VOREC first meeting, June 20, 2017 at National Life, Montpelier

Attendees:

Michael Snyder

Jessica Savage

Craig Whipple

Marc Sherman

Bill Supple

Frank Stanley

Trey Martin

Tom Stuessy

Shane Prisby

Amy Kelsey

Hal Ellms

Sarah Lang

Alicia DiCocco (for Mike DeBonis)

Drew Simmons

Wendy Knight

Steve Cook

Josh Ryan

Michael Snyder:

Welcome!

Thank you for being here and for your interest to serve, this is very exciting and a long time coming

Around the table for introductions and each person’s take on this initiative

Mike Snyder, Commissioner FPR

Gov Scott EO named him chair of VOREC

This is important and exciting – not just about state govt, we’re providing the framework – it’s really more about the private sector – for landscape and economic power combined and what, together, they can bring

This is more about the group here than state

Comm Wendy Knight is principal designee of ACCD Secretary (others from that agency will participate in different ways as well)

Background: forester by training and experience, passionate about it, through work and private life is engaged in outdoor rec (skier, hunter)….having seen mountain biking start up to becoming commissioner, has seen partnerships evolve between forest management and outdoor recreation

All types of use can be managed in harmony and coexist

Role as comm is taken seriously, thrilled for the chance to do more

Jessica Savage, Rec Prog Mgr FPR

Background: trail project manager for state and feds in USA, out west in Glacier, Yellowstone, others

Came back to VT for the love of this state

Excited about VOREC…incredible groundswell from towns to outdoor recreation users and coming together

She’ll be project manager for VOREC, helping with structure for Mike – although this group is fully participatory

(Michael: to be clear, Jess and Craig are well-engaged professionals who will help this effort – they’re not just govt staffers)

Craig Whipple Dir of State Parks

Decades-long advocate of outdoor rec in VT

Over time, initiatives have come and gone….all of a sudden this one comes along and it’s time!

Everyone is jazzed – this is extremely timely

Craig is part of FPR, but he’s here to help the group help figure it out and do great things

Josh Ryan, Timber & Stone LLC

Builder and designer of rec trails in VT and northeast (6 different states)

VYCC experience

Building trails can help personal growth

Worked with young people, then went into his own business

Currently building bike path in Wilton, CT (they have no rec space there – community is so appreciative because they’ve been an indoor culture, work in NYC)

Sees himself as ambassador from VT to the other NE states when he works there – recommends places to go and things to do and buy

Wendy Knight, Commissioner of Tourism & Marketing

New to public sector

Previous journalist

Marketing and tourism background

New at ACCD: holistic marketing, to not only visitors but to potential new residents, working with econ dev team

To retain business and recruit new workers (website page name insert here….)

Share resources and work collaboratively inside and outside state govt

This project fits well with larger projects and strategies in their marketing process

Drew Simmons, Pale Morning Media

PR agency, started 16 yrs ago

Specialize in outdoor rec and industry

Previous journalist Jackson Hole

To VT 14 years ago (from CA, lived in Boulder)

Was doing PR for Garmont, when they left the state the media wanted to know why

At national trade shows, runs into VT business owners and retailers, and sees how VT has cache – but come back to VT and there’s no connection between all these folks –

Wash, DC lobby events show how we really need to be active at the local level

Noted: when VOREC was announced, he got a lot of responses from out of state folks, more than VT folks

Recently created a group of outdoor industry people to do an event at Statehouse – and got their attention

So, the challenge was: what do you do when people say “yes”? what does this coalition want?

Well, what’s happening in the rest of the country? There are point people in charge of different sectors – and they can help be the business development voice – this gives the conversation more weight

Re last week’s announcement, in VT people are already sending letters to the editor

Find some alignment and common values to move this initiative forward

Vast majority of people in outdoor industry have so much in common –

Alicia DiCocco – sitting in for Mike DeBonis at GMC

GMC maintains and protects Long Trail and Appalachian Trail in VT

Excited for this opportunity to be part of VOREC

Rely on local business and individual donors to support trails

Use has increased by 23%, sustained – need support for this

Sarah Lang, Brattleboro Development Credit Corp

Region development corp

Manages southern VT economy project (started in March, and she’s a new VT resident)

Background: varied, worked USFS out west, enviro degree, outdoor rec industry in No Calif

Tie interests and hobbies with career goals (economic development)

Be a voice for southern VT (Windham & Bennington counties) and bring ideas to rural communities to stimulate economy

Hal Ellms, Pinnacle

Wholesale sales agency, based in Middlesex

Represents Bass footwear and Darn Tough

Distributes to LLBean, etc

Territory goes from tip of Maine to PA,

Offices scattered but based in VT

35 years in outdoor industry

Travelled, mtn bike and skied in Moab, Asheville and sees these towns revived by outdoor recreation – he’s

excited to bring that process here

East Burke is good example

Opportunity to capitalize on things already going great – facilities, beer, food – key elements to tying in with outdoor recreation

Tracy Zeno, FPR – scribe for today

Amy Kelsey, VTGC (non-motorized use)

Council created by leg to make recommendations to FPR re trail policy etc

Motor and non-motor trail groups convene at this council to make positive changes

Excited to share VOREC with other trails groups, and to parallel VTGC

Dir of Catamount Trail Assoc – growth of bc ski scene in VT, and recent organization of user groups – re use of public lands – part of VT BC Alliance

Excited to be here, thanks to folks who did work to get us here

Partnerships – many small trails orgs who have very small capacity – depends on volunteers

Leverage all these groups and find efficiencies to enable to do more – how could we do this better?

Make recommendations to support local trail groups in other ways (policy work, etc?)

Shane Prisby, VTGC (motorized use)

VAST trails manager, the only non-profit in US running this per statute

Involved with Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, too

Infrastructures built by tax base and tourism $$, run by competent and amazing people – find new volunteers and work within budget each year

Avg snowmobiler is 55 y.o., and many older members as well – this model worked for a long time, but how to sustain for increased use being seen statewide

Opportunity to have one big conversation – how to grow and remain sustainable

Tom Stuessy, VMBA

(Jess, I left the room and missed this -Tracy)

Trey Martin, Attorney with Downs, Rachlin, Martin LLC

Environmental attorney

Works with ski groups and trail groups in his day-to-day

Excited to be here, wouldn’t miss it

Worked with last Gov admin on 5th floor, has seen economics in VT

Clearly, outdoor rec is key to VT econ development

Wise use of the land is the econ dev tool we want in VT – leads to better community connections, conservation connections – helping to hold onto our working landscape

How do we attract new taxpayers to VT? Building on sales & use, rooms & meals taxes

This is the right time, this is the right way to do it

He has lots of ideas

This roundtable will help us figure out how to break down barriers and create results

Frank Stanley, VOGA

Grew up in VT, went to UVM, lives in Monkton with his family

Background: always interested in outdoor industry

Started VOGA in the 1990s, connecting tourists with accommodations

Ran Outdoors magazine (hunting and fishing)

Started govt affairs and public relations, is a lobbyist for outdoor interests, past 11 years

Organizes Yankee Sportsmen Classic and has done LCI org

Here to listen, learn, study, communicate, contribute – great opportunity

Bill Supple, Pres, CEO of Mammut

In outdoor industry since 1981, retail mostly on vendor side with int’l brands (he’s a forester)

Non-profit work as well, Access Fund – is on board of VPF

Happy to be involved, been involved in core industry group recently

VT is a small state, the scale will be in our favor – connect the dots and raise level of awareness

Attract real outdoor business here, but more important: generate environment and quality of life to attract other types of businesses here

Excited to bring experience from commercial side to this

Marc Sherman, Outdoor Gear Exchange

Owner

In VT 25 years – lakes, river, mtns are value proposition

VT “overregulation” gets bad rap (reg is important, what makes VT the way it is)

Connected with most of the people in this room today

Excited to see what VOREC can do

Focus on this important aspect of environment and economy, do from a pure direction and it will achieve economic strength

Back to Michael Snyder:

Even more excited now – this is quite a group

THANK YOU for making this commitment

This is a public task force advising the Gov

We want to get organized about how we function – we’ll start that today

Apologies for meeting on short notice – it won’t be like this going forward

Context for VOREC concept:

Please refer to advance packet for today’s meeting

This is an economic dev initiative

What’s unique: chaired by FPR, instead of ACCD, because we’re capitalizing on landscape

To be successful, must be rooted in environmental quality (high quality is our brand at FPR)

Proud to host this group

Grow the economy while sustaining the natural assets that we have

Consistent with local food, working landscape, water quality protection

Built infrastructure of parking lots at trails, etc –

Tradition of vigorous outdoor life

We have world-class facilities (ex: mtn bike trails) here, we want to build on that

Sustain / grow / leverage for more / protect what we have and capitalize on it

Idea of a collaborative is very important – increase this, and communication

Determine what the framework and mechanism will be

“Constellation of interested parties” (stakeholders, partners, etc) has a remarkable diversity

This could run the risk of being all over the map, and ineffective

Build a collaboration of communication

**Characteristics of this group are:**

**Openness, inclusiveness, transparency, representativeness (coin some words?) = all are welcome**

Many others are interested in being part of this – the VOREC group was appointed by Gov

Think of yourself as focal point of input from everyone in VT – VOREC members will **represent** broadly, and we all should bring more to the group than just the entity we represent

Gov has given broad charges in E.O., with some dates – so we’ll develop a timeline

We’ll discuss charter (operating principals, bylaws)

Jessica Savage:

Thanks for the introductions, everyone!

Timeline, next 6 months:

6/20/17 – first meeting of VOREC

7/1/17 – deadline for adopting bylaws (will vote electronically) and deliver to Gov’s office

7/14 – second VOREC meeting – please come or send a designee – talk about Grafton and reg summits

8/2 and 8/3 – event at Grafton conference (will have planning comm), frame up the large categories/buckets

TBD - third VOREC meeting following the Grafton conference

Then, get materials ready for regional summits statewide (5) in Sept and Oct

Break from meetings, between Aug and Nov

Prepare action plan, which will include results of Grafton conf

The draft charter was read and reviewed by the group

Wendy suggested adding another bullet:

“Align and share resources and strategies” (group: OK)

Change wording “contribute to market……”? Mike: maybe “support efforts to market”? (group: OK)

(suggestion from Mike: input can be taken and changed as a group, maybe not line-by-line today – work on key points today)

Mike: Come up with shared definition of “outdoor recreation” (NOT Parks & Rec) – connection to natural environment

Amy: can we look at what other states have? (Yes)

Jess: Wyoming has a great definition, group liked it

Drew: lifestyle component (including where you stop for coffee when you’re on your way to ride)

Hal: “outdoorsy” is one thing and “outside-sy” is another

Mike: these all qualify, for big picture – but maybe we focus on and limit to

Drew: “minimally enhanced outdoor recreation” – being outside is good, wherever it is

Shane: even a cemetery can be enjoyed, but should this be part of definition? Maybe narrow it down

Drew: list of direct activities and indirect activities, what are the categories we’re talking about? What is meant by minimally enhanced (ex: Kingdom Trails vs a golf course)

Mike: maybe create a very broad definition of outdoor recreation, and then decide what it gets narrowed down to for VOREC purposes

Bill: many activities exist because of natural resources

Trey: doesn’t golf qualify? (outdoors, exercise, fly to destination)

Mike: golf is already covered in other ways, it has developed features – how do we bolster the activities that need a boost

Amy: does paying a fee for something have a bearing?

Drew: non-competitive, non-fee-based activities are where a lot of this started

Mike: where are the impact opportunities? Maybe for now, just do a generic definition and go from there – what are the sectors, components, most available for growth?

Bill: big ski?

Mike: they already have efforts and resources going to them, so this was left off VOREC group

Bill: what constituencies does this group represent? How do you exclude big ski

Wendy: important to have definition more fully formed, what we think it should be, before the public meetings

Encompasses a wide scope of activities, VOREC’s scope will be traditional outdoor activities,

Mike and Jess will work up the definition and share it later with the group

Mike: should we do this same exercise with “outdoor recreation business”? is there a clear sense of this within the group?

Amy: is the coffee shop a business or a resource/asset, culturally or otherwise?

Mike: directly related business

Marc: significant portion of income directly derived from outdoor recreation

Wendy: Hotel VT isn’t, Trapp’s and Blueberry Hill are

Alicia: add “and organizations”, i.e. GMC is supported by non-profit organizations

Frank: differentiate between for- and non-profit?

Marc: VMBA, GMC are resources rather than business – would that be the distinction?

Shane: VAST, by statute, provides the trail systems – and exist to provide that physical asset,

there’s a grey area –

Marc: how to include these organizations in the broader definition of resources (through dues or contributions help provide assistance to an existing natural resource)

Mike: consensus is building on this, these are more like assets

Trey: outdoor rec business and organizations, and outdoor rec assets

Mike: businesses / organizations / assets

Drew: acknowledge some of these businesses have a physical presence in VT but operate nationally as well (ex: Mammut)

Mike: he and Jess will distill this definition and send it back to the group

(Jess then read the definition to the group)

Trey: outdoor recreation organizations = non-profits, providing and managing access

Mike: FPR would be in this category

Frank: smaller orgs, too – like friends’ groups

Mike: definition of assets? (natural, physical, cultural?)

Marc: include VT’s culture of outdoor activity

Trey: isn’t the outcome desired a recognizable outdoor culture (intellectual properties)

Drew: sustain, grow and leverage the cultural asset - are Vermonters out in the world an asset

Shane: (missed it)

Mike: we have broad agreement on asset, we’ll find a better word

Marc: list all the other assets, and then say “the culture and history of these assets…..”

Mike: “outdoor traditions” “human assets” – we don’t have to sell it but build on it (we just need to find the right word….)

Wendy: why taking off “economic”

Mike: it’s a typo – that word is built into VOREC – growing the economy will be the outcome

Josh: final written notes, please include the references (coffee shop, golf course, etc)

Michael:

Second page is suggestions, nothing flagged for editing – but comment at will after reading

Josh: please spell out things like “ACCD”, so the reader knows what they are

Mike: yes, and this will be all open to the public, including meeting attendance, share the info -

This is a collaborative network –

Trey: noted, emails are public property so keep this in mind

(at halfway point, Steve Cook took over for Wendy Knight)

Steve Cook, Dep Comm Tourism & Marketing

Has already worked with many partners at the table today while jump-starting this project

He’s up to speed, has had chance to talk with Mike

Outdoor rec industry, he works with lots of members – and are largest marketer in promoting the State of VT

Continuing with the charter:

2 more reps of economic development, to be named

1 is here today, Sarah Lang

1 more person will be named, the Governor is vetting now

Trey: note, please change wording to “voting members” rather than “members voting”

Drew: note where members are from, media will notice things like this and it will spark interest by area

Jess: re conduct section, talk about how group members will operate, communicate, strive for consensus

Marc: disclosure of potential conflicts? Should each member sign off on this?

Mike: yes, this is SOP and good idea

Frank: “economic” becomes “natural”

To Page 3:

Mike: noted, this will be revised and sent back around

To Page 4:

Trey: re meetings, split “meetings” and “vote”

Mike: postings to website – send these to Jessica

To Page 5:

Trey: will terms be staggered?

Mike: it was left open in the E.O., will discuss this as a group

Amy: 2 year terms?

Steve Cook: Travel Rec Council has 3-year term

Marc: set parameters for Commissioner Snyder to remove a board member

Mike: 2 years is good, with language re what might trigger a change

Jessica: will take a stab at ground rules for meetings, and distribute it to the group later

Mike: can we all agree that, as discussed, the charter will be amended for final review and subsequent vote (Yes!)

BREAK - - - - -

(Frank Stanley may have to leave a bit early, go to the airport)

Jessica Savage: Presentation

Spending on outdoor recreation in US

Spending on outdoor recreation in VT

Other states have these initiatives, too

Utah was first, in 2013

Gov created office of outdoor recreation

Did statewide summits, bringing industry and other sectors together

Priorities: eco

Colorado, 2015 (Luis Benitez is lead)

Economic development, conservation and stewardship, education and training

Washington, 2014

Blue ribbon task force

Listening tours

Economic impact study, combined with their SCORP

Grow the economy, position in Gov’s office, inspire outdoor rec culture, sustain outdoor rec assets

Specific outcomes were listed and they’ve met most of those (policy makers were involved along the way)

Oregon 2016

25-member leadership team, with 15-year vision

Priorities: world class experiences and infrastructure, diversity of enthusiasts, transportation and distribution of impacts

Rhode Island 2016

Public meetings

Sustainable funding, support active lifestyles

Proposed metrics for success (link provided by Jessica)

Wyoming 2016

State Parks Director is the lead

Stakeholder assessment survey started this out

Listening tour

Montana 2016

Intent is to create office of outdoor rec

Hired public access specialist

Fund Habitat Montana

Against transferring or selling public lands

Vermont: it’s already a great state

FPR always focused on recreation, more in recent 4 years

Recreation action plan, 2016 (improve partner communication, support public rec on private lands, improved info to public, meet demand for rec, address resource needs (staff, time and money)

Resource: ThinkVermont.com (ACCD)

VOREC

What does success look like for VOREC, from your organization’s perspective?

How can you represent stakeholders to VOREC?

Time for broad discussion:

Bill: other states, a lot going on behind the scenes, aggressively pursuing business owners to set up shop there

Trey: has anyone done a study on taxes paid by outdoor business vs gains to be made by tourism?

Marc: baseline survey, tourism, where does VT fall within the top 10 states, for example – do a baseline now and then another in 10 years to say where the needle has moved – increase the perception of VT as place to recreate outdoors – in theory, economic impact should show –

Drew: what does success look like? For his business, 97% rooted in outdoor economy, a good business in VT reflects well for him nationally – even though it won’t move the bottom line, it will raise the profile of outdoor rec in VT – get buy-in from state and local munis but also citizens to realize this is a business sector – ex. See a kid at farmer’s market selling widget to use for outdoor recreation – to get general success here we need a couple of easy wins to get the momentum going – get one on the scoreboard

Josh: farm to table movement really nailed it – why can’t this be just as big? For success, don’t just root it in single track mountain biking and associated purchases – what kind of formula did farm to table use?

Mike: model VOREC plan on this – there are parallels (not to spend a bunch of time on strategic plan, but create a roadmap similar to this)

Shane: it’s not about a product, but about a process

Marc: we already have the product, but can enhance it by the work the organizations are doing – make sure infrastructure is there to get to the spots for outdoor recreation (ex: island line bike ferry) – make people aware of what’s out there and how to get to it

Tom: VMBA sent letter to members, work together toward a common goal, get the word out

Alicia: 7th generation has a lot of people who came from somewhere else to work there – how to work together to address how to get businesses and workers to VT and enjoy the cultural experience

Mike: attract business who have left VT, and also start-ups and newcomers

Sarah: plenty of jobs in southern VT, the issue is getting good employees – market to people to come here, “we have the jobs”

Mike: we have the jobs, we have the playground, what are you waiting for?

Tom: partner with headhunter agencies, what kind of feedback to they get about VT

Sarah: commuted from Amherst for 2 months before getting a place to live, high end and low end are out there but not middle range

Mike: mid-level housing is needed, this is a missing piece – it’s not a recreation recommendation, but it is related – Gov would want to hear this

Marc: measure of success comes from employers being polled, saying how their businesses are doing – stats of who’s using Catamount, Long Trail, etc – and see what the trends are that go along with businesses – but we need a baseline for this

Bill: find out what attracts the businesses – i.e. Goldman Sachs relocated to Utah for the recreational access

Sarah: GE moving to Boston from CT, the biggest reason was culture the employees wanted – also, some people would give up a cut in pay to gain the lifestyle they want

Drew: re baseline data, in CT real estate is sagging – message is: unless your property is near something you want to do, it’s not worth as much – in VT there’s proximity to recreation so it’s a draw – Rep. Welch

Amy: what does success look like: infrastructure – from VTGS perspective, there’s already a lot of collaboration rather than competition – overlapping membership – local orgs want to build trails in all seasons, but do different things under different umbrellas – so, what kind of platforms would VOREC offer them to find efficiencies – think about ways to build infrastructure to benefit economy and employers among all the little non-profits

Alicia: to add more people and users to trails, for example, the first priority is conservation \*(ex, how to deal with mud season)

Mike: reinforced, conservation has to be part of this – good trails cost money – new revenue streams are needed –

Tom: admin efficiencies are needed – ex VMBA pass for one area, then add on another area, and so on – apply this to trails, buy a pass to VT trails and when doing so click on a box to give money to other orgs while you’re at it

Michael Snyder – Grafton Conference:

Background: had conversation with Windham Foundation and VT Community Foundation, philanthropic orgs who offered to fun a “Grafton Conference”, a 2-day event at their facilities for about 40 people (housing and food), along with professional facilitation. Scheduled for August 2-3. (Passed around a booklet from the recent forest economy meeting – the end product of that conference.)

Event starts with lunch on the first day, then a mtn bike ride for who wants to. All VOREC members encouraged to attend. An additional 20-25 people get invited. After lunch, maybe a keynote (Luis Benitez?). Then, take the top 4-5 ideas for VOREC and some conversation, then evening social time. Day 2, facilitated small groups – would any VOREC members be active participants at this event – and try to nail down the large categories of VOREC (which would be identified during this conference). Then, the report gets created, we work with stakeholders to reach the goals.

Hoping all VOREC members will be able to attend.

Short list of stakeholders/partners has been generated, beyond VOREC group, who might be invited:

- a couple of legislators (pro tem, speaker)

- big ski (Parker Riehle, Vail?)

- fish and wildlife sector

- tech sector (Trevor Crisp, Inntopia)

- climate change (Jon Copans)

- rural development (Paul Costello)

- transportation (VTrans)

- RPCs, ec dev ( )

- municipalities ( )

- businesses (Ted Manning, Alex Ibex)

- conservation & stewardship ( )

- diversity (disadvantaged, underserved populations)

Suggestions of who to invite? How do we get the right people in the room?

Has a category been missed that should be added?

**Input from group is encouraged**

**Invitations need to go out by early July**

There’s some wiggle room on the meeting spaces, but the overnight space is limited to 40

Hal: suggestion = retailers, like Sam’s or Farmway, broaden the geographic area

Bill: services (like guides) and hospitality sector

Marc: Burton, chill program

Shane: timber interests? Landowners? (VWA)

Sarah: young professional groups

Drew: educators (Johnson, Champlain, VTC)

Marc: health care (Fletcher Allen)

Josh: TNC, VLT, water recreation

Alicia: UVM student or Burlington HS or VT refugee resettlement proram – youth ambassador

Marc: earned benefits instead of “gimme” – market this resource as something Vermonters have earned the right to have

Craig: VOREC is the core group, then the conference attendees will be involved, then the public meetings will happen – this is inclusive

Mike: possibility of more than 1 conference

Marc: Orvis

Public Comment:

Nobody here from the public

Next Meeting:

Propose July 14 for the next VOREC team meeting, potentially somewhere other than National Life

By then, charter will be finalized and sent to Governor – and agenda for Grafton will have been distributed

Open Discussion / Roundtable:

Drew: how will workflow go, communication-wise?

Mike: Jess will be point of contact – reach out to Mike any time

Jess: will be email follow-up with attached documents – docs will be stored in Google, editable by everyone – can edit in Google drive or send it in track changes mode – further communication needs will be addressed as necessary –

Mike: email distribution list?

Jess: will share with everyone in the group (and if anyone wants to, just send your email to Jess and she’ll distribute it to the group for you)

Mike: media requests, please feel free to do as you wish, but please share VOREC info back with the group so everyone’s aware – helpful for Mike to know what’s going on

Drew: will there be a list of VOREC in the news?

Jess: easy to put links on the website

Hal: have had lots of questions – trying to find the right wording for this – could talking points be added to the dropbox so everyone could be on the same page?

Mike: yes, he and Jess will work together and get this onto the website for all

Drew: he has parting gifts (VT UV buffs – the company that makes them has made a few, VT is the third one

Mike:

Ready to adjourn. Tanks again to everyone, for taking the time out of y our day. Deeply appreciated.