**VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

March 8, 2019 at Agency of Natural Resources Office, Montpelier, VT

**Steering Committee Attendees:** Michael Snyder, Wendy Knight, Trey Martin, Bill Supple, Josh Ryan, Jeanne Gervais, Abby Long, Marc Sherman, Sarah Lang (phone)

**FPR/ACCD Staff Attendees:** Jessica Savage, Becca Washburn, Craig Whipple, Caroline Zeilenga, Tim Tierney

**Public Attendees:** Zac Freeman (RASTA/Randolph Trails and Recreation), Jean Audet (Green Mountain Horse Council), Gordan Adams (Timber and Stone), Liz Gleason (Vermont Housing and Conservation Board), Jessica Booth (Newport Parks and Recreation Department), Sarah Buxton (Department of Labor), Tracy Verge (Department of Labor)

**Mike S: Introductions and Welcome**

**February Minutes Approved:** Bill motion to approve, Trey second, none opposed, Chair Snyder and Vice Chair Knight abstained because absent from February meeting.

**Chair Update**

Mike S: Welcoming Abby Long to the steering committee, taking the place of Tom Stuessy, who has resigned. Thanks to Tom for his service. The Governor’s Office agreed that mountain biking needs membership on the steering committee, and Abby will fill this spot. Amy Kelsey also resigning. Governor’s Office has been alerted and will consider the best way to fill her general recreation slot.

Discussion of possibility of new representation from water-based recreation or equine recreation, and steering committee role as a two-year commitment.

Mike S: Legislative update: VOREC Community Grant Program very well-received in State House, with movement to fund further. Governor’s budget proposes another $100,000 in funding, while some legislators are suggesting a larger amount.

Mike S: Legislation is advancing related to the Act 47 Committee on Act 250 at 50 study group considering revisions to Act 250. The Administration’s bill has placeholder language regarding recreational trails, and is waiting on partner organizations (VT Trails Alliance and Forest Partnership as well as VT Trails and Greenways Council) to bring forward language changes they support.

Wendy: S.18 consumer protection bill moving forward. Testified last year asking for an outdoor recreation exemption, and this bill has now passed out of the Senate with the exemption included.

**Vice Chair Update**

Wendy: Department of Tourism and Marketing is refreshing imagery to reflect diversity. Please share any appropriate imagery that highlights diversity.

Wendy: Stay to Stay Program just piloted stay-to-stay ski weekends at three locations. Considering a similar arrangement with mountain biking this summer.

Wendy: Tourism Day coming up at the State House to reveal economic impact of tourism in Vermont. Proposing 2% of meals and room tax go towards Department of Tourism and Marketing budget.

Tim: Northern Border Regional Commission is a federal/state partnership with $3.4 million in eligible funds, including for state agencies. Could work with VOREC grant program for a funding match, and could also send non-winning grantees to the ACCD program.

Tim: State Trade Expansion Program is providing a Vermont Pavilion at the summer Outdoor Retailer show, featuring Vermont outdoor brands. Looking for representation from companies.

Becca: Currently making visits to ski areas who lease land from FPR. S.18 is coming up frequently during visits, and so is developing an etiquette for uphill travel safety and use conflicts.

Discussion of uphill policies for skiers and cutting ski lines on state lands.

Jessica: Working on grantees’ paperwork for Land and Water Conservation Fund and Recreational Trails Program grants. Also discussing fat biking potential on state lands.

Craig: State Parks are 9% ahead for the year already. Conversations may arise about accommodating increased use.

**Member Updates**

Marc: Conservation Alliance organization give grants, and anyone can join and receive one vote. Vermonters need to get involved to bring more money to the state. Also, would like to facilitate low-cost gear purchases for the First-Time Happy Camper Program.

Trey: Land and Water Conservation Fund was approved on bipartisan vote last week. Also, Trust for Public Land would like to tie their ideas to VOREC, including Long Trail projects and using the ROI report to consider a conservation funding forum. The Vermont Law School outdoor recreation business program will be reinstated again.

Josh: Testified at VHCB day in support of reinstating full funding, with hopes stories of our trails and their impact were effective. Green Mountain Club created list and interactive map of accessible trails in Vermont, in consort with FPR. And each month, inviting an employee to attend the steering committee meetings (Gordon is here today).

Jeanne: Island Pond is joining with Morgan and Newark to talk about ATV trails, and working with Kingdom Trails to map gravel routes.

Abby: Kingdom Trails is in winter operations, grooming for fat biking, Nordic skiing, and snowshoeing. Working on Concord-Burke municipal planning grant to map existing infrastructure like logging roads and gravel roads that connect the surrounding towns, and to use in a GIS map online by activity. This project sparked a conversation with NEK Collaborative to map the entire region and connect other trail systems. Also working on the Borderlands Project, a Northern Borders initiative from Maine to the Adirondacks to connect mountain bike network in the region to market together.

Sarah: Received over 70 project submissions across Bennington and Windham Counties that relate to objectives in their recent report.

**VOBA Update**

Bill: VOBA had second business roundtable recently at Killington, with 43 people attending. Included a VOREC/VOBA presentation, a panel discussion with three businesses, and a presentation from the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, then broke into working groups and brainstormed, and wrapped up with a networking session. The next roundtable is scheduled for June 5.

Mike S: Suggesting we consider building in more time for member updates during meetings.

**VOREC Work Process**

Mike S: At the last meeting, the state team put forward the idea of work groups, but this group was uncertain that was the best plan. Now proposing moving to fewer steering committee meetings—perhaps bi-monthly—with state team work sessions in between, which steering committee members can optionally attend. Their role is to represent interests, and they could guide core state staff to carry on the work.

Wendy: Opposed to this approach. Private/public sector is essential to the initiative, and we need to bring more people into the process.

Mike S: Approach reflects steering committee members’ time and capacity, and re-emphasizes what state can do for initiative; no desire to minimize private sector.

Josh: Propose we pause and discuss approach on a date when there’s full steering committee attendance.

Bill: Can some topics of interest to VOREC be run by VOBA to provide more capacity?

Marc: Advocating for more varied meetings with themes, rotating through three types of meetings each quarter: one for examination and reflections, one for a guest and work, and one for state updates.

Trey: Consider an external conversation to bring a proposal back to the group?

Mike S: Suggesting state team work towards a proposal and follow up with next steps to solicit input.

**VOREC Grant Program Update**

Becca provides overview of VOREC Community Grant Program proposals received and ranked, and asks selection committee members to share their experience.

Discussion of selection process and work to find resources and alternative funding options for the communities who didn’t receive the grant.

Announcement of winning grant communities: Newport City and Randolph, and introduction of community representatives Jessica Booth and Zac Freeman.

Jessica Booth provides overview of Newport City’s grant project.

Zac Freeman provides overview of Randolph grant project.

Discussion of upcoming Governor’s weekly press conference announcing grant program recipients.

**Guest Speakers: Sarah Buxton & Tracy Verge, Department of Labor Internship Program**

Presentation on strengthening labor force through youth internship program, and overview of the program. Discussion of where apprenticeship program could fit in outdoor recreation field, and connections to VOBA as well as VOREC.

**Public Comment**

Liz Gleason: Look to example of Farm to Plate Network as a collective impact model and meaningful way for people to engage and feel included. Also suggesting VOREC take on more interest in ultrarunning. Would also like to understand how the group sees ways for the public to be more involved.

Jean Audet: Advocating for horse community, which hasn’t received needed funding for equine economic impact study. Impact of equine industry/recreation isn’t fully appreciated in Vermont and there are few trails for horses. Happy to offer more input.

Mike S: Welcoming Liz and Jean to be part of next steps with engagement, representation, and involvement.

**Adjournment:** Trey motion to adjourn, Bill second. Meeting adjourned.