

Vermont TRAILS & GREENWAYS



Volume 4, Number 3

Winter 2001/2002

Permits for new trails and trail additions

Notes from a panel discussion at Governor's Conference on Recreation

— by Ben Rose, VTGC Chair —

Act 250 trail permitting has raised many questions and concerns. The 58th Annual Governor's Conference on Recreation held this past October featured a workshop called *Permitting Your Recreation Trail*. The following notes highlight the speakers' presentations (with author's apology for any misquotes, oversimplifications, or omissions).

✿ About Act 250 permits:

—Michael Zahner, Executive Director of the Vermont Environmental Board.

Act 250 jurisdiction is generally triggered by significant improvements on more than one acre of land, or more than 10 acres for projects in towns with zoning, or projects which are deemed to have a "public purpose." Trails included in the Vermont Trail System are deemed to have a public purpose. Accordingly, the jurisdictional threshold of impacted land for projects associated with these trails is likely to be 10 acres.

The Environmental Board has under consideration a draft jurisdictional policy regarding Vermont Recreational Trails dated January 9, 2001. Although not officially adopted, the draft policy serves as good general guidance:

- Assuming a six-foot-wide non-motorized corridor, a hiking trail should involve less than 10 acres if less than 13 miles in length.
- Similarly, a motorized recreational trail segment of 6 miles or less should involve less than 10 acres assuming a 12-foot-wide corridor.

Of course, there are lots of ifs, buts, and special circumstances; so early on, check with your local Act 250 District Coordinator for jurisdictional determination!

Note: Questions for further discussion: Are all trails "public projects"?; Must a trail already exist on the ground to be designated as part of the Vermont Trail System under 10 V.S.A. Section 443?

✿ About local permitting requirements:

—Jon Groveman, Esq., Director of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Municipal Law Center.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (229-9111) is a good resource for municipal officials and volunteers. Local permit requirements vary among municipalities. For example, old class four roads (and sometimes even class three road) may be viewed as "de facto trails." When a property owner wants to develop along the road, they request road maintenance services from the town, and the de facto trail is lost. Class four roads, as non-maintained public easements, can be reclassified by the town as "trails"; the legal process for this is "throwing up" a road. Every town has a policy regarding class four road maintenance. Your town's Municipal Plan can also provide importance signals to developers by identifying recreational corridors of value to the community.

✿ About trail proposal steps:

—Gina Campoli, Growth Analyst for the Agency of Natural Resources.

The Department of Environmental Conservation, which is within the Agency of Natural Resources, administers permits. As general guidance for siting trails in permissible locations, "stay away from water in all its forms"—a 50-foot buffer on wetlands is generally required. Try to incorporate natural resource issues early in trail planning. Invite the Department's resource specialists to review

your trail project before a route is "cast in concrete." When planning a project, be sure to:

- Obtain maps from the town clerk.
- Describe the project on maps and in written narrative.
- Talk to your District Environmental Coordinator.
- Contact the DEC wetlands program.



Abigail

✿ About trail funding:

—John Narowski, Environmental Services Engineer for the Agency of Transportation.

Projects of the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS) generally involve federal funding, and VTRANS provides environmental services specialists who focus on getting necessary permits. Section 106, for example, requires an affirmative finding regarding Historic Preservation.



Notes from the Chair

The Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Newsletter

Produced by the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council with support from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and assistance from the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program.

Layout by Kate Carter.

Newsletter contributions are welcome from both members and nonmembers.

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Appalachian Mountain Club, Catamount Trail Association, Cornwall Bicycle Club, Cross Vermont Trail Association, Essex Town Community Development Office, Friends of the West River Trail, Green Mountain Club, Mad River Path Association, Morristown Recreation Committee, National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program, Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Northern VT RC&D Council, Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Norwich Conservation Commission, Poulney Conservation Commission, Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, VT Agency of Transportation, VT Association of Snow Travelers, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation, VT Mountain Bike Advocates, VT Outdoor Guide Association, VT Youth Conservation Corps, Westmore Association Trails, Winooski Parks & Recreation Department, Winooski Valley Park District.

Places in the wilderness for everyone

But not everyone in all places

As I listened recently to testimony at a West Mountain Wildlife Management Area public hearing, I worried about the future of Vermont's trails. Vermont has a long and proud tradition of peaceful co-existence between diverse users in the woods.

It is sad to see so much polarization and distrust over the future of the former Champion Lands. Hunters fear that access to the "core reserve area" may someday be closed. The Agency of Natural Resources struggles to develop a plan that satisfies legislative intent and responds to easement language and ecological recommendations. Wilderness advocates call for quiet places within the overall Champion Lands mosaic, and wish they could be larger. Camp leaseholders see unwelcome changes coming, and grieve. Nobody is happy.

I believe that as members of the trails community, we have a role to play in bridging these perspectives. Trails groups should stand united behind an inclusive vision for open land and public recreational access in Vermont. Here are some ideas for an inclusive trails vision:

1. Communicate—Keep talking to each other. There is no substitute for personal communication in such a small state.

2. Zone management—We must be willing to accept some zone management of public lands, recognizing that there are appropriate places for motorized recreation, places for mountain bikes, places for equestrians, places which can be successfully shared by many user groups, and some places where only pedestrian travel is appropriate. There are even a few precious places where there should be no trails at all. The alternative, a free-for-all, would increase conflicts and degrade everybody's experiences on public lands.

3. Hunting and fishing—These are important and valued traditions in Vermont. Lawful hunting and fish-

ing should never be displaced from public land by other recreational pursuits. Hunters should feel welcome on and near Vermont's trails. And everybody should have the good sense to wear blaze orange during hunting season.

4. United we stand—We should all join together as users of Vermont's outdoors to resist the erosion of the open land base which makes the pie smaller for all outdoors people. When new roads are built without ample provision for safe and appealing pedestrian and bicycle travel, it gets harder to access Vermont except in our automobiles—and the pie gets smaller.

When land gets subdivided or developed without regard for retaining trail connections, the pie gets smaller. And when private land gets posted because a landowner has experienced disrespectful use, the pie gets smaller. We need to invest at the local level in keeping what we've got.

5. Nearby trails—People need trails in close proximity to their homes. As Vermont's population grows, the need to plan and implement new recreation corridors increases and so does the complexity of planning and permitting new paths.

Unless Vermont invests the dollars for communities and organizations to plan and permit new recreation corridors, we will become increasingly dependent on our vehicles and increasingly cut off from our open lands. *Trails are a worthwhile investment. It is only going to get harder if we wait. We're in this together.*

Best wishes for a peaceful and healthy new year. Please remember to renew your VT Trails and Greenways membership.

—Ben Rose

The drawings in this issue are courtesy of the students of Mrs. Michlovitz's class at the Hartland Elementary School; they drew pictures of what they like to do for fun in the outdoors!

Grant News

Vermont Recreation Trails Grants

"To provide trail opportunities to all citizens of Vermont within 15 minutes of their home."

The Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program is **soliciting proposals from municipalities and non-profit organizations for recreation trail grants under the 2002-2003 round of funding.** Approximately \$350,000 in matching funds were available last year and the Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation anticipates at least as much for the current year. Funds require a minimum 20-percent sponsor match for all projects, except for mini-grants that require no local match.

Up to \$3,000 of available funds will be set aside for the mini-grant option. Mini-grants of up to \$500 are available at 100 percent of project costs to local governments, community volunteer groups, educational institutions, civic groups, or approved non-profit organizations with recreation trails in their goals. Mini-grants may provide seed money to perform certain recreation trail activities or to provide training, to develop a trail, or to purchase educational tools or materials. Mini-grants must clearly pose no negative historical or environmental impacts and will ideally include a community service element.

The Recreation Trails Grant Program provides matching grants for maintenance on existing trails; restoration of areas damaged by use of trails; development of trail-side and trailhead facilities; provision of features which facilitate access to and use of trails by persons with disabilities; construction of new trails on state, municipal or private lands where a recreational need for such construction is shown; preparation of and printing of trail-related maps and other educational information and materials; trail protection including fee simple or easement acquisition; and purchase of hand tools for trail work.

The program is administered by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Rec-



Morgan

reation of the Agency of Natural Resources.

Applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on **Friday, February 1, 2002**, in order to be considered under this round of funding.

For more information on this program, contact Sherry Smecker, Recreation & Trails Grants Administrator, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, 103 South Main Street, Bldg. 10 South, Waterbury, VT 05671-0604, or call 802-241-3690 or email ssmecker@fpr.anr.state.vt.us.

Land & Water Conservation Funds

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation is **soliciting proposals from municipalities for grants under the Land & Water Conservation Fund Program.** Approximately \$360,000 in federal matching funds were available for competitive grants last year and we anticipate at least as much for the current year. A minimum 50 percent local match will be required.

Eligible applicants under this program include governmental entities. Eligible activities include outdoor recreation development or enhancement and land acquisition to serve conservation or future outdoor recreation development.

Applications must be received no later than **4:30 PM on Friday, March 1, 2002**, in order to be considered under this round of funding. For more information on this program, contact Sherry Smecker, Grants

Administrator for LWCF & Recreation Trails Grants Programs, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, 103 South Main Street, Bldg. 10 South, Waterbury, VT 05671-0604, or call 802-241-3690, email ssmecker@fpr.anr.state.vt.us or visit www.state.vt.us/anr/fpr/recreation/index.htm.



Jazmine

Statewide News

What are we thinking?

At the October Governor's Conference on Recreation, the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council hosted three informative and well-attended sessions, and wrapped up with a Trails and Greenways Roundtable. Here's what was on everyone's mind:

- Managing a trail system with lots of other users on it, for which the landowner wants you to be responsible (in addition to your specific use).
- Tying local efforts into a statewide system and promoting it effectively.
- Figuring out how many trail users you have.

- Trail easement valuations.
- Landowner agreements.
- Long-term trail protection.
- Getting projects started.

One suggestion for the issue of how to value trail easements was to create an "easement corner" in the VTGC News. Anyone interested in participating in an email exchange about easement valuation and related topics is encouraged to contact Dottie Weinstein, Trail Protection Director of the Catamount Trail Association at 864-5794, ctamail@aol.com. She will put together an article for a future newsletter.



Chris

National survey of the Vermont Visitor: Outdoor Recreation Supplement, May 2001

Four-season recreation and nature-based tourism are extremely lucrative segments of tourism industry and they have a substantial economic impact on the Vermont and its rural communities. This spring, the University of Vermont released some interesting statistics that reveal just how important this segment of our economy is.

- 22% of Vermont visitors participated in outdoor activities
- Of these outdoor participants, 50% participated in wildlife watching, 33.5% hiking, 27.5% in water recreation, 23.3% in fishing, 14% in canoeing/kayaking, 11% in biking, and 10.2% in hunting.
- On average the outdoor visitor visited 2.5 times and stayed 8.1 nights throughout the year.
- About 50% of outdoor visitors are repeat Vermont visitors.
- A majority of outdoor recreation visitors (62.7%) participated in one activity while 16% participated in three or more.
- 60% of outdoor recreation visitors were from the New England and Middle Atlantic census regions.
- 51% of outdoor recreation visitors had an annual household income of \$50,000 or greater versus 44% of all visitors.
- 42.6% of visitors had a college degree, of which

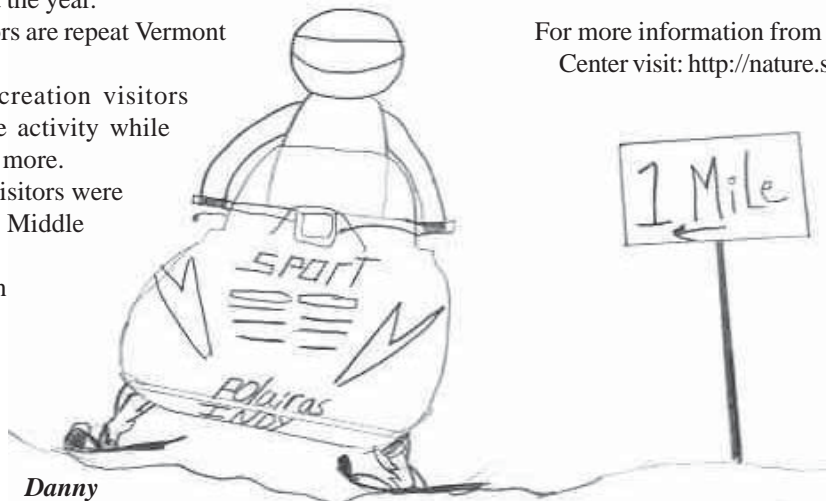
22.6% had post college graduate degrees.

- Outdoor recreation visitors typically have a party size of 3.3 persons and visit 2.5 times a year, compared with 2.0 for other visitors.
- On average, outdoor recreation visitors stay 8.1 nights compared with 4.7 nights for other visitors.
- Outdoor recreation visitors spend more than other visitors, with an average, expenditure of \$971 over the year. (Average is \$645)
- 33.3% of visitation occurred in the summer, 25.2% in the fall, 20.5% in the winter, and 21.0% in the spring.
 - Almost 50% of outdoor recreation visitors come to Vermont in at least two seasons, 20% came in all seasons.

For more information from the Vermont Tourism Data Center visit: <http://nature.snr.uvm.edu/vt/dc/> (Vermont

Tourism Data Center, UVM & Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing University of Vermont source).

Thanks to Vermont Outdoor Guide Association (www.voga.org) for providing this data for the newsletter.



Danny

Member News

Bike Ferry a splash!

— by Chapin Spencer —

Every trail should have a fun boat ride in the middle!" a young bike rider declared this summer. Local Motion and the Island Line Development Committee whole-heartedly agree.

The young rider was on the Winooski River Bike Ferry, which makes a critical connection on the Island Line Rail Trail between abutments of a dismantled train bridge. This season, the 24-foot pontoon ferry logged 20,000 fun-filled boardings. Seniors on tandem bicycles, babies in strollers and everyone in between hopped on board to savor the spectacular views along the emerging Island Line Rail Trail.

Holy Grail of rail trails

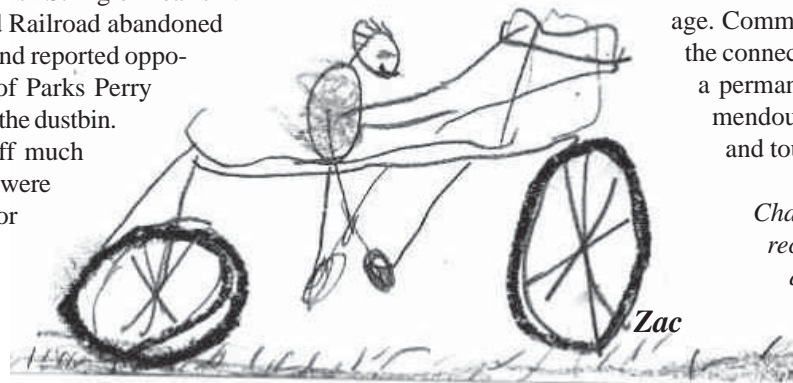
Local Motion and the Island Line Development Committee are leading efforts to transform the historic 41-mile Rutland Railroad Island Line into a rail trail from Burlington and Colchester up through the Champlain Islands. Obstacles along the way are bridges that were dismantled 30 years ago. That's where bike ferries come are handy.

If advocates clear hurdles this winter, a second ferry—the Allen Point Bike Ferry—could launch service next season. The two ferries will link the Burlington Bike Path, Colchester Causeway Park and South Hero Rec Path into a 17-mile rail trail through Lake Champlain, the centerpiece of which is the 3½-mile marble causeway connecting the mainland to the islands.

A 37-year-old idea

All good ideas aren't quickly adopted. In 1964, Governor Hoff first articulated this "String of Pearls" vision a year after the Rutland Railroad abandoned the line. Political struggles and reported opposition from Commissioner of Parks Perry Merrill sent the proposal into the dustbin. Soon after, the State sold off much of the railbed and the bridges were supposedly scrapped for razor blades.

It wasn't until the early 1980's that a few Burlington citizens including a young doctor named Howard Dean began to de-



velop the Burlington Bike Path on the old Rutland Railroad Island Line. Thanks to trail advocates in Burlington, Colchester and South Hero, who have now rehabilitated almost all of the railbed up to South Hero village, the last step is to cross the two gaps where bridges were removed.

North of South Hero village, much of the railbed is privately owned. The Island Line Development Committee, with representatives from each town, will work to identify potential routes on or adjacent to the railbed where permission is granted or find alternative routes where needed.

Bike Ferries: A Great Connection!

For many reasons, bike ferries are a great way to "bridge" gaps in the trail and to connect communities. Ferry captains are the eyes, ears and ambassadors of the trail. Advocates can measure demand for such a trail linkage. Communities can get comfortable with the connection before investing money into a permanent bridge. Bike ferries are tremendously fun attractions for residents and tourists alike!

Chapin Spencer is the Executive Director of Local Motion, a non-profit developing and advocating non-motorized trails, routes and facilities to promote cycling, inline skating, and walking (www.localmotionvt.org).



Member News

Weather takes toll on Long Trail, shelters

By Ben Rose, GMC Executive Director, 802-244-7037 ext. 12

The summer of 2001 was extraordinarily dry. Rainfall was several inches below average, and usually reliable water sources along Vermont's mountain hiking trails stopped flowing. At the Green Mountain Club's Hiker Center, responding with up-to-date information to inquiries from long-distance hikers about where they could expect to find water became a daily challenge.

Despite the drought, summer 2001 was busy and productive. Among other projects, GMC field crews rehabilitated miles of trails in the Breadloaf Wilderness, many heavily damaged by the one-two punch of the Ice Storm of '98 and Hurricane Floyd of '99. The GMC has been working since 1910 to build, maintain, and protect the Long Trail and its side trails. The 445 miles of hiking trail within the Long Trail system comprise roughly half of all Vermont's designated hiking trail mileage.

Thanks largely to the volunteers of the Northern Frontier Section, two lean-to shelters were replaced: Laura Woodward Shelter, which sits on the north side of Jay Peak, and Shooting Star Shelter, the second northernmost shelter on the Long Trail, which had been crushed under the weight of last winter's remarkable snows. These shelter projects went smoothly, despite an unforeseen last-minute glitch: the helicopter scheduled to fly in logs and other components of the new shelters was grounded for a week by FAA airspace restrictions in the aftermath of September 11.

The Long Trail Protection Campaign had a successful 15th year, with four new parcel acquisitions. In addition, GMC was able to acquire the Black Falls Tract in Jay, Westfield, and Montgomery. This beautiful 3,675 acres, prominently visible from miles of the Long Trail, has now been added as a primitive area within the Jay State Forest.

Mad River Cooperative donated a permanent easement across its ridgeline property for the Long Trail and Theron Dean Shelter, assuring the future of 1.5 miles of the Long Trail. Following completion of this year's projects, only 9 miles of the Long Trail and 5.5 miles of side trails remain vulnerable to closure by private landowners.



Aaron

Web site grows, programs expand at VOGA

By Graydon Stevens, VOGA Executive Director, 802-425-6211, info@voga.org

As our membership grows, so grows our web site. We have over 250 pages on line, driven by two domain names. The Vermont Recreation Pages, www.voga.org, is a directory of recreation resources for most activities in Vermont. It provides a free listing to trail organizations on our Trails and Waterways Page at www.voga.org/Vermont_Recreation_Trails.htm. Please visit this site to make sure your organization is listed and also check for errors. For corrections or new listings, email Gray at info@voga.org or call 802-425-6211 and I'll be glad to make changes to the site.

Watch for our women's outdoor programs. Vermont Outdoors Woman (VOW), a division of VOGA, will be sponsoring women's programs starting this winter with a winter camping and survival weekend in February. One of the instructors will be John Gibbons, grandson of Euell Gibbons, who operates The Wilderness Learning Center in Chateaugay, NY. This will be a great opportunity for women to learn winter skills and to get together for a winter outing. Call our office if you are interested or visit VOW's web site at www.voga.org/vermont_outdoors_woman.htm.

As a new service at VOGA, we are developing and hosting web pages for businesses that don't want to spend a fortune on a site. Give us a call if you are interested.

MVRT signs

By Cynthia Scott

The Northwest Vermont Rail Trail Council recently installed green wooden Town boundary signs along the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail. VT Forest Parks and Recreation installed the signs, which identify the seven towns through which the MVRT passes. Council volunteers installed them and VAOT District 8 kindly supplied the posts and bolts.

Westmore Association

By Paul Moffat, Chair

Our Trail Crew works every summer on about 25 miles of trails in and around Westmore/Lake Willoughby. This year, trail signs were refurbished and free maps were distributed to local stores and campgrounds. New maps are planned for next year. A small army of dedicated volunteers cleared blow-downs and brush from trails, including the Town Forest bog. The Northeast Kingdom Conservation Service Corps of the VT Leadership Center put in three training days of work in addition to leading volunteers on National Trails Day (June 2) and a Green Mountain Club group working on the Bald Mountain Trail.

Member News

Catamount Trail hosts more ski tours, welcomes snowshoers

By Ted Milks, Catamount Trail Association, 864-5794

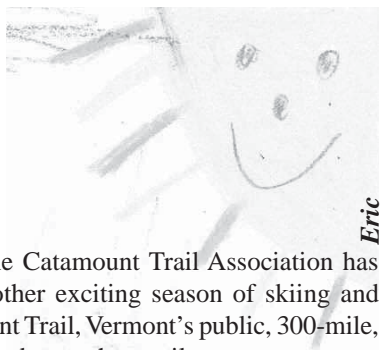
Winter is on the way and the Catamount Trail Association has been busy preparing for another exciting season of skiing and snowshoeing on the Catamount Trail, Vermont's public, 300-mile, end-to-end backcountry ski and snowshoe trail.

The CTA offers free guided day tours on the Catamount Trail, which are led by volunteers who are familiar with the route and enjoy helping skiers discover the beauty of backcountry skiing. A variety of skill levels are required, depending on the particular tour. There is something for everyone, from gentle "Elder tours" for those looking to enjoy a social ski at a slower pace, to hardcore back-country adventures for advanced skiers. This year, the CTA's tour and events schedule is bigger and better than ever.

In addition to day tours, there will be several snowshoe tours led by the CTA's Executive Director, Ted Milks, as well as overnight trips at local yurts, backcountry telemark clinics by the North American Telemark Organization, and other special events.

2001 was an exciting year for the CTA's Trail Protection Program. The miles of trail on private lands permanently protected through trail access easements were extended by 4.2 miles. Since the CTA began a pro-active trail protection campaign in 1998, it has permanently protected over 17 miles of the trail. These efforts are the key to assuring that the Trail remains available for future generations. 180 miles of the 300-mile corridor cross the lands of over 350 private landowners, through their generous permission. Rising development pressures and changing ownership along much of the Trail makes keeping it open increasingly tenuous.

The CTA board and staff is fully committed to these efforts and welcome the financial support of those who value preserving winter recreational opportunities in Vermont. To learn more about the CTA's winter events calendar or its Trail Protection program, visit our web site at www.catamounttrail.org, or call the CTA office at 802-864-5794.



Eric

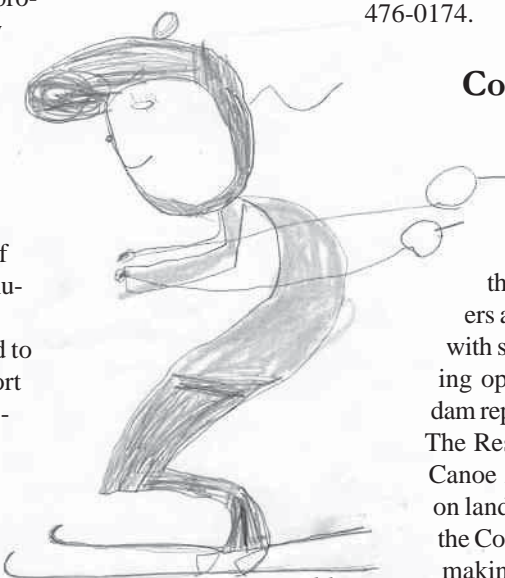
Innovative water diversion

By Kate Carter, Vermont Mountain Bike Advocates (VMBA) 802-244-5796, www.vmba.org

If you haven't ridden your mountain bike on the Cotton Brook Trail lately, you're in for a little surprise. Sixteen scary looking black objects are installed on the steep downhill section and at first sight your impulse is to get off your bike and walk. The black things are innovative water diversion devices installed by The Vermont Youth Conservation Corp this past summer. They are made of 4-inch-wide strips of hard rubber, recycled from old machine belts. Each strip, approximately 16 feet long, is mounted along the length of a 16-foot-long 2 X 6 plank. The belt and plank are not flush and the plank is buried so that the rubber belt extends above the ground. The planks are situated at an angle to divert running surface water off the trail. When a biker hits the rubber strip, it folds over, so the rider feels only a bump. Once the rider passes by, the strip pops back up to its original position.

Two of the innovative devices were installed by Vermont Mountain Bike Advocates during the summer of 2000. They proved durable and effective and were inexpensive to make. To see them in action, go to the Cotton Brook Mountain Bike Trail in Mount Mansfield State Forest. From the Little River Canoe Access in Moscow, go 7.8 miles up Cotton Brook Road (no motor vehicles) and turn left on the mountain bike trail. Start downhill and in about 400 yards you'll see the first one. It's the scariest. They get tamer the further down you ride.

For more information on these unique water diversion devices contact Kate Carter, Vermont Mountain Bike Advocates, 802-244-5796, or Diana Frederick, Dept. Forest Parks & Rec., 802-476-0174.



Kathleen

Cotton Brook Extension Trail

On September 20, 2001, Commissioner Motyka approved the designation of the Reservoir Loop Trail as a temporary addition to the Cotton Brook Mountain Bike Trail. The designation legitimizes the use the trail is currently receiving by mountain bikers as well as walkers, runners, dogs, and people with strollers. It provides additional mountain biking opportunities in the Cotton Brook area until dam repairs are completed and the reservoir is filled. The Reservoir Loop Trail starts at the Little River Canoe Access and Heads south for about 2 miles on land that is normally under water. It connects to the Cotton Brook Trail just below the storage shed, making a fun, 5-mile beginner loop. VMBA has plans to install signs next spring.

103 South Main St.
Building 10 South
Waterbury, VT 05671-0604



**Vermont Trails and
Greenways Council**

2002-2003 VERMONT TRAILS AND GREENWAYS COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Membership extends annually from June 1 - May 31

NEW **OR** **RENEWAL**

Date Received/Amount _____ **Check No.** _____

ORGANIZATION NAME _____

CONTACT NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

STATE _____ **ZIP** _____

TELEPHONE _____ **FAX** _____

EMAIL _____ **WEB SITE** _____

PLEASE GIVE US A BRIEF DESCRIPTION ON YOUR ORGANIZATION _____

DO YOU OR YOUR ORGANIZATION PERFORM ON-THE-GROUND TRAIL WORK? _____

Annual membership dues:

- Commercial** \$50
- Statewide** \$30
- Regional** \$25
- Local/Community** \$20
- Individual/Friend** \$10

Please make checks payable to:
Vermont Trails and Greenways Council
103 South Main St., Building 10 South,
Waterbury, VT 05671-0604.

**Questions? Call Sherry Smecker, Recreation &
Trails Administrative Assistant, 802-241-3690.**
Thank You!