



BLACK ROCK FOREST

65 Reservoir Road
Cornwall, NY 12518-2135
T 845-534-4517
F 845-534-6975
office.manager@blackrockforest.org
www.blackrockforest.org

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Past Chairs

William T. Golden (1989-2007)
Founding Chair

Sibyl R. Golden (2007-2017)

Black Rock Forest to Dedicate Second Phase of Visitor Access Pathway

Renamed for Sibyl Golden

0.6-mile path provides accessible deep-forest hiking

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Contact: Brienne Cliadakis
Interim Director of Development
845-534-4517, ext. 26
bcliadakis@blackrockforest.org

Black Rock Forest will celebrate the memory of Sibyl R. Golden, the longtime board chair of the Black Rock Forest Consortium, on Thursday, June 6, with the opening of the second and final phase of the Black Rock Forest Visitor Access Pathway — and by renaming the entire 0.6-mile-long, easily accessible trail as ***Sibyl's Path***.

Golden, the daughter of William T. Golden, the founder of the Black Rock Forest Consortium, was board chair of the Consortium from 2007 to 2015 and then served as its co-chair from 2015 until her death in 2017.

Black Rock Forest Consortium shortened its name in 2018 to Black Rock Forest, to better reflect its commitment to serve the Hudson Highlands through conservation, a public summer science camp, and numerous programs for visitors.

In addition to Black Rock Forest, Golden served on the boards of the American Museum of Natural History, Barnard College, the New York Hall of Science, the Hebrew Free Loan Society and many other institutions.

Her effect at the Forest was felt throughout every level of the organization: membership nearly doubled during her time leading its board, while student visitors increased by 30 percent, and researchers published 60 peer-reviewed journal papers and graduate theses during her tenure.

But perhaps her greatest impact was in helping to create the framework for a conservation easement between New York State and the Open Space Institute that protected 3,777 acres of Black Rock Forest. The easement — the largest-ever of its kind in the Highlands — was announced by Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Earth Day two years ago and stands as a huge milestone for public access to the outdoors in New York State.

The Visitor Access Pathway is a gentle walking and hiking path that — even deep within Black Rock Forest — creates a safe connection for senior, physically challenged and beginning hikers. It's a fitting memorial to Sibyl, who spent so much of her life enjoying and advocating for the natural world, even as she suffered from ALS later in life.

Phase 1 of the path, a fully ADA-accessible trail that's more than a quarter-mile long, opened in late 2016, while a second phase of identical length was constructed in 2018 and reaches Mailey's Mill Bridge, where it connects with the nearly 4,000-acre forest's larger network of hiking trails.

In all, the two pathways combine to create more than a mile-long roundtrip of remarkably accessible trail winding through some of the region's most demanding but rewarding and scenic outdoor terrain.

Built into steep talus and supported in places with eight-foot stone walls, the second VAP phase is more challenging than the first. The new trail is equipped with railings along steep slopes, and is appropriate for beginning and casual hikers, as well as people who are walking and pushing strollers.

Individuals using wheelchairs or walkers should proceed with caution in deciding whether to use the steeper sections, noted Eddie Walsh, the trail specialist at Tahawus Trails, who designed and constructed both phases of the pathway. The second phase differs from the first where the trail narrows in spots from eight to six feet wide; its grade also exceeds 8 percent in some places.

To assist users, both phases of the trail were built with the same easy-on-the-feet packed stone as their base. Sibyl's Path is equipped with ADA-accessible benches, made with wood from Black Rock Forest, along the hiking corridor and at the phase 1 scenic overlook.

The second phase of the pathway, like the first, was built using funding (\$217,000 for phase 1; \$354,000 for phase 2) from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund.

"It's been very encouraging to receive such generous support from New York State, as well as from private donors and volunteers," said Bill Schuster, the executive director of Black Rock Forest. "It has allowed us to finish this important project, which creates a safe connection for our hikers and inspires people of all ages and abilities to get outdoors and experience the natural beauty of the Hudson Highlands."

Erik Kulleseid, the commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation, as well as guests from partner organizations such as the Open Space Institute, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and members of the Golden family are expected to attend the opening and renaming ceremony. Please make plans to join us on June 6 as we honor Sibyl by creating new and better ways for everyone to access the natural world.

Black Rock Forest is a non-profit organization with a mission of advancing scientific understanding of the natural world through research, education and conservation programs. The organization maintains a 3,914-acre forest, a biological field station, and two award winning green buildings in the Hudson Highlands, 60 miles north of NYC. For more information on Black Rock Forest, visit www.blackrockforest.org.