

VOREC Steering Committee Meeting Agenda

Friday, March 11, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Teams meeting

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Join by phone: +1 802-828-7667; Conference ID: 315 981 149 #

Objectives

- Share and discuss updates on Vermont’s Outdoor Recreation Economy.
- Learn about work to build active, healthy and equitable communities in Vermont.
- Review 2018 VOREC Prioritized Action Plan and begin thinking about new challenges and opportunities that should be considered.

Pre-meeting questions to ask Outdoor Recreation Communities

- What are the biggest changes to Vermont’s outdoor recreation economy you’ve experienced between 2018 to now? Do those changes present new challenges and/or opportunities for business growth, increase in participation among all demographics, quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources, increased stewardship, and/or the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation?
- What major efforts do you want to see happen to strengthen the outdoor recreation economy?

Agenda

Time	Topic	Lead
9:00 a.m.	Welcome and introductions	Jackie Dagger, Program Manager
9:10 a.m.	Business meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve November minutes• Updates from chair• Other updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ACCD (Josh Hanford)○ VTGC (Abby Long)○ VOBA (Kelly Ault)	Mike Snyder, Chair Jackie
10:00 a.m.	Building Active, Healthy and Equitable Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about work happening between Regional Planning Commissions and the Vermont Department of Health• Q&A	Melanie Riddle, Assistant Planner, Lamoille County Planning Commission Ed Bove, Executive Director, Rutland Regional Planning Commission
10:30 a.m.	Break	ALL

Time	Topic	Lead
10:40 a.m.	VOREC 2.0 discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share outcomes from November meeting • Review 2018 Action Plan • Discuss the current landscape of Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Economy by VOREC Pillar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are there new challenges? ○ Are there new opportunities? • Discuss next steps 	Jackie
11:50 a.m.	Public comment	ALL
11:55 a.m.	Other business	ALL
12:00 p.m.	Adjourn	ALL

VOREC Steering Committee Meeting

March 11, 2022 via Microsoft Teams | 9:00am – 12:00pm

Steering Committee Attendees: Michael Snyder, Josh Hanford, Mike Debonis, Hal Ellms, Karrie Thomas, Drew Simmons, Kim Rupe, Abby Long, Marc Sherman, Josh Ryan

Steering Committee Members Absent: Frank Stanley, Jeanne Gervais, Shelby Semmes

FPR/ACCD Staff in Attendance: Jackie Dagger, Caroline Zeilenga, Becca Washburn (joined at 10:00am)

Public in Attendance: Melanie Riddle (Lamoille County Planning Commission), Ed Bove (Rutland Regional Planning Commission), Kelly Ault (Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance), Lisa Lafont (Vermont Horse Council), Bryan Rivard (Ski Vermont), Steve Sharp (Mad River Valley Backcountry Coalition)

Welcome and Introductions

Business Meeting

November Minutes: Mike D. motion to approve, Karrie second. None opposed, no abstentions. Minutes approved.

Chair Updates

Mike provided an update that in FPR's FY23 budget the Governor's recommendation includes another round of one-time general funds of \$5 million for the VOREC Community Grant Program. This is presently being discussed in the House Appropriations Committee. The committee conversation has included a thought of trimming this amount, but using the "trimmed" funds for other recreational support. The grant program does continue to be well received, and announcements about this year's grants will be coming very soon. He also shared that the House has now passed the reserve forestland bill for Current Use, which has raised questions about the posting of land as part of Current Use.

Mike shared that S.234, the Act 250 bill, has crossed over from the House to the Senate, and includes the language that exempts recreational trails from fragmentation criteria, but currently the Administration does not support the bill. The House may consider adding more to the bill that would possibly allow the Administration to support.

Congressionally directed spending announcements are being made, including recreation funding in Vermont. All three delegations have also reached out about another round of earmarks, and there are many big ideas that will be offered.

Mike provided an update on the Vermont State Parks seasonal workforce: Applications are extremely low. Many people are thinking creatively about recruitment and strategies to help with this. Mike invited the steering committee to share the word about working for Vermont State Parks within their networks. FPR is also working on improving connectivity for staff and visitors in parks, and working to increase wages.

Jackie shared that Frazier Blair of Orvis and Danny Hale of Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA) have been nominated and Mike is working with the Governor's Office to receive approval. Jackie also shared that she will be sending out a bi-monthly meeting hold for upcoming steering committee meetings.

Jacked provided an update on the grant program: The team is aiming to make announcements of grant recipients early next week. She thanked the steering committee members who served on the grant review committee.

Jackie shared that the Confluence of States has been meeting monthly and is working on hiring a fellow to support the group's administrative functions, and continuing to welcome new states, including Maryland most recently. Drew shared that others in the industry have noticed the decrease in news coming out of the Confluence of States and the business sector hasn't been hearing much about their activity. Jackie noted that the hiring of the fellow will hopefully include more outreach. Mike also noted that turnover in some state offices, leadership changes, and the lack of in-person events owing to COVID have impacted some of the activity and publicity. This year's National Governor's Association meeting will be held in Maine on July 10-13, with the Confluence exploring a signing summit for new states as part of the event.

Vice Chair Updates

Josh shared the workforce challenges experienced in ACCD and for seasonal state historic sites. He noted that there are many open, limited-service positions, and that there are limitations because of professional experience qualifications required in many state government positions. He is also seeing these workforce challenges with the partners ACCD works with. He also spoke to the housing challenges and the many goals and solutions for re-investing in Vermont's housing and building new homes in some places, as well as moving unhoused Vermonters into long-term housing. He noted that most of the budget bills to move this work forward are complicated by additional policy layers within the bills. He invited everyone to speak with their legislators to encourage support of housing bills and initiatives.

Marc agreed with the housing needs and also noted the need for safety and for workers to feel physically safe commuting to and at work, including employees who work in loss prevention.

Josh provided an update on EDA grants, which could bring new money to infrastructure projects supporting out of state visitation and visitor experience, as well as destination marketing activities and strategic planning. He also noted efforts underway on NBRC funds for marketing, a summit, and more. Jackie added that in a recent meeting with NBRC representatives, the Northern Forest Center joined to discuss a summit for Fall 2023; Jackie will serve on the committee for planning the summit, and will be updating steering committee members on the work.

Partner Updates

VTGC: Abby shared that the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC) is creating an outreach pamphlet to educate stakeholders about what VTGC is, the work they do, and their shared values. They also submitted a request for funds for administrative support for VTGC of \$150,000 for a program manager, expecting that funds would flow through FPR. VTGC is also working toward publishing the best management practices and incorporating this into the Vermont Trails System, in partnership with FPR.

Abby also provided a legislative update that the council supports H.581, but understands that many important stakeholders do not support this bill, so they are not pressing to see the recreational trails provisions in the bill pass.

For more information see Abby's summary in the Meeting Minutes Appendix (starts on p.5).

VOBA: Kelly provided an update on VOBA's work on outdoor recreation economy policy, expanding workforce, supporting JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) work in outdoor businesses, and marketing to elevate outdoor communities, businesses, and recreation opportunities. VOBA's policy work includes infrastructure and stewardship, economic and workforce development, outdoor recreation marketing, and healthy landscape and climate economy, with a focus on advocating for specific policies including the VOREC grant program and economic development, workforce, and housing bills.

Mike noted that the Administration has been open to expanding career technical education initiatives to include recreation as well as forestry, and Kelly agreed that VOBA is also supporting expansion opportunities like this, as well as overlapping interests with climate policies.

VOBA is also engaging the outdoor community in focus groups and interviews to identify workforce recruitment, education, training, and retention needs. VOBA will summarize the needs and recommendations from this engagement. VOBA is also asking questions about business and technical assistance that outdoor communities need.

VOBA has received support from ACCD to provide a second Basecamp marketing initiative in Vermont Sports magazine this summer featuring VOREC communities.

Building Active, Healthy, and Equitable Communities

Jackie introduced Melanie Riddle from the Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission and Ed Bove from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to discuss the work regional planning commissions are doing through a grant from the Vermont Department of Health (VDH).

Ed provided background on Vermont's regional planning commissions. Planning considerations include health and wellness in many other aspects of their work, from recreation to transportation to planning to agriculture to crime. This work has traditionally been more indirect, but now RPCs are partnering with the Department of Health to dedicate work specifically to healthy community design.

Melanie described the healthy community design work RPCs are engaging in through the VDH grant. The support includes health equity and COVID prevention, with funding to focus on increasing health equity and improving access to physical activity and healthy food. This work will include creating a health

equity toolkit that synthesizes health equity work being done in other states and that is applicable to both Vermont's small and large municipalities.

Jackie invited the steering committee to consider ways that VOREC can connect to this work with RPCs. The group discussed ideas to be included in the toolkit, such as tracks or categories for communities to use in their planning and encouraging communities to assess their outdoor recreation opportunities and consider how to improve them and improve access to them. Karrie suggested making sure that communities interested in VOREC grants are aware of this toolkit, and that this could also tie back to communities' readiness to apply for future VOREC grants.

VOREC 2.0 Discussion

Jackie reported out on work she's been implementing as a result of the small group discussions from the last meeting.

- More regular updates – Jackie has been sending weekly legislative updates, as one example
- More tasks related to areas of expertise – Jackie has been pulling out pre-meeting questions to help steering committee members connect with their outdoor recreation communities
- Continue bringing in speakers – We heard from one today and will continue bringing more; Jackie invited suggestions for future speakers

Jackie also invited feedback and ideas or needs that she isn't already addressing. She also shared upcoming work priorities for strengthening the group, including updating the charter and bylaws. She invited steering committee members to serve on a smaller group to improve the VOREC website. Kim and Drew volunteered.

She also encouraged the group to think about how they would like to involve their outdoor communities in the work of updating the action plan.

Jackie facilitated a discussion on VOREC 2.0 planning, building on one-on-one interviews she held with steering committee members in June 2021. She prompted Steering Committee members to think about changes in Vermont's outdoor recreation economy since the 2018 VOREC Action Plan was created and asked them to identify new challenges and opportunities linked to each of VOREC's five principles (aka pillars). She facilitated the conversation using a Miro Board, and began with an overview of the 2018 plan and objectives, and how the strategies align with the VOREC pillars. As an addition to the slides Jackie shared, Drew noted that the growing of outdoor recreation businesses component also included retaining existing businesses.

Jackie invited steering committee members to engage with the Miro Board by adding their own comments to sticky notes or by sharing comments in the chat or raising hands to offer comments.

Related to one challenge noted about access issues that impact communities, including traffic challenges through Stowe, Mike invited help from VOREC and others to bring together a Route 108 corridor transportation dialogue. At the end of the discussion, Jackie encouraged everyone to continue considering opportunities and challenges and adding to the Miro Board.

For notes recorded from the Miro Board see Meeting Minutes Appendix (starts on p.5).

Public Comment

Lisa Lafont: Vermont Horse Council will be spearheading a share the trail, share the road safety campaign beginning May 7, and noted that the 2018 VOREC action plan speaks to an opportunity and challenge they are experiencing allowing users to understand yield rules on trails and roads. VHC is encountering people who don't know yield laws to bypass horse riders, bikers, or others. She has observed this is more of a problem as recreation grows and encouraged VOREC's support of this safety campaign.

Other Business

No other business offered.

Adjournment: Jackie motion to approve, Josh second. Meeting adjourned.

Appendix

VTGC Updates Summary from Abby Long

1.) VTGC is working on creating a snazzy looking educational pamphlet to clarify what VTGC is, what we do, and why we do it. We realized, the past few years working on an alternative program for trail oversight, taught us that many stakeholders do not have a good idea of our work and, specifically, the best management practices already deployed by our membership organizations, plus the dedication we collectively have for environmental and community stewardship. So in a nutshell the info brochure will share that The Council directly represents thousands of members, volunteers, and private landowners, and the organizational members of VTGC have considerable 'on the ground' experience stewarding recreational trails, including well-cataloged BMPs. We'll also share that The Council is an important partner in the development of trail-related policy and programs, including our statutory role advising The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources on trail matters, including Recreation Trail Program grant allocations, supporting outdoor recreation education programs, and overseeing the Vermont Trail System, a role we execute through a close collaborative relationship with Vermont Forest, Parks, & Recreation. And we do all this because our Council members are the stewards of the 70+% of public access trails on private land and we are on the front line balancing equitable access with responsible use of our amazing landscape.

2.) We have submitted a request for funds for administration support to Rep Sims and Kimbel. In order to more effectively fulfill the VTGC mission to ensure that people will always have access to the trails and landscape of Vermont, and our commitment to foster trails that are both environmentally sustainable and community supported, the VTGC is requesting \$150,000 in one-time funds for a Program Manager and programmatic improvements. These funds would support a part-time (0.5FTE) staff member employed by the VTGC for three (3) years, along with enhanced member tools, materials, and communications.

3.) A third item, VTGC intends to consolidate, organize, and publish our collective BMPs and are beginning work towards integrating these management practices into the Vermont Trails System (VTS). This is a shared vision with FPR - to elevate and strengthen the VTS such that it is seen as a symbol of stewardship - and one that will take time to realize. Much of our focus this year will be dedicated towards this end.

4.) On the Omnibus bill - I would simply note that while the VTGC supports everything in H581, but we understand that other important stakeholders do not. We are not pressing to see the Recreational Trails provisions in the bill move forward, though we do believe significant portions (Sections 10-12) could pass without any real opposition and would provide helpful clarity on current oversight / Rule 71. Members of the REDWnG are keeping an eye out for other bills to which these non-controversial provisions could be added, though we understand this not to be a high priority.

Miro Board Notes

VOREC Principle: Grow outdoor recreation-related businesses

- New Challenges
 - Housing
 - Workforce development
 - Worker safety
 - Small business / nonprofit \$\$ support to elevate their wages to be more competitive and encourage hiring
 - Remote workforce – access to better wifi – requires air travel
 - Remote workforce changing population of outdoors towns – how to keep them in VT when get called back to the office
 - Disconnect between marketing and stewardship
 - Safety for employees in Burlington – densifying neighborhoods are creating unsafe environments for staff in customer service facing jobs – employee harassment is heightened
- New Opportunities
 - Creating alternative education programs for teenagers
 - Remote workforce – opportunity to encourage remote workers to come to Vermont

VOREC Principle: Increase participation in outdoor recreation activities among all demographics

- New Challenges
 - Making sure messages about overcrowding don't exclude people
 - Economic, inflationary, pressure making access to outdoor recreation more challenging to lower income populations
 - Making sure people of all abilities have access and the supporting infrastructure they need (e.g. parking, lodging, etc.)
 - Capacity of NGOs to support diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ)
 - Making the outdoors a more welcoming space for all

- New Opportunities
 - Outdoors are being marketed to wider audiences
 - Can VT work with sister cities from other states to bring more diverse / economically challenged youth groups to our outdoor recreation opportunities
 - Invest in instructors and people who can facilitate development of new users – specifically target diverse leaders – seeing more diverse people with diverse interests

VOREC Principle: Strengthen the quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources

- New Challenges
 - Expanding definition and understanding of ability beyond what is required in ADA
 - Building a holistic experience – want to create as soon as people enter the state – to visit but also want people to want to call VT home
 - Modernizing the Vermont Trails system
 - Resources for communities planning trails and outdoor rec. opportunities
 - Range of opportunities available – developing an asset map (massive undertaking)
- New Opportunities
 - Range of opportunities available – showing people the resources that are out their backdoor
 - Good jumping off point with Town Forest Tool Kit for thinking more creatively around how we develop new assets / VT Trails System
 - User fees? Backpack tax? – Are these options for managing use? Ex: Fish and wildlife system, funded by fees / taxes – new funding source to help counter increase in user participation and impact – In NH users need a parking pass to use any trailhead (free or considerably less automatic parking pass for folks in need, on food stamps)
 - Adopt statewide code of conduct like “Ride with Gratitude” – unified messages that encourage stewardship
 - Outdoor recreation infrastructure valued same as traditional transportation infrastructure
 - Range of opportunities available – showing people the resources out their backdoor
 - More appropriate infrastructure to support users with mobility challenges
 - Disperse popular times – expand options for experiences – are there seasons that can be expanded? Locations that are set aside for one use that can be expanded to multi-users? – help reduce overcrowding – looking at how traditionally dedicated use and thinking about how to re-assess those decisions.
 - Developing standards / specifications for accessible trails – increased awareness for all users who are accessing outdoors / desire for experiences – ex: retrofit to get boat in the water for folks who need that help.
 - Inviting more communities to do a recreation assessment – economic love as much as trail resource love – start by looking at what we have and look more at what could be.

VOREC Principle: Increase stewardship of outdoor recreation resources and environmental quality

- New Challenges
 - Long term funding sources (think about ways to access resources through funds that could build over time – endowments)
 - Huge increase in users
 - Existential threat of climate change increasing
 - Need to think more strategically about management practices because of climate change and new users
 - Continue to explore way to support / compensate private landowners who generously provide outdoor rec opportunities in our state (current use type tax credit or carbon tax credits)
- New Opportunities
 - Support trail networks in making stewardship plans / policy that takes climate change / impact into consideration
 - Have more users – new residents – was about upkeep but with new users need to communicate about the need to new people
 - New dollars available for infrastructure is welcome and necessary given the incredible increase in need
 - Support trails / outdoor space in accessing Lidar terrain mapping to assess environmental impact / erosion annually to aid in mitigating this impact
 - KT looking at Lidar mapping / terrain to see the annual impact – tech being used in new ways creating new opportunities for management of trails – Carbon tax credits / working with landowners– wave the liability – ex: white out solutions in St. Johnsbury – can fly drones over areas to get better look at the terrain
 - People are noticing spike in participation – that it’s good – brings extra pressures and challenges – opportunity to go after dedicated revenue source – “Vermont Trails Stewardship Trust Fund”
 - Funding for VTGC Admin – help build capacity of stewardship practitioners in the state

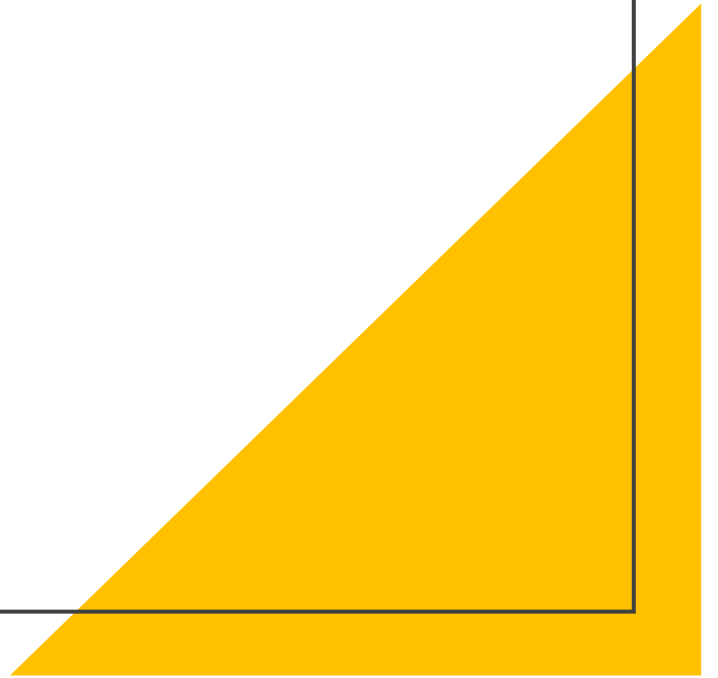
VOREC Principle: Promote and enjoy the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation

- New Challenges
 - Overcrowding and overuse of the outdoors – challenge in making sure all feel welcome
 - Motorized recreation does not create a healthy environment (Electric motorized OHVs)
 - Access issues with outdoor rec. assets – impacting participation negatively (inclusivity) – ex: vale resorts addressing income needs but it’s also less enjoyable
 - Issue with idling cars at ski resorts
 - Climate change/carbon – transportation solutions: public transportation / electric vehicle incentives
 - Bus rapid transit – increasing transportation potential (public transportation) – ex: Killington system
 - Defining outdoor recreation when we’re talking about VOREC – collect information from new users / continue dialogue around what we mean

- Downside of increasing use of resources
- New Opportunities
 - Mental health benefits – more awareness in the wake of COVID
 - Increase opportunities for participants to learn and hone skills
 - Also reduced air pollution
 - Nationally increased awareness of the outdoors as a welcoming place for people of all races
 - Renewed focus on value of outdoor education learning in the outdoors
 - Route 108 transportation / visioning
 - Reviving community ski hills / xc trails
 - Explore incentives for health and wellness – insurance, employer benefits
 - Data gathering – renewing commitment to gathering data to understand target pops to make recreation more accessible
 - More connector trails / paths to downtowns – mitigate recreation travel off dangerous roads

VOREC 2.0

Action Plan Overview





How was it created?

- Two-day Grafton Conference on Outdoor Recreation and Rural Economic Development (August 2017)
 - Community conversations held around the State
 - Arlington
 - East Dummerston
 - Hartford / White River Junction
 - Island Pond
 - Rutland
 - Saint Albans
 - Waterbury
 - Comments collected through email
 - Comments collected through write-in survey
-

What does it look like?



VOREC Steering Committee Recommendations and Action Plan February 2018

INTRODUCTION:

The VOREC Steering Committee offers the following recommendations and action plan intended to enhance business opportunities, improve participation in outdoor recreation, strengthen our recreational infrastructure and stewardship of natural resources, and grow Vermont’s economy in a manner consistent with Vermont’s strong outdoor culture of respect and sustainability. The recommendations are broad, balanced, and inclusive. Through a collaborative process, including considerable public input, we have developed recommendations we think are achievable and impactful, given sufficient public and private commitment and resources. Some key principles have guided our work:

Inclusiveness. Outdoor recreation is defined broadly to be inclusive of all forms of outdoor recreation, including on-road, off-road, non-motorized, motorized, trail-based, open space, and by land, water and air. We have solicited and received feedback from many groups and individuals involved in outdoor recreation. Our motto has been: “If you’re outside, you’re in.”

Balance. We have considered all components of the Governor’s executive order including economic growth, marketing, stewardship, and access. We’ve sought to develop recommendations that balance economic growth with limited resources, balance increased outdoor participation with stewardship and sustainable infrastructure, and balance the varied needs of stakeholders and user groups.

Interconnectedness. We understand there is participation interconnectedness among outdoor recreational enthusiasts with users engaging and appreciating a variety of recreational pursuits. User groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive, i.e.

Objective	Strategy	Action/Initiative	Resources Needed	Impact to State Revenues	Timeframe
	Support other creative efforts to ensure lifelong participation in outdoor activities including beginning activity programs for all ages and families, e.g. loaner program for gear, community bike or kayak programs, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ID such programs in Vermont and elsewhere 2. Replicate and support these programs 			
	Identify and promote access across all types of outdoor recreation and all seasons – including both				



How is it structured?

- Guided by three key principles
 - Inclusiveness
 - Balance
 - Interconnectedness
 - Organized primarily by objective categories and strategies
-



How is it structured?

- Objective categories
 - Regional pilot programs
 - Economic development
 - Funding
 - Workforce development
 - Marketing
 - Private / public partnerships
 - Access and participation
 - Stewardship
 - 40 strategies listed under objective categories
-



How do strategies align with pillars?

VOREC Pillar	# of aligned strategies
Grow outdoor recreation-related business	12
Increase participation in outdoor recreation activities among all demographics	11
Strengthen the quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources	19
Increase stewardship of outdoor recreation resources and environmental quality	9
Promote and enjoy the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation	4

VOREC Steering Committee Meeting Agenda

Friday, May 13, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Teams meeting

[Join through Teams app](#)

Join by phone: +1 802-828-7667; Conference ID: 775 350 354#

Objectives

- Share and discuss updates on Vermont’s outdoor recreation economy.
- Learn about VOREC Community Grant Program recipients and discuss program feedback.
- Build alignment around future meetings and opportunities for better public engagement through the VOREC website.

Pre-meeting questions to ask Outdoor Recreation Communities

- Are there projects you are excited about that were funded through this year’s VOREC Community Grant Program? Do you anticipate meaningful improvements for your community, or communities near you, because of this work? If so, what? Were there un-funded projects or types of work that you would like to see funded in the future?
- Have you visited the VOREC website? What information were you looking for? Were you able to find the information you needed?

Agenda

Time	Topic	Lead
9:00 a.m.	Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce new members	Jackie Dagger, Program Manager
9:20 a.m.	Business meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve March minutes• Updates from chair<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ FPR (Becca Washburn & Jackie Dagger)• Other updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ACCD (Josh Hanford)○ VTGC (Abby Long)○ VOBA (Kelly Ault)	Mike Snyder, Chair Jackie
10:20 a.m.	VOREC Community Grant Program <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn more about FY22 grant recipients• Grant program discussion	
10:40 a.m.	Break	ALL

Time	Topic	Lead
10:50 a.m.	VOREC 2.0 discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review takeaways from March Miro Board discussion • Group capacity building discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discuss upcoming meetings (Speakers, virtual vs. in-person vs. hybrid meetings) ○ VOREC website brainstorm 	Jackie
11:50 a.m.	Public comment	ALL
11:55 a.m.	Other business	ALL
12:00 p.m.	Adjourn	ALL

VOREC Steering Committee Meeting

May 13, 2022, via Microsoft Teams | 9:00am – 12:00pm

Steering Committee Attendees: Michael Snyder, Josh Hanford, Hal Ellms, Drew Simmons, Kim Rupe, Abby Long, Frazier Blair, Danny Hale, Karrie Thomas (joined by phone)

Steering Committee Members Absent: Mike Debonis, Frank Stanley, Jeanne Gervais, Shelby Semmes, Marc Sherman, Josh Ryan

FPR/ACCD Staff in Attendance: Jackie Dagger, Caroline Zeilenga

Public in Attendance: Kelly Ault (Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance), Jackie Cassino (VTrans), Bryan Rivard

Welcome and Introductions

Jackie Dagger, VOREC Program Manager, opened the May meeting of the VOREC Steering Committee and shared that the steering committee was welcoming two new members. Frazier Blair, Vice President of Merchandise Planning at Orvis, joins as one of five non-state representatives from companies within the Outdoor Recreation Industry. Danny Hale, Executive Director of the Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association and Co-chair of the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC), joins as the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC) motorized recreation representative.

Frazier introduced herself and described her background in outdoor recreation and outdoor retail. She has worked at Orvis for 17 years and she also sits on the boards of the Outdoor Industry Association and the Green Mountain Valley School.

Steering committee members introduced themselves and shared one reason they participate on the steering committee. Staff and partner organizations introduced themselves.

Danny introduced himself after joining the meeting at 9:45am. Danny remarked on the importance of the management of Vermont's outdoor recreation resources to the state and to VOREC's work. Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Mike Snyder (Mike), noted that stewardship is a foundational pillar of VOREC's work and he welcomed Danny's voice and interest in supporting this on the steering committee.

Business Meeting

March Minutes: Hal motion to approve, Josh second. None opposed, no abstentions. Minutes approved.

Chair Updates

Mike welcomed new members and asked veteran steering committee members to reach out to new members and be available to support and provide input from their experience participating on the steering committee.

Mike shared a legislative update: The session ended last night and the Governor's recommendation to allocate \$5 million to the VOREC Community Grant Program was included in the legislature's budget,

though the Governor has not yet signed the bill into law. State parks also received funding to provide internet connectivity in the parks, which is important for safety, business operations, and staffing. S.11 passed, including workforce development support that relates to outdoor recreation.

Mike shared that the Director of Finance and Administration at the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) is moving on, and this is coupled with historic workloads and strain, and he requested understanding that FPR is behind and is working hard to find solutions to provide service more quickly.

Mike also shared the Stowe Mountain Resort's decision to charge for parking in the winter. FPR is examining this internally and will be meeting with the resort's management to discuss whether FPR receives a portion of the parking fees and whether charging for parking this way is an unreasonable limitation to public access to Mount Mansfield State Forest.

Mike also provided FPR updates from Becca Washburn, Director of the Division of Lands Administration and Recreation (DLAR):

The Recreation Program Manager position formerly held by Jessica Savage will soon be posted for recruitment. The Enhancement of Recreation Stewardship and Access (ERSA) Trail grants have been awarded to 12 recipients and more information can be found on FPR's Recreation Grants website (<https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants>). There is an increase in funding through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and FPR hopes to host a community grant round this fall. The Recreation Trails Program (RTP) is currently taking full applications and hopes to award funding in the fall.

Jackie provided updates from the Confluence of States. She explained that the Confluence of States (the Confluence) is a group of 13 states, and growing, that have established offices of outdoor recreation and their Governors have signed on to a series of four accords that closely resemble VOREC's pillars (and were written with significant input from VOREC members). The purpose of this group is to bring outdoor recreation to the policy-making arena. She also explained that the Confluence is closely coordinated with the Outdoor Recreation Learning Network (ORLN) that was established by the NGA to support states interested in organizing an outdoor recreation office or have an outdoor recreation office but haven't signed on to the Confluence accords. Jackie participates in regular monthly meetings for the Confluence as the Vermont representative. Jackie shared that the Confluence is preparing to visit Arkansas in late May, including a visit to Bentonville to learn about the Walton Foundation and to join the ORLN Annual Meeting in Little Rock which will include a Confluence signing ceremony to welcome New Hampshire, Arkansas, and Maryland to the Confluence. She invited the steering committee to send her questions to inform her participation in both meetings. Additionally, Jackie shared that the Confluence has hired a fellow to focus on building a communications strategy and administrative backbone for the Confluence. To learn more about the Confluence and the Confluence accords visit: <https://www.confluenceofstates.com/>. Jackie will be attending the Outdoor Retailer summer show in early June and invited input from the committee before she attends.

Vice Chair Updates

Josh shared workforce challenges related to keeping up with federal funding assistance and new programs. However, there have been many legislative wins related to workforce development, training, and economic development and housing, including funding to invest in existing housing stock and new

pilots to spur modest single-family home development and mobile home parks and to create a new smart-growth neighborhood from scratch in the next five years, as well as many additional supports to housing, homebuyers, and community development.

There have been recent efforts to consider dual-language signs on the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) for Canadian visitors, as one example of efforts underway to welcome more Canadian visitors back to the state.

Partner Updates

Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance (VOBA): Kelly shared VOBA's excitement about the "The Next Outdoor Playgrounds" feature in the May Issue of Vermont Sports Magazine highlighting communities who received VOREC Community grants. Eleven communities and hundreds of businesses are included, as well as statewide recreation connections. VOBA is exploring a fall feature that would highlight the remaining 10 VOREC grant communities this year.

VOBA has received a grant from VOREC and the VOBA team is working on their plans to implement the funds for workforce and business assistance for the outdoor sector. Many opportunities have emerged, largely focused on technical occupations like bike mechanics, trail construction, and gear and apparel manufacturing as well as skill-based instructors—these jobs are in high demand and hard to fill—as well as recruiting for diversity and helping companies expand their inclusivity.

VOBA has completed work with UVM's MBA program in sustainable innovation on focus groups and interviews with 55 businesses to inform and reinforce the needs of the industry for workforce training and education. The report that was produced includes many recommendations.

VOBA's policy work focused largely on economic development, including the VOREC Community Grant Program, as well as e-bike incentives and VHCB and housing, many components of which were within S.11.

Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC): VTGC has created an educational document on what the council is and what they do. The VTGC annual meeting will be held in person in Montpelier on Monday, May 16. Discussion will focus on current challenges and opportunities, how VTGC can better support members, how members can be more active and engaged, and modernizing the Vermont Trail System. Abby also mentioned that S.234, the act relating to Act 250, lays out a marker that trails do not fragment forests. Mike noted that although he is not speaking for the Governor, the Governor publicly indicated that he is likely to veto the bill.

See appendix for educational document about VTGC and what they do.

VOREC Community Grant Program

Jackie provided an update on the progress the VOREC Community Grant Program has made and presented on this year's grants. Thirty-seven projects were invited to submit a full application, of which 30 applied. After a robust review process to identify grant recipients, award decisions were announced in March to 24 recipients with over \$4.5 million in funding. She reviewed grant recipient locations and broad project categories and reviewed the grant program recommendations that were made before this grant round and the ways that these recommendations were implemented. She acknowledged that FPR

business office staff turnovers are delaying grant funds being delivered and FPR is providing support to these communities.

Danny shared that project are going to experience costs going up for bids and asked if there's a plan for that. Mike agreed that FPR is feeling the same challenge with contractors and costs, and Jackie responded that conversations haven't been had yet. Drew shared that there was initially some concern about expenditures and the pace of reimbursement, and that the project in his community is a dominating conversation with significant local media coverage and complimented VOREC for encouraging communities to think about what's possible with outdoor recreation in their communities. He also suggested a future conversation about what long-term, sustainable funding for the program looks like.

See the appendix for PowerPoint slides.

VOREC 2.0 Discussion

Jackie reminded the group of the VOREC 2.0 conversation from the last meeting and pointed people to the appendix to the March meeting minutes to see the conversation notes. She focused this meeting's conversation on building the steering committee's capacity for working with each other and building public engagement. She asked the group to brainstorm a list of topics they would like to hear from speakers about, and their interest in different meeting formats, as well as ways to make the VOREC website a better tool for public engagement. She shared questions on her screen and noted responses.

See the appendix for discussion notes. The full discussion can be viewed by watching the meeting recording available publicly on FPR's YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCzDdXvrzPd3pnMLpx7aM9g/videos>)

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Other Business

Kelly shared that the Office of Racial Equity invited groups to submit projects that would advance diversity and equity and noted this as a potential funding opportunity for outdoor organizations and communities.

Adjournment: Jackie motion to adjourn, Abby second. Meeting adjourned.

Appendix

VOREC 2.0 Discussion Notes

Question: What topics should the steering committee learn more about to inform our work on VOREC 2.0 and an updated prioritized action plan?

- Learnings from other states – what are other offices of outdoor recreation doing? Learning from their models.
- Relationship between conservation and recreation advocacy – look at from both sides
- The move to electric – not just e-bikes but also e-infrastructure
- Used commerce – products that are being sold 3-4 times past first owner and how that impacts the economy
- Supply chain and inflation over the next few years and how that impacts what VOREC is trying to achieve and our role in supporting grantees
- Equity and inclusion – how VOREC integrates into our work
- Communities becoming unaffordable and driving out the local community – what can the outdoor recreation sector do to give back – are there examples of recreation industry giving back to the community?
 - Examples
 - Pine Hill Park event to benefit homeless prevention center
 - User groups working with community groups to give back and build partnerships - New River Gorge

Question: Moving out of the restrictions of the pandemic, what meeting models have you liked? Are there examples of hybrid, virtual or in-person meetings that you think the VOREC Steering Committee should consider? What are they?

- NEK Collaborative Board – regular meetings are on Zoom, quarterly in-person meetings, annual meeting is in person
- Hybrid model (e.g. in-person and virtual participation) makes it really hard to engage
- VASA – Use a hybrid meeting model. They have found that having good technology (e.g. mics and cameras) is needed to make this model work well. A moderator also makes a huge difference.

Question: Who is currently visiting the VOREC website? Who do we want to visit in the future?

- VOREC steering committee members looking for resources
- Legislators / elected officials looking for more information
- VOREC grant applicants
- Funders
- Outdoor recreation user groups (e.g. climbing groups, backcountry ski groups)
- Media

Question: What images do we want people to see when they visit the website?

- Images of different outdoor recreation user groups
- Map of communities who have received VOREC Community Grants
- Dashboard with data on towns served, trails built, projects that have been funded (update annually)
- Images from VOREC Community Grant Projects
- Succinct explanation about VOREC
- Word collage in the shape of VOREC acronym
- Images that reflect community, stewardship of resources
- Images connected to the driving principles of VOREC

Question: What key information of messages do we want people to remember after they leave the website?

- What VOREC is
- What the Outdoor Recreation Economy is
- That VOREC wants stakeholder input! People should know how to attend a meeting, how to send us a note, be able to share feedback on how we're doing, understand how to apply for a grant and who the previous grant recipients are
- What VOREC's driving principles are

Question: What else should we be thinking about?

- Navigational features – want to make sure the website is easy to navigate
- Representation – we should make sure visitors to the website know who our partner organizations are and how to get to their websites
- Making the website a hub for contributing ideas – make it a one stop place to find people / organizations working in the outdoor recreation space
- Developing a questionnaire for website visitors to fill out / gather information about the outdoor recreation economy



Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative

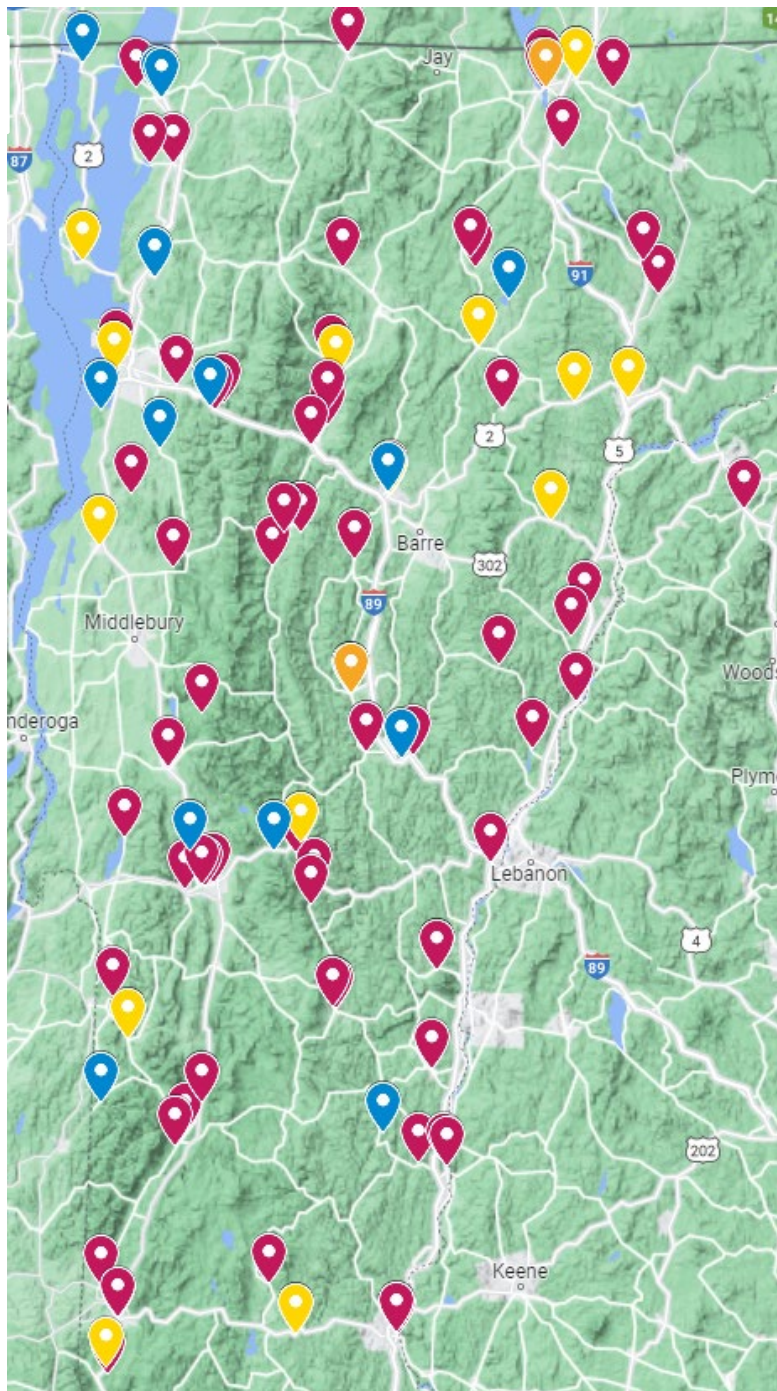
GRANT PROGRAM RECIPIENTS

FULL APPLICATIONS

- Received 30 full grant applications
- Requested a total of \$7.2 million dollars
- Selected 24 grant recipients and over \$4.5 million in funding

FY22 GRANT RECIPIENTS

- City of Vergennes
- Town of Pownal
- Town of St. Johnsbury
- Town of Groton
- Town of Hardwick
- Town of Danville
- City of Burlington
- Trust for Public Land
- Sterling College
- Lake Champlain Economic Development Corporation
- Town of Derby
- Town of Killington
- Town of Pawlet
- City of Montpelier
- Town of Cabot
- Mad River Valley Recreation District
- Town of Northfield
- Vermont Museum of Natural History
- Town of Bethel
- Ascutney Outdoors
- Town of Ludlow
- Vermont Outdoor Business Association
- Vermont River Conservancy
- Town of Randolph /VT Huts



FY2022 VOREC Community Grant Program Recipients

Purple markers = Letter of Interest Applicants

Blue markers = Applicants invited for full applications

Yellow markers = Grant recipients

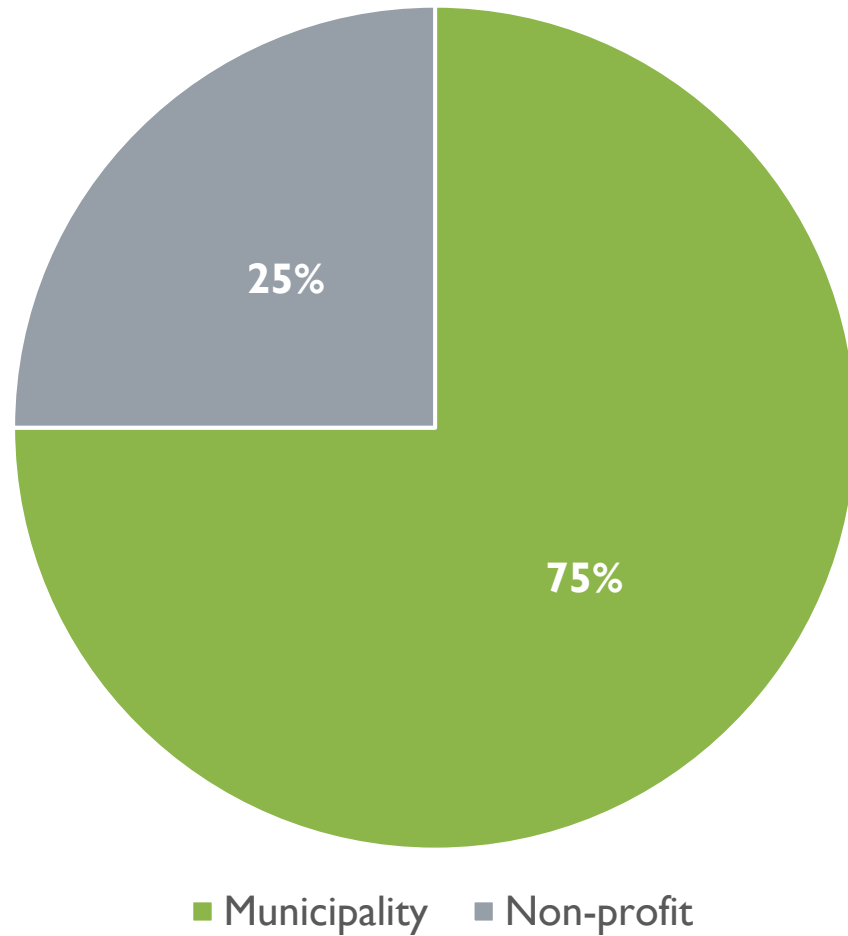
2022 GRANT AWARD BREAKDOWN

- Recipients will complete work in 11 of Vermont's 14 counties
- Projects will....
 - Have statewide benefits
 - Connect communities to and further develop statewide outdoor rec. resources
 - Support workforce and outdoor recreation business development
 - Create new opportunities for gear lending

2021 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set a grant minimum of \$50,000 with no maximum
- Implement a 2-step Letter of Interest and Application Invitation Process
- Expand eligibility to include non-profits
- Fund up to 25 grants across the state in several “buckets” (equity, regional / multi-community efforts, local/smaller efforts, economic impact studies)
- Provide non-reimbursement based / up front funding to grantees

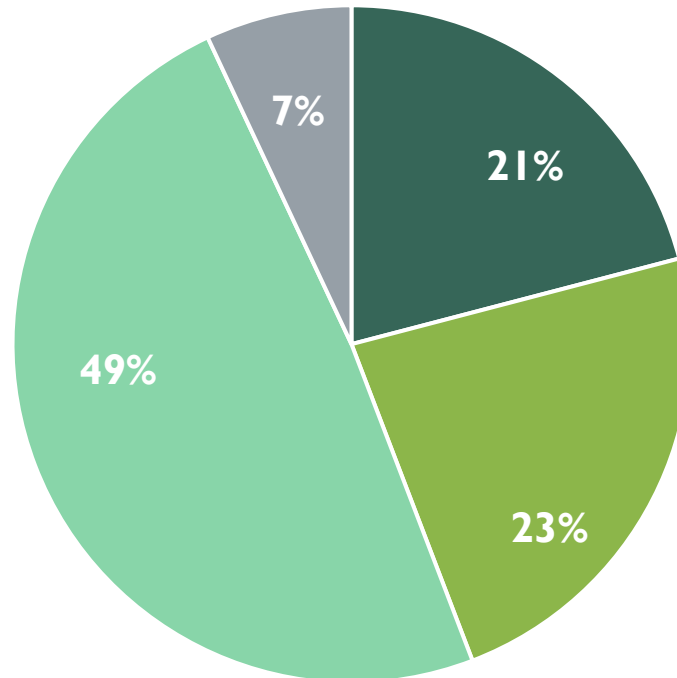
MUNICIPALITY VS. NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION



DISTRIBUTION ACROSS IDENTIFIED FOCUS AREAS

EQUITY FOCUS AREA

Projects counted under the equity focus area have an element of accessibility for differently abled bodies (e.g. ADA accessible trail / bathroom), provide better access to otherwise expensive equipment (e.g. gear library, low-cost rentals), and/or create programming focused on BIPOC.



■ Equity

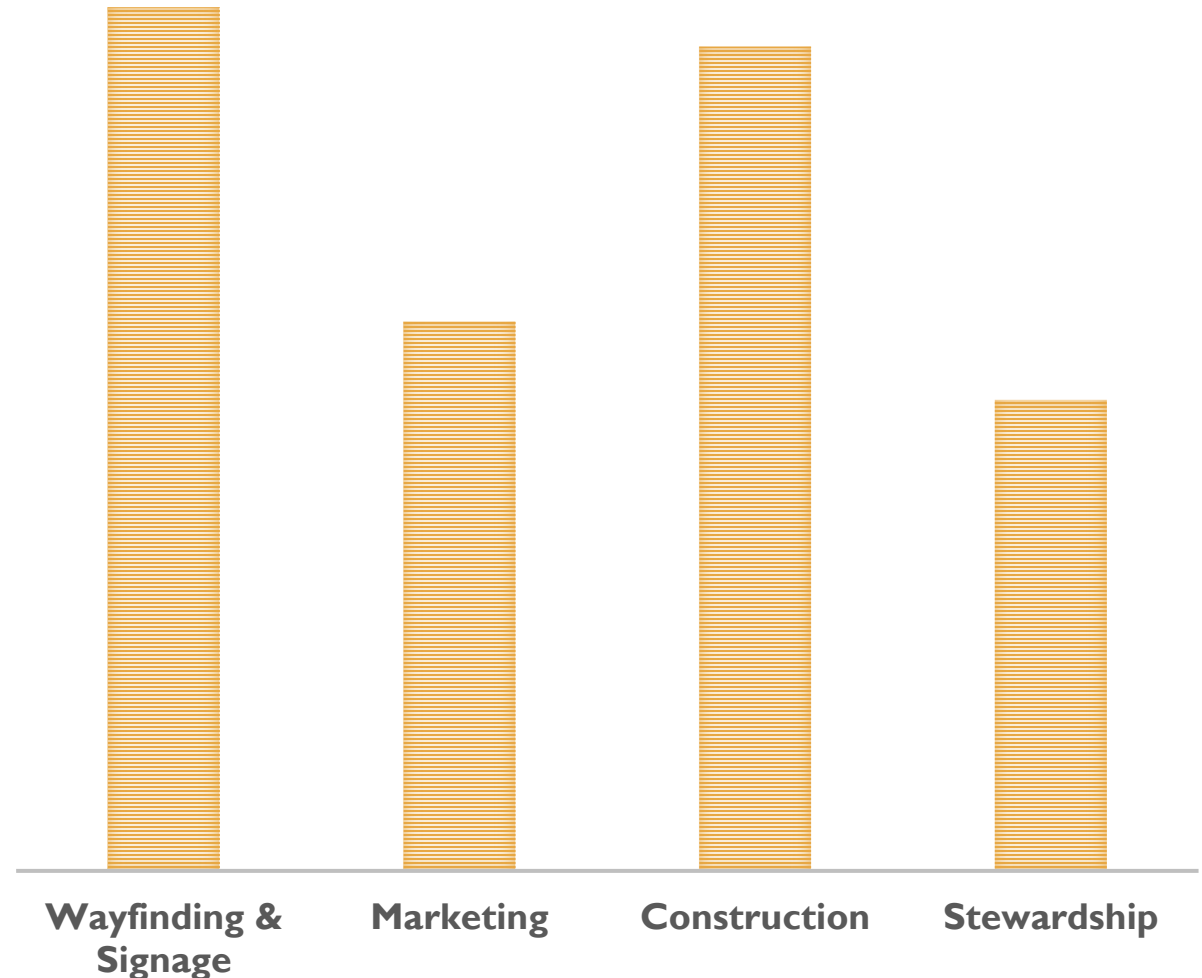
■ Local/smaller efforts

■ Regional/multi-community efforts

■ Economic impact data

FUNDED PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Wayfinding & signage:** trail system maps, educational kiosks, marketing for local businesses
- **Marketing:** website development, logo development, outdoor recreation resource photos, messaging development, community events
- **Construction:** trail building, park improvements, pedestrian bridges, parking construction and improvements, pump track building, skate park improvements
- **Stewardship:** trail maintenance, stewardship team coordination, educational programs and signage about community natural resources
- **Other:** land acquisition, business development, workforce pathway development (trail building & bike mechanics), trail use studies



GRANT RECIPIENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Decisions emailed to applicants on Wednesday, March 16
- Decisions announced publicly at the Governor's Press Conference on Monday, March 28
- 11 recipient communities highlighted in May Issue of Vermont Sports Magazine
- Coverage of individual projects in local news



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- Grant agreement development
 - Working with grantees to confirm project activities and budgets
 - Working with the FPR Business Office to execute grants
 - Executing grants and starting to issue re-imbursements
- Watching the Governor's recommendation to allocate another \$5 million to the VOREC Community Grant Program in the FY23 budget

VERMONT TRAILS AND GREENWAYS COUNCIL



Ensuring people have access to the trails and landscape in Vermont.

VERMONTTGC.ORG

WHO WE ARE

A collective voice for Vermont trails. The **Vermont Trails & Greenways Council (VTGC)** gathers together an active membership of nonprofit trail organizations representing all types of trails statewide. Membership also includes community groups, local businesses, cities and towns and public land management agencies.

The members of the Council:

- Represent **50,000+** individual members
- Log **100,000+** hours of volunteer time annually
- Manage and maintain **7,750+** miles of public access trails
- Support **50,000+** jobs statewide through the broader impact of our work
- Steward trails on private land, which hosts over **70%** of public access trails in Vermont
- Partner closely with state and federal agencies to manage trails on public land



WHAT WE DO

The Council serves as the consolidated, expert voice for recreational trails in Vermont and provides guidance to policymakers in the following ways:

INFORM

The Council directly represents thousands of members, volunteers, and private landowners and can provide their perspectives along with those of our member organizations to help inform decision-making, including as testimony.

GUIDE

The organizational members of the Council have considerable on the ground experience stewarding recreational trails, including well-cataloged best management practices, positioning the Council as an important partner in the development of trail-related policy and programs.

ADVISE

The Council has a **statutory role** advising The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources on trail matters, including Recreation Trail Program grant allocations, supporting outdoor recreation education programs, and overseeing the Vermont Trail System (VTS), a role we execute through a close collaborative relationship with Vermont Forest, Parks, & Recreation.



The Council is eager to engage with policymakers at any time to discuss how we can assist on trail-related topics.

WHY NOW

Demand for outdoor recreation access has risen dramatically over the last decade, growth that was only accelerated through the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 7.1 million more Americans participated in outdoor recreation than in 2019 (OIA, '21). This explosion in trail popularity has been especially acute in Vermont, a five-hour drive from over 80 million people and a regional epicenter for outdoor recreation.

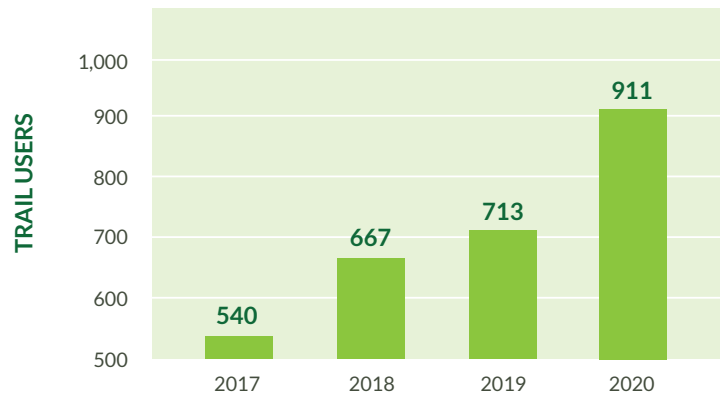
Vermont was no exception:

- Daily usage at the Blueberry Lake trail system in the Mad River Valley grew over **150%** from 2016 to 2021 (Mad River Riders, '22).
- Catamount Trail Associations annual trail user counts at Brandon Gap and Nebraska Valley **doubled** between 2017 and 2020.
- Sales of VASA Trail Access Decals, required to access ATV trails on private land without individual landowner permission, have increased over **150%** from 2016 to 2021

Year Over Year Trail Counts (Winter Use)

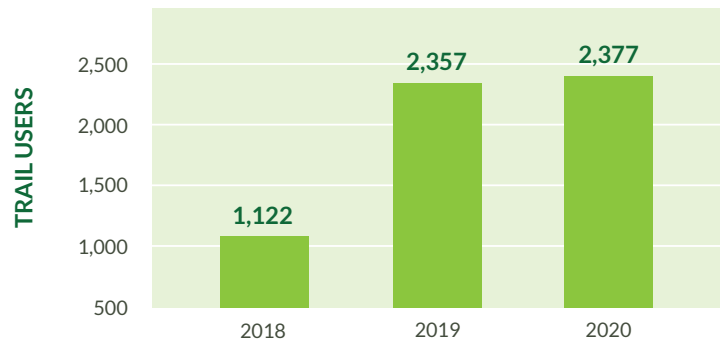
Brandon Gap - No Name Backcountry Area

Year Over Year Trend



Nebraska Valley - Catamount Trail Section 22

Year Over Year Trend



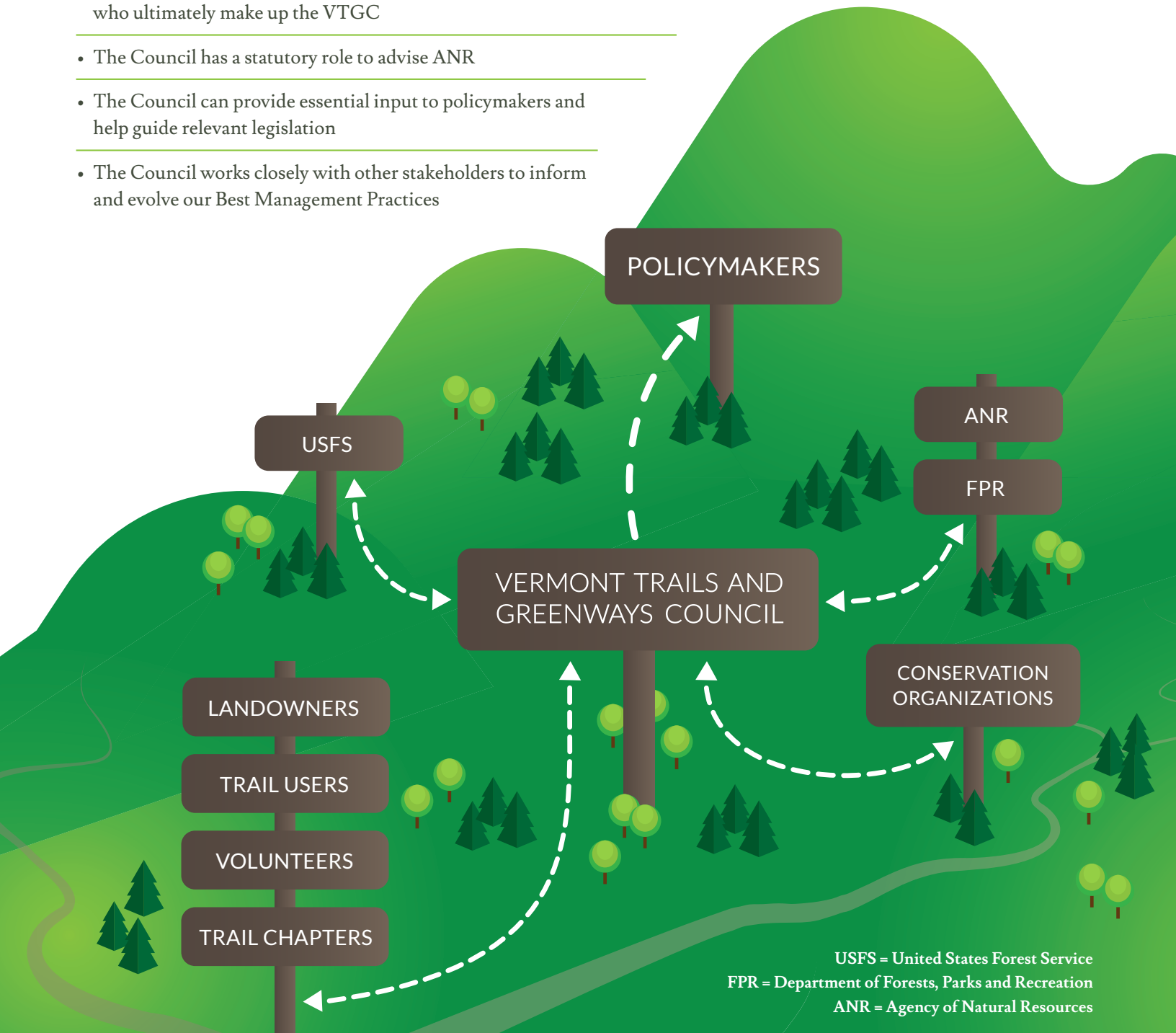
Now, more than ever, the Council seeks the support from and active dialogue with Vermont's policymakers to ensure we chart a supportable, sustainable path forward. VERMONTTGC.ORG

OUR STEWARDSHIP COMMUNITY

As stewards of the 70+% of public access trails on private land and in concert with public land managers, the VTGC is on the front line balancing equitable access with responsible use of our amazing landscape. Our members best management practices, which address trail design, construction, use, and maintenance, demonstrate our commitment to environmental stewardship.

Key points of how we work

- Our Council members represent landowners, volunteers, and members, who ultimately make up the VTGC
- The Council has a statutory role to advise ANR
- The Council can provide essential input to policymakers and help guide relevant legislation
- The Council works closely with other stakeholders to inform and evolve our Best Management Practices



OUR MEMBERS

Board of Directors:

Danny Hale, Co-Chair – VASA

Nick Bennette, Co-Chair – VMBA

RJ Thompson, Co-Vice Chair
Vermont Huts

Mariah Keagy, Co-Vice Chair
Sinuosity

Greg Western, Secretary
Cross Vermont Trail

Cindy Locke, Treasurer – VAST

Matt Williams, Board Member
Catamount Trail Association

Eric Remick, Board Member
Hardwick Trails Committee

Abby Long, Board Member
Kingdom Trail Association

Caitrin Maloney, Board Member
Velomont Trail Collective

Rosy Metcalfe, Board Member
Community Representative

Rachel Fussell, Board Member
Community Representative

Organization Members

Caledonia Trail Collaborative

Catamount Trail Association

Craftsbury Outdoor Center

Cross Vermont Trail Association

Green Mountain Club

Hinesburg Trails Committee

Kingdom Trail Association

Mad River Path

Nature Conservancy

North Country Trail Association

Northern Forest Canoe Trail

Northwoods Stewardship Center

Stowe Trails Partnership

The Nature Conservancy

Town of Hardwick

Town of Lyndon

Upper Valley Trails Alliance

Vermont Association of Snow Travelers
(VAST)

Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association
(VASA)

Vermont Horse Council

Vermont Huts Association

Vermont Mountain Bike Association

Vermont Off Highway Vehicle
Recreation Association (VORA)

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

State and Federal Agency Members

Green Mountain National Forest

National Park Service

Vermont League of Cities and Towns

VT Agency of Transportation

VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

VT Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation

Commercial Members

Sinuosity, LLC



Please contact these VTGC Council members for more information: Mariah Keagy – mariah@sinuosity.net
Nick Bennette – nick@vmba.org, Danny Hale – director@vtvasa.org, RJ Thompson – rj@vermonthuts.org



Photo by John Atkinson



Photo by Marius Becker



VERMONT TRAILS AND GREENWAYS COUNCIL

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