

Vermont TRAILS & GREENWAYS



Volume 5, Number 1

Winter 2002/2003

Got a good project?

Over \$900,000 available for trails, recreation and conservation projects!

The Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program is soliciting proposals from municipalities and non-profit organizations for recreation trail grants under the **2003-2004** round of funding. Approximately **\$380,000** 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 of up to \$500 that require no local match.

Grant categories are: (1) maintenance on existing trails; (2) restoration of areas damaged by use of trails; (3) development of trailside and trailhead facilities; (4) provision of features which facilitate access to and use of trails by persons with physical challenges; (5) construction of new trails on state, municipal or private lands where a recreational need for such construction is shown; (6) preparation and printing of trail-related maps, studies, and other educational information and materials related to trails; (7) trail protection including fee-simple title to property or easement acquisition for recreation trails or recreation trail corridors; and (8) purchase of hand tools for trail work.

Applications must be received by **4:30 PM on Friday, January 31, 2003**; upon approval, funding will be made available to the highest ranked projects in the spring of **2003**. For more information on this program, contact Sherry Smecker, Recreation & Trails Grants Administrator, VT Dept. Forests, Parks & Recreation, 103 South Main Street, Bldg. 10 South, Waterbury, VT 05671-0604, or call 802-241-3690. E-mail ssmecker@fpr.anr.state.vt.us.

Proposals from municipalities for grants under the **Land & Water Conservation Fund Program** are also being solicited. The L&WCF Program helps to create and maintain high-quality recreation areas and facilities and contributes to the protection of outdoor recreation resources. Eligible activities include acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. Approximately **\$545,000** 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

Grant deadlines:

- ▶ **Vermont Recreation Trails Grants applications due January 31, 2003.**
- ▶ **Land & Water Conservation Fund Program applications due Feb. 28, 2003.**
- ▶ **For a grant application and grant guidelines please visit www.state.vt.us/anr/fpr/recreation.**

is required. Eligible applicants under this program include governmental entities. Applications must be received no later than **4:30 PM on Friday, February 28, 2003**. The applications will then be reviewed and ranked by a five-member citizens committee using established review criteria. Upon approval, funding will be made available to the highest ranked projects in the summer of 2003.

For more information contact Sherry Smecker, L&WCF Grants Administrator, VT Dept. 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.

—Sherry Smecker



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, 802-244-5796.

Newsletter contributions are welcome from both members and nonmembers.

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Vermont Trails and Greenways Council

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Local, Regional, Commercial & Statewide Council Members:

Catamount Trail Association, Cross Vermont Trail Association, Comfort Inn, Green Mountain Horse Association, Hazen's Notch Association, Kingdom Trails Association, Local Motion, Inc., Mad River Path Association, Mad River Riding & Driving Club, Marcon Corporation, Middlebury Area Land Trust, Middlebury Bicycle Club, Morristown Trails Committee, National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program, Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Northern VT RC&D Council, Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Norwich Conservation Commission, Rails to Trails Conservancy, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, South Burlington Rec Path Committee, St. Michael's College Local Road Program, Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Tawanda Riding Club, VT Local Roads Program, 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, Williston Conservation Commission, Windham Regional Commission, Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association.

From the Chair

Thoughts on driving to work

I am driving to work, alone in the car with my thoughts and plastic mug of coffee. In a few minutes I'll exit the interstate at Waterbury, just like I do every other workday.

Instead of listening to the radio, today I'm pondering what to write in this column. This newsletter is generally seen by a modest number of people, mostly folks who already believe passionately in the value of trails. So, what shall I preach this time to you, the choir?

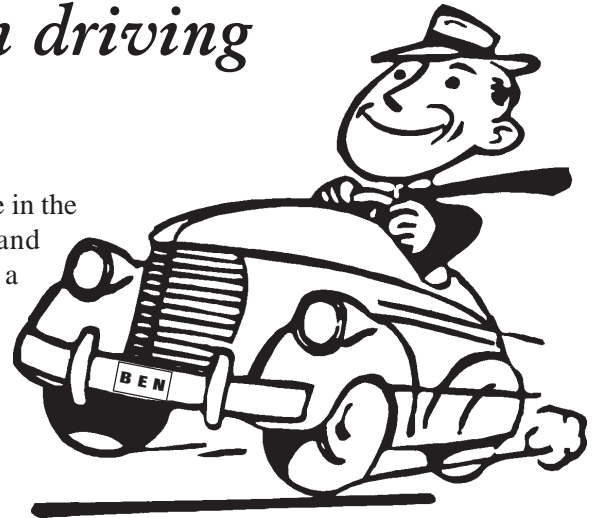
How about an uncomfortable jolt of honesty? Here it comes....

Dammit, this automobile commute every day is the central hypocrisy of my life. I know it is bad for the planet and unsustainable if billions of people do the same. But I'm not willing to move to where I work or quit my job, so here I sit. **Vrrrooom.**

Ouch. It took years to articulate this dilemma to myself, and more years to confess it in print. It will probably take another decade or so before my wife and I are willing to restructure our lives and act upon it. Eventually, I hope we will.

Hey, it is uncomfortable to discuss our addictions publicly. Being hooked on gasoline is a shameful dependency. But admitting it is a first step.

And once we start the conversation, the importance of trails and greenways comes into focus. If the history of Vermont has anything to teach, it is that human imprints on the landscape can fade over time. Few Vermonters living a hundred years ago could foresee how



Vermont looks today (i.e. 80 percent wooded, with healthy populations of deer, moose, beaver and bear...). Nor can we predict how Vermont will look in 2103. Perhaps the Interstate highways will not convey single-occupant vehicles. Perhaps Route 2 will be a path, not a road. Perhaps most workers will not commute 20 or 30 minutes each way, five days a week. Perhaps there will be several days a week when future Vermonters travel only by muscle power.

Maybe some of us will live to see a Vermont where automobiles are less central, and walking, bicycling and riding on horseback regain the status that these modes of transportation lost during the 20th century. If we are disciplined about building trails that connect our villages, schools, stores, and workplaces, instead of great bloody ribbons of asphalt that dissect our hills and valleys, do not assume that they can't become the essential transportation corridors of the future.

Listen to your heart, even if you still need to drive to work. And let's force ourselves to talk about it.

—Ben Rose

Statewide News

Legal issues concerning trail use

A summary from the Governor's Conference on Recreation

This fall, Ben Rose assembled an excellent panel of professionals to discuss the perennial topic of legal issues on trails. Ginny McGrath, George Stearns, John Riley, and Dave Sichel lent their considerable knowledge to an eager audience. In case you missed it, here are some of the highlights:

✓ When the state legislature was discussing landowner liability, they had insurance representatives come to the State House. The insurers told the legislators that there are **no** cases in Vermont where a landowner was sued by someone who was injured while recreating on their land. According to the Vermont Trial Lawyer's Association, there is a total absence of any case law in Vermont where a recreational user sued a landowner because they were injured while recreating on that person's land. There have been a couple of cases where an issue was settled out of court.

✓ Hosting a trail that is part of the Vermont Trails System (Title 10, Chapter 20) provides very substantial protection to any landowner, private or public.

✓ Under our landowner liability protection statute (Title 12, Chapter 203), a landowner is only liable for an intentional act or something worse than gross negligence; in

this case "landowner" refers not only to the title holder of the property, but to any group that has a trail license or easement on that property as well.

✓ As a general rule, when permission for use of land is given, it can never "ripen" into adverse possession; therefore, it is actually better for a landowner to give formal permission for trail access, either through a written agreement or revocable license, than not (case law under Title 12, Sect 502).

✓ Title 12, Chapter 201 provides immunity for directors and officers of non-profit corporations, if they serve without compensation.

✓ There is no difference between a landowner having granted a revocable license and a permanent trail easement in terms of the landowner's exposure to being sued.

✓ In terms of risk management for a trails organization, its important to post and maintain signs, rules of trail use, notifications of

For more information, call for a copy of "Public Recreation on Private Land: A Landowner's Guide" from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, 802-241-3690.

hazards, etc., respond promptly to any user complaints, and keep good records of trail maintenance, responses to concerns, etc. The "assumption of risk" statute is 12 VSA 1037.

Landowners can receive the benefit of insurance in the following ways:

1. Get their own homeowner's insurance;
2. Get insurance through the entity holding the trail license or easement. This can happen in two ways: either the landowner can be added in name as a co-insured with the trail organization (as GMC does), or the entity has a contract with the landowner that holds them harmless/indemnifies the landowner (as VAST is required to indemnify the State for VAST trails on State land). This arrangement, however, needs to be clarified with appropriate language; that the organization will not hold a landowner harmless for willful or wanton acts, and that the landowner is covered up to the limit of the organization's insurance.

And keep in mind that sometimes a landowner will raise the question about liability because they haven't decided in general about hosting a trail.

—Jennifer Waite



Member News

Gap closes on Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail!

The Northwest Vermont Rail Trail Council held a grand opening ceremony for the Sheldon Junction Bridge on Thursday, October 24, 2002. Lt. Governor Doug Racine joined the festivities. The opening of the Sheldon Junction Bridge marks the completion of Franklin County's 26.4-mile-long Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail which extends from St. Albans to Richford, VT.

A 1984 train derailment caused a damaged span in the bridge to be removed and the railroad line to cease operation. Since 1997, when the northern section of the MVRT opened, trail users have had to detour onto a state highway to cross the Missisquoi River, a dangerous and frightening experience. Thanks to a VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program grant awarded to the Northwest Vermont Rail Trail Council, repairs to the bridge and replacement of the missing span have been underway since early summer.

—Cynthia Scott, MVRT coordinator

Photos by Amy Bell: The old and the new Sheldon Junction bridges; a well-attended processional bridge crossing; Lt. Governor Doug Racine performs the ribbon cutting.



Team work and trail work in the Northeast Kingdom

The Green Mountain Club, Westmore Association and the Vermont Leadership Center teamed up to rebuild the steps on the Bald Mountain Fire Tower. The Northeast Kingdom Conservation Service Corps of the Vermont Leadership Center have been also working on regional trails. They put in two training days of work, in addition to helping Westmore Association and Green Mountain Club volunteers replace 64 Bald Mountain fire tower steps on National Trails Day. Twenty volunteers turned out that day to carry the heavy plank steps up from the Long Pond trailhead and install them in 22-mile-per-hour winds!



A VT Recreation Trails Fund grant paid for two crew-weeks of restoration work; the grant paid for \$8,500 of the \$10,900 total cost. The Association members and an anonymous benefactor raised \$3,150 for the Town. Trail usage is increasing and erosion from heavy rains is a continuing problem. Thus we have established an Annual Trails Fund to provide new maps, future trail work, and the required "match" for any state and federal grants for which the Association applies.

—Paul Moffat, Chair, Westmore Association

Member News

Ski the length of Vermont with the Catamount Trail Association 2003 Ski Tour



Photo courtesy CTA.

The Catamount Trail Association's "Ski Tour the Length of Vermont" is a winter 2003 celebration of the 300-mile Catamount Trail—the nation's longest Nordic ski trail—and an opportunity to ski it from end to end in a single season. The Tour will begin at the Massachusetts border on Thursday, January 30, 2003 and end on Saturday, March 1, 2003 at the Canadian border.

The Tour will consist of 29 individual day segments (plus two scheduled rest days) following the Catamount Trail through the heart of the Green Mountains. Each day, skiers will gather at a predetermined assembly point, spot cars for end-of-the-day transportation, and set out on the Trail. Skiers are welcome to join the group for a single day, multiple days, or to ski the entire Trail and become one of CTA's official "End-to-Enders."

Skiers who wish to be "end-to-enders" or to ski multiple days are responsible for arranging their own lodging. Skiers interested in single or multiple day tours without the need for overnight lodging are required to contact tour leaders in advance of each day's tour. A list of tour leaders with contact information will be provided on the CTA web site, published in the winter edition of the Catamount Trail News, and available on request from the CTA office in Burlington.

For more information and a schedule of this special tour, check out the Events section of CTA's web site at www.catamounttrail.org, or call our office at 802-864-5794. Join us for a wonderful adventure this winter!

—Ted Milks

Member News

Vermont Bicycle/Pedestrian Coalition hires first director

The VT Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition has hired Becka Roof as its first paid executive director. Becka is already hard at work advancing the organization's mission to make bicycling and walking a significant part of the culture of Vermont through improved facilities, greater safety, and public education. Becka brings several years of professional and volunteer experience to the job, having worked closely with the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, the League of American Bicyclists, and on her projects with the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program. Becka's office is with Local Motion on the waterfront in Burlington, P.O. Box 4003, Burlington, VT, 05406, 802-861-3300, becka@VTBikePed.org.



Becka Roof with her packable bicycle on a bike tour.

Adventures of the traveling Newburys

The Newbury family from Fairfield, Vermont will talk about their five-month cross-country bicycling adventure at a public presentation, Monday, November 25, 2002, 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria of St. Albans City Elementary School on Bellows Street in St. Albans, Vermont.

Gil, his wife Peg, and their sons, Anders, 9, and Eric, 7, pedaled their custom-built 80-pound Quad bicycle some 4,000 miles starting at Plymouth Rock in April and ending in the Pacific northwest in August.

The presentation, which is free and open to all, is sponsored by the Northwest Vermont Rail Trail Council and the Center for Health and Wellness. For more information, call the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 802-524-5958 or the Center for Health and Wellness, 802-524-1217.

New and useful resources

Guide to Bicycle Advocacy

From the Bikes Belong Coalition

A broad range of topics is covered in this 40-page instructional booklet, including how to encourage increased bicycle use at an early age, making roads more bike-friendly, and teaching driver awareness. View it online at www.bikesbelong.org or call 617-734-2800 for a copy.

Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access: Best Practices Design Guide

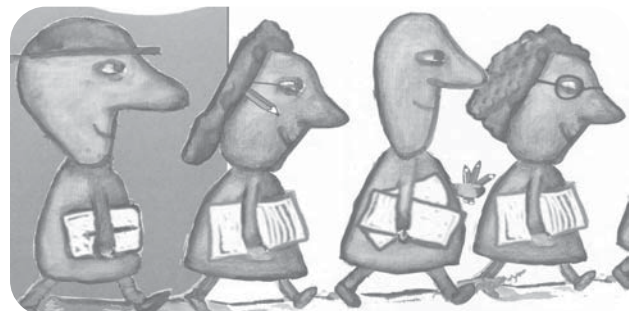
From the Federal Highway Administration & Beneficial Designs, Inc.

This publication discusses ADA compliance in relation to better access design on sidewalks, trails, shared-use paths and specialized trails, as well as the Universal Trail Assessment tool. Extensive information comes from the work of the U.S. Access Board's Recreation Access Advisory Committee and the Regulatory Negotiation Committee on Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas. To order a copy, go to www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/trailpub.htm.

Community Tool Box

From the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program

So...you have a great idea for a project in your community—maybe restoring a neglected river for recreation, or turning an old railroad corridor into a greenway, or revitalizing a neighborhood with community trails and gardens. But where do you start? The Community Tool Box contains 43 information sheets to help you, including creating a vision, running events, facilitating meetings, collecting information (mapping, inventories, storytelling), organizing (grants, work plans), outreach, creating visuals (displays and videos), and producing brochures, flyers and press releases. Check it out at www.ncrc.nps.gov/program/rtca, or contact Jennifer Waite at the Rivers & Trails Vermont office, 802-457-3368, ext 21, jennifer_waite@nps.gov.



Member News



VAST looks forward to winter

As the winter season approaches, VAST's 144 snowmobile clubs are busy preparing the trails for riding season. Because of volunteerism, coordination, and support from generous Vermont landowners statewide, the VAST snowmobile trail system is a haven for outdoor winter recreation.

Many trail construction projects take place through the VAST Grant-In-Aid program, which is funded through VAST membership dues and trail maintenance assessment. This year, over \$555,000 will be allocated to fund bridge and trail construction, and trail brushing and clearing projects. Some of this season's larger projects include a major trail re-route in Bridgewater, a 70-foot bridge replacement over the West Branch of the Passumpsic River in Lyndonville, and another 70-foot bridge replacement over the Seymour Brook in Cambridge.

This winter, a major goal is to continue the GPS data collection for the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS). VAST recently purchased several Trimble GPS units and plans are to use them to map every mile of trail on the SSTS, integrating the information for the overall improvement of the trail system.

VAST was the first state/province to adopt the new International "Zero Tolerance" while snowmobiling program. Every snowmobiler will be asked to take the "Zero Tolerance Pledge" that says, "Zero Tolerance I Say, 'til I'm Done For The Day." Individuals agree to not consume alcohol of any type while operating a snowmobile. The program includes decals and a highly visible orange tube to be installed on the handgrip of the snowmobile ski that sports the above-mentioned pledge.

Another International program that VAST is participating in is "Snowmobilers Keeping Nature Beautiful." This program that

will raise the environmental awareness of snowmobilers across North America, and VAST was one of the first organizations to support it. The program endorses the following concepts:

Leave Tracks, Not Trash—If you had space to bring it in, respect nature by carrying it out too.

Maintain Your Sled—A well-tuned snowmobile is more environmentally friendly and reliable.

Protect Wildlife—Animals are more vulnerable in the winter, so keep your distance and leave them alone.

Leave it Stock—Refrain from using after-market pipes that increase noise and that annoy others.

Stay on the Trail—Wherever possible, reduce your environmental impact by riding on organized trails.

Respect Sensitive Trails—There are lots of other places to ride, so avoid areas marked as environmentally sensitive or protected.

Embrace New Technologies—Mother Nature appreciates snowmobiles that run even more efficiently and effectively.

Spread the Word—Snowmobiles continue to improve, thanks to oil injection, sound reduction measurers, variable height exhaust valves, direct injection, on-board computers, and now, 4-stroke engines.

To sum it up, snowmobilers care about the environment and are working hard at "*Keeping Nature Beautiful.*"

—Alexis C. Nowalk, VAST Trails Admin./Coordinator
www.vtvast.org



Council members check out the grounds of the Green Mountain Horse Association in South Woodstock at the Spring, 2002 VTGC annual meeting.

Join the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council

Now is the time to renew your membership. Or, if you have never been a member, now is the time to join. The Council needs your support! Help us shape the future of Vermont recreation. (Application form available on back page.)

We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting:

Thursday, January 16, 2003, 10 a.m.
The State House, Montpelier.
For more information call
Ben Rose, 802-244-7037.

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



**Vermont Trails and
Greenways Council**

2003-2004 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!