**VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

April 23, 2018 at the National Outdoor Recreation Conference, Burlington, VT

**Attendees:** Josh Ryan, Cindy Locke, Mike DeBonis, Frank Stanley, Mike Snyder, Wendy Knight, Drew Simmons, Tom Stuessy, Bill Supple, Hal Ellms, Trey Martin, Jessica Savage, Caroline Zeilenga

**Mike S: Introductions, overview of VOREC for conference members in attendance**

Introductions from each committee member

**March Meeting Minutes Approved:** Cindy motion to approve, Tom second. Cindy motion to pass minutes as amended to remove her name from list of attendees. Minutes approved with amendment. None opposed, no abstentions.

**Committee Member Updates**

Mike S: Legislative update: S.276, Outdoor Recreation Friendly Communities Program and appropriation, Act 250 and recreational trail development.

Wendy: Legislative update: ThinkVT Innovation Fund, S.105. Pivot process improvement plan for permits for businesses in Vermont, updating outdoor recreation on ThinkVT portal, film opportunities in VT.

Josh: Trail design and construction for municipalities looking to build infrastructure.

Cindy: VTGC supporting Act 250 and recreational trails policy changes.

Mike D: Trail clubs focused on hiring and planning for summer trail work. Ideas for enhancing stewardship funding and trail infrastructure are an exciting part of VOREC.

Frank: Legislative session wrapping up, looking forward to more VOREC work.

Drew: National momentum on outdoor recreation, Confluence summits, hoping this will create tools for other states who want to build state offices of outdoor rec, goal of identifying a metric for success for outdoor industry that isn’t just dollar figure.

Tom: Background on VOICe, updated VOICe charter shared at last meeting, any questions about charter?

No questions, updates continued.

Bill: Working on VOBA with other members, and looking forward to pilot when it gets going.

Hal: Two anecdotes related to VOREC work: community value of rec path in Golden, CO, and High Line rec path in New York City.

Trey: Trust for Public Land and conservation community update: Heard presentation by Quantified Ventures about financing for public recreation groups. Would like to meet with non-profit representatives before next meeting to discuss models to pay for conservation projects and perhaps bring this group to speak at a future meeting.

**VOBA Update**

Mike S. asks Drew for update on VOBA.

Drew: Background on VOBA, updates from last meeting.

Discussion on role and importance of VOBA.

**Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community Program Discussion**

Mike S. introduces Jessica to lead discussion.

Jessica: Background on Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community Program and recent planning discussions. Would like to ask questions of steering committee members today to guide future planning meetings. Opportunity for committee members to be part of planning group.

Jessica: What does success look like?

Discussion of goal of this project, how VOREC can support it, amount of funding available, definitions of an Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community, and how success and impacts are measured.

Jessica: How can we make sure this program raises the standard for how outdoor recreation boots economic impact? How can we make sure pilot communities lead to a successful long-term program?

Discussion of what long-term success looks like.

Jessica: The language for this program exists within an economic development bill and communities need to demonstrate economic need to be eligible. How can we make sure we’re capturing success when communities’ readiness levels may be different?

Discussion of tools, resources, and partnerships; criteria and evaluation for potential projects; near, mid, and long-term goals.

**Break**

**Addiction Recovery and Outdoor Recreation Panel**

Mike S. introduces Jolinda LaClair, Vermont Director of Drug Prevention Policy.

Jolinda: Background and statistics on addiction in Vermont; four pillars of policy: prevention, treatment, recovery, enforcement; strategies for addressing these pillars.

Introductions and discussion from addiction recovery and outdoor recreation panelists: Gary DeCarolis, Executive Director of Turning Point Center; John Gower, Turning Point employee; Mickey Wilds, CEO and founder of Working Fields; Breck Knauft, Executive Director of Vermont Youth Conservation Corps; Dan Osman, Director of Camp Daybreak.

Jolinda: As Governor’s Opioid Prevention Council moves forward with next set of strategies, especially emphasizing prevention and recovery, how can we share strategies and find partnerships?

**Public Comment (In Response to Addiction Recovery and Outdoor Recreation Panel)**

Public Comment: Ohio Governor created “Start Talking” bumper stickers to encourage talking with children about drugs. Use of state vehicles in Ohio to solve transportation problems in rural communities.

Public Comment: What ways do you measure efficacy of recreation in response to addiction?

Discussion of role of outdoor recreation in recovery; access and participation opportunities.

Public Comment: Can we as outdoor recreation professionals use health impact assessments in our planning?

Discussion of strategies to use these assessments in planning.

Mike S: Steering committee will continue to discuss ways to continue working with the Council.

**Public Comment (General)**

Mike S. opens floor for continued public comment with VOREC steering committee.

Public Comment: Congratulations on recent town forest project. Also want to speak to equine recreation as a form of outdoor recreation. Horse industry drives economic impact and is under-represented on steering committee. Little equine access on public land in VT.

Mike S: Our fundamental principle is to be inclusive. We welcome and encourage your engagement not only through members of the steering committee.

Cindy: Also encourage you to participate with VTGC.

Drew: We’re paying attention to federal data on outdoor recreation impacts, and equestrian impact is well represented there.

Public Comment: If one community receives full $100,000 appropriation for Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community Program, this is a disincentive to leverage funding. What about four communities receiving $25,000 each?

Mike S: Both arguments have been made in the legislative discussion.

Public Comment: Recognize that the Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community Program is a new initiative and needs to stay innovative and flexible. Be willing to take risks with projects that don’t fit traditional funding sources.

Public Comment: Can we see your initiatives and goals so we can best work together?

Mike S: We’re working in the moment, developing strategy as we go at this point. Don’t have an agenda for the long term set yet, but want to be open and invite input as agenda evolves.

Wendy: You can see our action plan to understand where we’re at presently and what you might want to help with.

Public Comment: What are some of the ideas you’ve come up with for criteria to make a town outdoor recreation friendly?

Trey: Towns with a planning process across sectors—trails, water, etc. And how the town is connecting to broader regional efforts.

Wendy: Commitment from business center. Are town’s businesses committed to understanding what their recreational assets are.

Jessica: Communities with a real understanding of the user groups they have and want to attract, to best cultivate user experience. And signage, maps, etc. to identify these communities to visitors.

Mike D: Towns that embrace volunteerism to maintain and build their assets.

Drew: Cultural buy-in from the town to illustrate they’re willing to work as a team.

Public Comment: What is your group doing to demonstrate that all income levels are invited to participate, not just elite?

Mike S: Growing participation among all demographics and income levels is foundational for us.

Hal: We don’t want gear to be a barrier for entry. Implementing a gear loaner program in select state parks.

Drew: We need to remember geographic and demographic concerns in our efforts, and this is among them. Public health is also key.

Cindy: We’re discussing how to invite youth into the outdoors, and ways to boost involvement of youth of all backgrounds.

Public Comment: Working on Teton Dam restoration, to bring outdoor recreation back to this community, but difficult getting interest from businesses. How have you come together so quickly?

Mike S: Vermont’s Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation has a rich history of partnering with volunteers and external groups. Economic development potential of these partnerships is a newer realization, which came to us from the business community. Businesses came to the State to create this initiative.

Drew: One of our strategies was to talk grand-scale and long-term, which encourages more involvement.

Cindy: The community spirit is here in Vermont. The politics are less important than the sense of volunteerism and working for the common good.

Wendy: Small size of state helps empower interested leaders.

Public Comment: We created a Camping 101 in our town to give people knowledge and encourage them to get outside, and held clinics so people could feel comfortable asking questions.

Public Comment: Question for Wendy about the ThinkVT webpage: How does the Department determine what destinations are included?

Wendy: Site is not meant to show outdoor recreation assets, but outdoor recreation as a key industry.

Mike S: Other comments?

No other comments. Trey motion to adjourn, Frank second. Meeting adjourned.