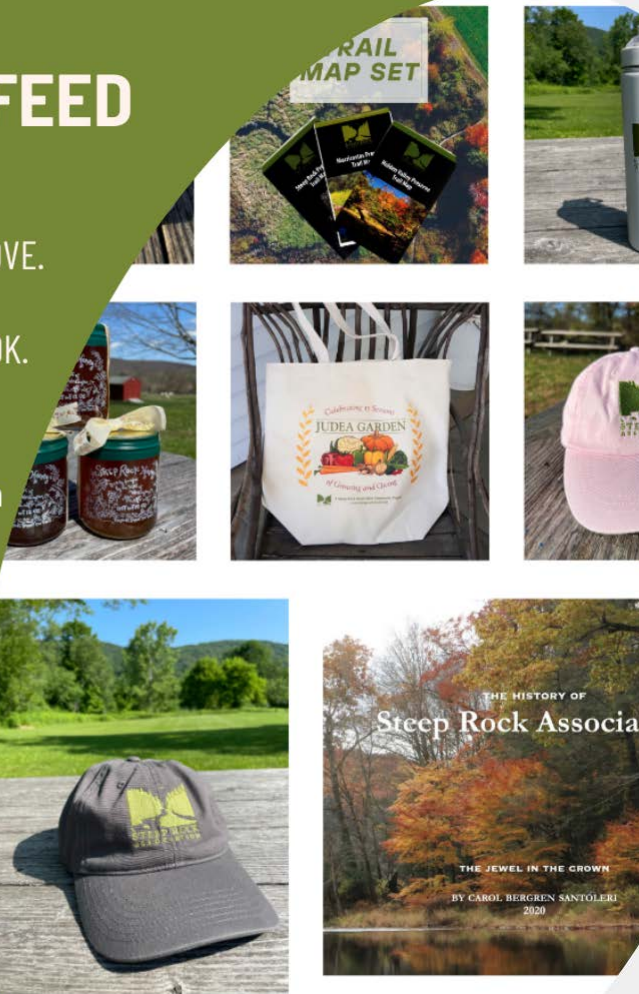
Mowing to Manage Habitats

Many of you have noticed the recent mowing we've performed in our preserves. SRA habitat management strategies include brush-hogging and selective cutting on some fields between October and March in order to maintain suitable conditions for species that prefer early successional habitats (open fields). Cutting in the fall and winter is safer because it's outside the breeding and feeding season for plants and animals. To learn more about our management strategies and the importance of maintaining field habitats for biological diversity, click [\[more\]](#)

SHOP OUR INSTAGRAM FEED NOW!

SUPPORT THE TRAILS YOU LOVE.
GET COOL STUFF.
ON INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK.

@steeprockassociation



Get Great Gifts, Support Great Trails!

Still looking for last minute gifts for your favorite Steep Rock fan? We've got The History of Steep Rock Association book, hats, honey, trail maps, and water bottles - the perfect gifts for the hiker in your life--available on both our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram Shops](#). If you're in the Washington area, you can save on shipping by shopping local! Steep Rock Honey is available at [Hickory Stick Bookshop](#), [The Smithy Market & The Smithy Cafe at 9 Main](#), and [J. Seitz & Co.](#) Trail Map sets are at the [The Po Cafe](#) and [The Hickory Stick Bookshop](#), and The History of Steep Rock Association Book is sold at The [Hickory Stick Bookshop](#). Of course, if you're in town, stop by our office at 116 Christian Street, say hello, and pick them up in person! Happy Holidays.

Maximize Your Impact with Non-Cash Gifts

Did you know that many of our supporters give non-cash gifts, such as stocks, QCDs and grants from donor advised funds? We encourage you to explore these “tax smart” options, which offer you tax benefits while providing us with sustained support. [\[more\]](#)

Upcoming Events

- **Dec. 8 - [Holiday in the Depot](#)**
Join us for Washington’s Annual Holiday in the Depot. Santa, Christmas carols, shopping, festivities and more!
- **Dec. 17- [Christmas Bird Count](#)**
Your eyes, ears, and enthusiasm are needed to collect data for the nation’s longest-running community science bird project, Audubon’s 124rd Christmas Bird Count. All are welcome to participate!
- **Dec. 21 - [Winter Solstice Firepit Celebration](#)**
Join us to bid farewell to shorter days and welcome increasing daylight. We will gather and celebrate with refreshments and friends around the fire!



Steep Rock Preserve: Tunnel Road Bridge Closed in 2023

The Town of Washington is replacing Tunnel Road Bridge over the Shepaug River. We anticipate the bridge opening in December. There is **no parking or access to Steep Rock Preserve coming from River Road or Lower Church Hill Road.** The only vehicle access is Spring Hill Road off Route 199/Roxbury Road. **Horse trailers prohibited and SR1, SR2 campsites closed for the 2023 season.**

Our Contact Information

{{Organization Name}}
{{Organization Address}}
{{Organization Phone}}
{{Organization Website}}

{{Unsubscribe}}

