

## VOREC Meeting Agenda: February 18, 2021

### Advance Packet:

- December Minutes
- Outdoor Recreation Funding White Papers (4)
- VOREC Funding Outline
- VOREC Action Plan

### Steering Committee Meeting: 9 am to Noon

#### Teams

#### **9:00 am- 9:05 am: Welcome and Introductions Michael Snyder, Chair**

- Review and Approve Minutes from December Meeting

#### **9:05 am- 10:00 am: Updates: Q and A and Discussion to be Included**

##### Introduction and Updates:

- Legislative Updates: Act 250 EO, other
- Updates on VOREC business: Program Manager search; nominations for Economic Development candidate, OR Funding, OREC Updates

ACCD: Josh (or other)

VTGC

VTA

VOBA

#### **10:00 am-11:00 am: Discussion: VOREC Funding Opportunity**

##### **Mike/Jess to Introduce: All Discuss**

**11:00 am-11:30 am: COVID-19 Guidance and Ethics Messaging (Jessica and possibly VTDM Representative)**

#### **11:30 am- 11:55 am: PUBLIC COMMENT**

#### **11:55 am- Noon: Other Business: 2021 Meeting Dates**

#### **Noon: ADJOURN**

## **VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

February 18, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

**Steering Committee Attendees:** Michael Snyder, Karrie Thomas, Abby Long, Josh Ryan, Shelby Semmes, Hal Ellms, Mike Debonis, Drew Simmons, Josh Hanford, Bill Supple, Cindy Locke, Frank Stanley

**FPR/ACCD Staff Attendees:** Jessica Savage

**Public in Attendance:** Karen Yacos (Local Motion), Kim Rupe (Rutland Region Chamber), Ollie Burress (Craftsbury Outdoor Center), Kelly Ault (VOBA), Misha Torren (Crag Vermont), Jordan Rowell (University of Vermont), Alec Ellsworth (City of Montpelier), Melinda Scott (Town of Williston), Jackie Dagger, Zac Freeman (RASTA), Danny Hale (Vermont ATV Sportsmen's Association), Molly Mahar (Vermont Ski Areas Association), Randy Richardson (Upper Valley Trails Alliance), Gary Fox (Town of Rockingham)

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Marc Sherman, Jeanne Gervais

**December Minutes Approved:** Bill motion to approve, Karrie second. None opposed, no abstentions, minutes approved.

### **Welcome & Introductions**

Introduction of steering committee members, staff, and guests.

### **Chair Updates**

Mike S. provided an update on the VOREC Program Manager search and the Director of State Parks search, with second-round interviews scheduled for both positions.

Mike S. shared that a nomination is under review by the Governor's office to fill a vacant steering committee seat.

Mike S. provided an update on the Governor's proposed outdoor recreation investments. Some of these investments, including VOREC funding, may be accelerated through the legislature to be able to employ right away rather than waiting for the new fiscal year. The third year of funding for VOREC from the Northern Borders Regional Commission has also now been confirmed.

Mike S. provided an update on Act 250 and recreational trails and the Governor's executive order: ANR is working on a report of recommendations to the Governor, with input from stakeholders, and working through many challenges and perspectives.

Mike shared an overview of current bills in the legislature that relate to outdoor recreation.

Jessica provided an update on the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program: an order from the outgoing federal administration would have drastically changed the program, but the new administration rescinded the executive order and issued a new one. The apportionment amount under the new administration is expected soon.

*Mike S. left the meeting for 45 minutes for a legislative commitment and Josh H. chaired the meeting until he returned.*

### **Vice Chair Updates**

Josh H. provided an update on ACCD: Deputy Secretary Brady is leaving the agency, and has been a strong supporter of outdoor recreation, and leadership is working to fill this gap. The Department of Tourism and Marketing will be exploring ideas for employing some of the NBRC funds for outdoor recreation marketing this summer, and sharing more with FPR and the steering committee soon.

Josh H. shared concerns about private landowner recreation issues and landowner concerns and conflicts with increased usership, noting the need for a bigger discussion about large tracts of private land enrolled in current use or conservation easements and public access guarantees that should be considered with these types of investments, as well as user capacity concerns with marketing and bringing more people to recreate in Vermont when so many recreation opportunities are on private lands. Abby and Cindy concurred with the challenges and concerns of private landowners at Kingdom Trails and VAST, and Karrie agreed with concerns and the need for a campaign to educate users about behavior and ethics. Josh suggested adding this item to the agenda for further discussion, and Drew suggested that this is already on the action plan and could be prioritized.

The group discussed the Department of Tourism and Marketing's summer outdoor recreation marketing, including both concerns about marketing to people from out of state when out-of-state visitation isn't encouraged at present, and the need to market to out-of-state visitors and recognize the role of private landowners, as well as the need for stewardship ethics as part of the messaging and messaging that connects outdoor recreation to related businesses and buying local messaging for Vermonters.

### **Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Updates**

Mike D. provided an update on VTGC's role consulting on the Governor's executive order on Act 250 and recreational trails.

### **Vermont Trails Alliance Updates**

No update offered.

### **Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance Updates**

Kelly shared updates on VOBA's work on policy and economic research. The policy committee has identified legislative needs about pandemic response and outdoor recreation infrastructure, including the Governor's proposed investments. VOBA is working on two economic impact projects, including a market research study with a benchmark data survey to better capture the economic impact of the industry, and a report with national partners to define economic impacts of outdoor recreation and emerging trends to invest in for the future.

*Mike S. returned part-way through the VOREC funding opportunity discussion and resumed chairing the meeting.*

### **VOREC Funding Opportunity**

The group discussed the proposed \$5 million for the VOREC grant program and the recommendations for the best and most impactful ways to use the funds. The group offered suggestions, including streamlining the reimbursement process for recipients, especially with larger grant amounts; focusing on youth recreation and the connection to retaining youth in the state; avoiding carving out activity-specific categories and instead targeting regional grants in every area of the state; increasing membership on the grant committee, including sub-committees with regional representatives; focusing the funding on underrepresented communities; including private landowner considerations in the funding and inviting landowner input; investing in parking, which is a major need at recreation destinations; the possibility of including land acquisitions in the grant; making sure that efforts aren't duplicated; funding large, creative projects that don't fit most other grant parameters; offering major grants with one that tells the story of each of VOREC's five pillars; putting sector development and economic recovery strategies of communities into the considerations, as well as focus on businesses that have been impacted by the pandemic and not supported well yet; borrowing from other frameworks for the grant program, especially that relate to equity; projects that offer short-term economic recovery that puts people to work, and long-term economic investment; and continuing stewardship education to new users.

Jessica discussed administrative aspects of the grant program and timeline, and invited steering committee members who are interested to serve in a larger capacity in planning the program.

### **COVID-19 Guidance and Ethics Messaging**

Jessica described COVID-19 messaging FPR and partners developed and adapted to the Governor's orders as well as specific uses and seasons, and ways to improve this messaging in anticipation of recreation this year in mud season and beyond. She noted the need to better incorporate stewardship ethics in messaging, as well as a plan for specific swim hole and water recreation messaging. In addition, the group suggested sharing information about volunteer opportunities and creating a trailhead ambassador program.

Jessica shared the Dept. of Tourism and Marketing's request for input on the most impactful messaging strategy for this sector's businesses and organizations, and for Vermont's recovery, and several possible strategies they've proposed. In addition, Jessica asked the group to consider what ethics, stewardship, or safety messaging could be incorporated. The group suggested a stewardship message that includes respect for landowners and users and connections with local businesses and organizations; focusing on covid safety and wider Vermont ethics; focusing on interconnectedness of the outdoor recreation economy and stewardship in a "we're all in this together" message; focusing on in-state marketing and encouraging Vermonters to travel Vermont and visit local businesses; and reinforcing any message that encourages spending local instead of buying online.

### **Public Comments**

Gary Fox commented on the earlier discussion about the amount of recreation users and capacity concerns and suggested encouraging people to recreate in state forests.

Zac Freeman commented about a private landowner interested in recreation on his land but with concerns about liability for some activities being planned, and whether there is an opportunity for

VOREC to provide insurance to cover liability to further incentivize private landowners to open their land to recreation.

Danny Hale commented on the costs of insurance for VAST and VASA and agreed with the need for more support in liability protections.

Randy Richardson asked whether there would be opportunities ahead for public support of the Act 250 and recreational trails process. Mike S. explained that the progress that has been made so far is owing to public support, and that he's also hearing from many stakeholders concerned about trails, and encouraged continuing advocacy from trail groups.

Zac Freeman asked about existing studies on the impacts of trails on wildlife, and Jessica provided information on work in ANR to better understand this topic in Vermont.

Ollie Burress commented on the need to better promote information about the Vermont Trail System, especially in relation to Act 250 and recreational trails.

**Motion to adjourn:** Bill motion to adjourn, Hal second. None opposed, no abstentions, meeting adjourned.

## VOREC Meeting Agenda: April 30, 2021

### **Advance Packet:**

- February Minutes
- VOREC Action Plan

### Steering Committee Meeting: 9 am to Noon

#### Teams

**9:00 am- 9:05 am: Welcome and Introductions Michael Snyder, Chair**

**9:05 am- 9:45 am: Congressman Welch:**

- Outdoor Recreation Funding Opportunities
- Sector Updates
- Q and A

**9:45 am – 10:15 am: Meeting Business**

- Approve February Minutes
- Updates: Mike
  - Introduce Jackie Dagger
  - NGA Webinar Opportunity
  - Legislative/Funding Updates
- Other updates

**10:15 am- 10:45 am Discussion: VOREC Community Grant Program Recommendations: Jessica Savage**

**10:45 am-11:30 am: Use Value Appraisal (“Current Use”) Program: Keith Thompson**

**11:30 am- 11:55 am: PUBLIC COMMENT**

**11:55 am- Noon: Other Business:**

**Noon: ADJOURN**

## **VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

April 30, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

**Steering Committee Attendees:** Michael Snyder, Josh Hanford, Hal Ellms, Karrie Thomas, Abby Long, Bill Supple, Cindy Locke, Drew Simmons, Frank Stanley, Kim Rupe, Marc Sherman, Mike Debonis, Shelby Semmes

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Josh Ryan, Jeanne Gervais

**FPR/ACCD Staff Attendees:** Jessica Savage (FPR), Becca Washburn (FPR), Jackie Dagger (FPR/ACCD), Caroline Zeilenga (FPR), Sherry Winnie (FPR), Keith Thompson (FPR), Ken Jones (ACCD)

**Public in Attendance:** RJ Thompson (Vermont Huts Association), Kelly Ault (VOBA), Caitrin Maloney (Velomont Trail Collective), Kathy Urffer (Connecticut River Conservancy), Claire Polfus (CCGIS and TrailFinder), Tracy Zschau (Vermont Land Trust), Melinda Scott (Town of Williston), Joe Fox (St. Johnsbury Academy/Caledonia Trail Collaborative/Noble Fox Adventures), Doug Stewart (Skirack), Grace Hawkins (Waypoint Outdoor), Nick Bennette (VMBA), Randy Richardson, Jessica Booth, Abigail Johnson, Steve Gladstone

**Welcome and Introductions:** Mike S. opened the meeting and introduced Congressman Welch.

### **Congressman Welch**

Congressman Welch provided updates on outdoor recreation funding opportunities, heard updates from Vermont outdoor recreation sectors, and answered questions from meeting participants.

### **Meeting Business**

**February Minutes:** Bill motion to approve, Karrie second. None opposed, no abstentions, minutes approved.

### **Chair Updates:**

Mike S. welcomed new VOREC Program Manager Jackie Dagger. Jackie introduced herself and shared her personal outdoor recreation experiences and passion, as well as her professional experience and skillset.

Mike S. also welcomed new steering committee member Kim Rupe from the Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region, filling Sara Lang's former spot representing economic development. Kim introduced herself and provided background on areas of focus in her work that relate to the VOREC initiative.

Mike S. provided an update that staff at the NGA Outdoor Recreation Learning Network have contacted him seeking ideas for an upcoming webinar on workforce in the outdoor industry. He requested ideas for topics or speakers.

Mike S. updated the group on legislation and budget issues: The Act 250 and recreational trails report is with the Governor's Office with no current plans to pursue legislation, but best management practices

work continues in ANR to develop this resource regardless of any future steps on Act 250. Becca shared more information on this work so far. Mike also reported that H.315 passed into law and includes the Governor's original request for \$5 million to the VOREC Community Grant Program, and \$5 million for FPR and DFW for recreational access and infrastructure improvements on public and private lands. He shared that the FY22 budget is in process in the Legislature, and while VOREC funding support has been removed for this year because of the one-time funding, it can be requested for FY23.

*No additional Vice Chair, VTGC, or VOBA updates were needed beyond what was given during the session with Congressman Welch.*

### **VOREC Community Grant Program Recommendations**

Jessica provided an overview of the program and funding and shared the major recommendations from the grant program work group. The steering committee discussed equity considerations, long-term stewardship planning, engagement with non-profit organizations, and grant minimums for funding. Jessica and Jackie stated that they would coordinate further and share additional ways to provide feedback.

### **Use Value Appraisal ("Current Use") Program**

Mike provided background that the steering committee has expressed support for including recreation benefits in the Current Use Program, and that this goal hasn't yet been met owing to the complexities and challenges it presents rather than for lack of support or interest. Keith presented on the UVA program and how recreational activities are currently compatible and eligible uses within the program and he answered questions from the steering committee and guests about the program.

The group discussed out-of-state ownership and posted land in Current Use parcels, and suggested that VOREC continue to connect with landowners who allow public use of their land, to better understand their concerns. Mike also noted the politics of Current Use because of the expense of the program and the conflicting and complex political opinions of the program. He noted that change to the program is possible, but requires a careful campaign to bring support to the process and suggested VOREC could develop this campaign. He suggested forming a work group to further explore recreation and Current Use issues. Josh, Drew, Shelby, Abby, and Mike D. volunteered to serve on this group.

### **Public Comment**

Lisa Lynn expressed thanks for all of VOREC's work.

### **Other Business**

Mike thanked the VOREC Program Manager search committee for their work in the recruitment process, and Shelby shared several takeaways the committee reached from the search process, including:

1. The action plan needs significant reconsideration to address emergent themes of recent years while building on the foundation of the original plan.
2. Measures of a healthy, inclusive, and durable recreation economy should be a near-term goal to establish metrics of success, including looking at best practices from other states.

3. Equity, diversity, and inclusion should be a priority in the first year for the program manager, including building better representation on the steering committee.
4. The grant program has been very successful and should remain a high priority.

Mike added that the program manager position will lead to a transition in roles, with Jackie and Jessica playing a shared role in VOREC in the short term and Jackie taking on the primary role into the future, moving from staff work to a leadership role and perhaps eventually assuming elements of the Chair's role as well. He acknowledged and thanked Jessica for her tremendous work as lead VOREC staff to this point.

**Motion to adjourn:** Bill motion to adjourn, Hal second. None opposed, no abstentions, meeting adjourned.

## VOREC Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, August 4, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### Teams meeting

[Join through Teams app](#)

Join by phone: +1 802-828-7667; Conference ID: 262 017 860#

### Attend in person

ANR Annex Building (190 Junction Rd. Montpelier, VT 05602)

**Note:** *Steering Committee members are strongly encouraged to participate virtually. If you are a member of the public who does not have internet access and/or would like to view the meeting in person, please see below for more information.*

### Objectives

- Celebrate the launch of the 2021 VOREC Community Grant program.
- Discuss important questions and/or project ideas outdoor recreation communities are talking about related to the grant program.
- Discuss how different areas of the outdoor recreation economy are doing coming out of the pandemic.

### Questions to ask Outdoor Recreation Communities

- Where do you think the VOREC Community Grant program can make the biggest impact over the next two years for outdoor recreation communities?
- Are there supply chain and/or workforce disruptions that VOREC needs to consider as we identify projects to fund through the VOREC Community Grant Program over the next two years?
- Are there questions you have about the VOREC Community Grant program that have not been answered?

### Agenda

Time	Topic	Lead
1:00 p.m.	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Mike Snyder, Chair Jackie Dagger, Program Manager
1:10 p.m.	<b>Business meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve April minutes</li><li>• Updates from chair</li><li>• Other updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ ACCD (Tim Tierney &amp; Heather Pelham)</li><li>○ VTGC (Abby Long)</li><li>○ VTA (Abby Long)</li><li>○ VOBA (Kelly Ault)</li></ul></li></ul>	Jackie

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead</b>
1:35 p.m.	<b>Outdoor Recreation Grant Program Discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant Program updates</li> <li>• Discussion about feedback from outdoor recreation communities</li> </ul>	Jackie
2:45 p.m.	<b>Public comment</b>	ALL
2:55 p.m.	<b>Other business</b>	ALL
3:00 p.m.	<b>Adjourn</b>	ALL

### **Join the meeting in person – Instructions**

Please review and follow the steps below to join the August VOREC Steering Committee meeting in person. The meeting will be held at the Agency of Natural Resources Annex Conference Room (190 Junction Rd, Montpelier, VT 05602).

1. Let us know to expect you! Email Jackie Dagger ([jackie.dagger@vermont.gov](mailto:jackie.dagger@vermont.gov)) and she will share contact information for the FPR staff who will be on site for the meeting.
2. There is parking in front of the ANR Annex Building and overflow parking on the east side of the building. Please feel free to park in any open spot.
3. FPR staff will meet you at the entrance to the building and direct you to the conference room.

## **VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

August 4, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

**Steering Committee Attendees:** Michael Snyder, Hal Ellms, Karrie Thomas, Bill Supple, Drew Simmons, Kim Rupe, Abby Long, Frank Stanley, Jeanne Gervais, Josh Ryan, Shelby Semmes

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Cindy Locke, Marc Sherman, Mike Debonis

**FPR/ACCD Staff Attendees:** Jackie Dagger (FPR/ACCD), Tim Tierney (ACCD), Heather Pelham (ACCD), Jessica Savage (FPR), Becca Washburn (FPR), Caroline Zeilenga (FPR), Sherry Winnie (FPR)

**Public in Attendance:** Kelly Ault (VOBA), Kathy Urffer (Connecticut River Conservancy), Ken Brown (VAST), Betsy Cherrier Fournier (RISEVT), Cindi Wight (Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront), Russell Hirschler, Jared Newell

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Mike S. opened the meeting and welcomed guests, then announced a change in meeting process that the new VOREC Program Manager, Jackie Dagger, will facilitate the meeting.

Steering committee members introduced themselves and members of the public introduced themselves in the virtual meeting chat. FPR/ACCD staff and Kelly Ault from VOBA also introduced themselves.

### **Meeting Business**

**April Minutes:** Bill motion to approve, Karrie second. None opposed, no abstentions, minutes approved.

### **Updates from the Chair**

Mike S. provided an update on outdoor recreation funding, including the Governor's \$20 million in one-time investments in outdoor recreation, the possibility of making a request for another round of enhanced VOREC grants in 2022 through ARPA, and the possibility of additional funding for recreation projects through federal earmarks from Senators Leahy and Sanders.

Mike S. provided a legislative update, inviting suggestions from VOREC on policy recommendations. Additionally, he is hearing from legislators with questions on Act 250 and recreational trails. He shared that there are no plans currently from Governor Scott to propose Act 250 legislation on recreational trails while trail groups do not support it, but if partners would like to pursue legislation, the Administration would like to be supportive of it. Legislators are also engaging with constituencies on the VOREC grant program and there is considerable legislative support for this program. We look forward to reporting to legislators on the impacts of this program.

Mike S. also announced that current steering committee members' two-year terms will be renewed with the assumption that members want to continue unless they signal otherwise. He announced that Bill will be stepping down, and invited Bill to speak to this.

Bill thanked committee members for the wonderful experience and the excellent work through the years. He noted that the end of the term was a natural time to step down, particularly as VOREC begins

a new chapter with a dedicated program manager and to provide an opportunity for a representative from a larger Vermont outdoor brand to serve on the steering committee. He indicated he is happy to continue to serve on special committees or projects as the group might desire.

### **ACCD Updates**

Tim provided an update on Economic Development Association (EDA) funds available nationwide, including in Vermont. There is a travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation EDA fund, with both a non-competitive grant to the Department of Tourism and Marketing (DTM) and a competitive application. DTM has \$10 million available, and a plan needs to be put together for tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation, due by the end of September. The competitive grant application is due March 2022. The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) will also be increasing funds for grants distributed next year. Tim encouraged groups to collaborate and strategize to best put to use all of the opportunities for federal money. Heather echoed the need to line up projects with the best funding sources and to use the funds to affect transformational change. She invited everyone to attend a series of forthcoming roundtable discussions DTM will be hosting. More information will be shared as it becomes available, and Heather encouraged attendees to gather their thoughts in the coming weeks.

### **VTGC & VTA Updates**

Abby began with a VTGC update: The new executive committee began their tenure with an orientation with Jessica at FPR on the VTGC-FPR partnership and a decision to continue monthly meetings with VTGC and FPR.

Abby noted that there is no VTA update at present, as the group has paused on any major work during the summer.

### **VOBA Update**

Kelly provided an update on the outdoor recreation economy: The summer has gone well overall for outdoor businesses and a strong participation boom is projected to continue, which is promising for economic recovery. VOBA's main effort this summer has been on workforce development, including a forum and partnership with UVM on outdoor recreation job opportunities, including technical trades, gear and apparel manufacturing, and recreation instruction. VOBA has also been meeting with educational institutions across the state to develop degrees, trainings, and apprenticeships that align with the outdoor sector. VOBA's recruitment and retention efforts include JEDI training, resource sharing, and relationship building.

### **Outdoor Recreation Grant Program Discussion**

Jackie provided an update on the grant program status, including the launch of both the VOREC grant program and the ERSA trail grants, and considerable interest from the public. The letter of interest is due August 27, and an internal ranking team consisting of FPR and ACCD staff and members of the VOREC steering committee will be convened to review letters and invite applicants to submit a full application.

Jackie facilitated a conversation about areas where outdoor recreation communities need the most help and areas of the most opportunity, as well as tools and strategies to make the grant program and the communities that receive grants most successful. The group discussed the following ideas:

- **Areas outdoor recreation communities need help**
  - Long-term maintenance of new infrastructure.
  - Lodging to take advantage of new visitors.
  - Workforce capacity for technical trail builders as well as adjacent businesses.
  - Healthcare help for small businesses to keep their talented employees.
  - Support for individual communities to build partnerships.
  - Getting materials to build new infrastructure – material costs are really high.
  
- **Biggest opportunities**
  - Supporting maintenance of new infrastructure.
  - Investments in the businesses/organizations that benefit from outdoor recreation
  - Technical assistance support for small communities to do design / project development / permitting work (e.g. this work is different than the actual construction).
  - Create better geographic balance so that communities that have a lot of infrastructure already aren't growing too fast / having a lot of impact.
  - Workforce development (e.g. trail building and businesses).
  
- **Tools/strategies**
  - Ask grantees to keep a maintenance plan (stewardship endowment/estimation of easement monitoring costs – could do through direct interviewing).
  - Evaluate projects from communities with established infrastructure differently than communities who are just developing infrastructure / make sure there is “geographic balance.”
  - Build a position at FPR for a Permit Specialist to focus on the permitting and regulatory side of projects (ex: VT Adaptive provides someone to consult with communities about how to make trails adaptive).
  - Allow funds to be used to build campgrounds to help solve the lodging problem.
  - Put a call out to the legal community to help provide some pro-bono advice to communities who need it.
  - Track total volunteer hours to quantify the number of people volunteering their time to this work (e.g. human capital).
  - Focus on building partnerships between smaller communities during LOI round.

**Public Comment**

No public comment provided.

**Other Business**

No other business.

**Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned.

## VOREC Meeting Agenda

Friday, November 5, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### Teams meeting

[Join through Teams app](#)

Join by phone: +1 802-828-7667; Conference ID: 545 885 323#

### Observe in person

ANR Annex Building (190 Junction Rd. Montpelier, VT 05602)

**Note:** *The meeting will primarily be a virtual meeting. Steering Committee members are strongly encouraged to participate virtually. If you are a member of the public who does not have internet access and/or would like to view the meeting in person, please see below for more information.*

### Objectives

- Share and discuss updates on Vermont’s Outdoor Recreation Economy.
- Invite dialogue and questions about progress on the VOREC Community Grant Program.
- Explore opportunities to work together in new ways based on outcomes of steering committee one-on-one interviews.

### Agenda

Time	Topic	Lead
9:00 a.m.	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Jackie Dagger, Program Manager
9:10 a.m.	<b>Business meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve August minutes</li><li>• Updates from chair</li><li>• Other updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ ACCD (Josh Hanford)</li><li>○ VTGC (Abby Long)</li><li>○ VOBA (Kelly Ault)</li></ul></li></ul>	Mike Snyder, Chair Jackie
10:00 a.m.	<b>Grant program update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progress update</li><li>• Letter of Interest key themes</li><li>• Next steps</li></ul>	Jackie
10:30 a.m.	<b>Break</b>	ALL
10:40 a.m.	<b>VOREC 2.0 discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review outcomes from steering committee interviews</li><li>• Discuss opportunities for working together in new ways</li></ul>	Jackie
11:50 a.m.	<b>Public comment</b>	ALL
11:55 a.m.	<b>Other business</b>	ALL

Time	Topic	Lead
12:00 p.m.	Adjourn	ALL

**Observe the meeting in person – Instructions**

Please review and follow the steps below to observe the November VOREC Steering Committee meeting in-person. The meeting will be held at the Agency of Natural Resources Annex Conference Room (190 Junction Rd, Montpelier, VT 05602).

1. Let us know to expect you! Email Jackie Dagger ([jackie.dagger@vermont.gov](mailto:jackie.dagger@vermont.gov)) and she will share contact information for the FPR staff who will be on site for the meeting.
2. There is parking in front of the ANR Annex Building and overflow parking on the east side of the building. Please feel free to park in any open spot.
3. FPR staff will meet you at the entrance to the building and direct you to the conference room.

*Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) the Agency of Natural Resources is taking additional safety measures to protect employees, partners, and members of the public. For in-person meeting attendance, masks are required for anyone who is unvaccinated and encouraged for everyone. If participants are feeling sick, they are asked to stay home. Thank you for adhering to this health and safety guidance.*

## **VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

November 5, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

**Steering Committee Attendees:** Michael Snyder, Josh Hanford, Mike Debonis, Hal Ellms, Karrie Thomas, Drew Simmons, Kim Rupe, Abby Long, Marc Sherman, Frank Stanley, Jeanne Gervais, Shelby Semmes

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Josh Ryan

**FPR/ACCD Staff in Attendance:** Becca Washburn, Caroline Zeilenga

**Public in Attendance:** Kelly Ault (VOBA), Lisa Lafont (Vermont Horse Council), Hayden Smith (Trust for Public Land), Rob Farley (October Siberians), Kate Wanner (Trust for Public Land), Jordan Rowell, Stephen Gladstone, Shelley Seward, Robin Verner

### **Welcome and Introductions**

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

### **Chair Updates**

Mike provided an update that FPR Recreation Program Manager Jessica Savage has taken a new position outside of FPR and he thanked her for her service and her work with VOREC.

Mike shared that Cindy Locke has stepped down from the steering committee and reminded the group that the seat formerly held by Bill Supple is also open. He invited steering committee members to make nominations for Bill's and Cindy's seats.

Mike shared that a group of legislators from the Rural Economic Development Working Group has, with logistical support from FPR's forest economy program, been on a Forest Economy Learning tour. At every stop on the tour, there has been a connection to recreation and the relationship between recreation and working lands, including a stop at Kingdom Trails hosted by Abby. He noted that rural economic development through forestry and outdoor recreation are the highest priorities at FPR.

Mike provided an update on Vermont State Parks, noting that the parks have had an exceptional year, with well over a million visitors, with the highest visitation since 1988 and the fifth-highest visitation ever, even while the Canadian border was closed.

Becca provided an update on the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants awarded this fall to Burlington, Manchester, and Montpelier.

### **Vice Chair Update**

Josh provided an update that ACCD has been involved in coordination of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) and continued work and planning on an overall management plan and unification of the whole trail. ACCD has also submitted to the Economic Development Authority (EDA) a concept paper for a

grant, as well as EDA grants for downtown and village revitalization with its important connections to outdoor recreation.

**Confluence of States Meeting:** Jackie shared updates from her attendance at the Confluence of States and Outdoor Media Summit meeting in Colorado in September. Eleven states were represented, and directors of state outdoor recreation offices discussed how to define the outdoor recreation economy at a national level, including consistency in Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORPs) and opportunities to standardize North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. Directors also discussed how to represent stewardship in the media, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) figures that will be released November 9. New Hampshire and Maryland are the newest states to establish outdoor recreation offices. She invited group members to follow up with her if they'd like to learn more about the meeting.

**Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Update:** Abby shared that the next VTGC meeting is November 11 and the topic will be working on the Agency of Natural Resources Act 250 and recreational trails alternate framework proposal and is based on requests from legislators for VTGC input. Abby and Cindy will be stepping down as VTGC co-chairs. Nick Bennett of the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA) and Danny Hale of the Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA) will be the new co-chairs.

**Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance Update:** Kelly shared that VOBA analyzes Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) numbers every year to show the outdoor recreation sector's impact and where it's falling short, and is anticipating the release of the newest BEA numbers next week, including anticipating strengths and areas for improvement that will make the case for investment. She noted the incredible highs in participation, as well as the low trends expected with the hospitality sector. She and Jackie have discussed putting out a joint press release and invited volunteers to help with crafting the messaging about the data.

Kelly also shared VOBA's recent work on workforce development, particularly in careers with severe shortages, including bike mechanics and trail builders, and has been discussing connections with educational institutions, and discussing professional certificates in these fields, as part of long-term relationship building and as pilots for experiential learning opportunities with businesses and in the field. VOBA has also been spearheading justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion work in the sector, and invited the group to attend a workshop on this next week.

She also shared that VOBA is having an event next week to recognize Senator Patrick Leahy as the recipient of VOBA's first Trailblazer award.

#### **VOREC Community Grant Program Update**

Jackie provided an update on the status of this year's VOREC Community Grant Program and shared a Powerpoint with more information. Steering committee members commented on the notable number of non-profit applicants who were invited to submit a full application, and encouraged continued inclusion of non-profit applicants in the future, given many municipalities who are struggling with capacity to take on grants like this. The group also discussed the possibility of future funding amounts; Mike indicated that nothing is confirmed or committed, but there are indications that there may be another grant round with increased funding. Drew noted that the VOREC grant program has come up in VOBA workforce discussions and how this program will be transformational for some communities, but

that labor to support these projects may be challenging. He noted that there is the potential for new business creation through these projects as well. Josh noted that training is part of the answer for workforce, but that there's also a worker shortage in Vermont and strategies to reduce the required workers in a business are also necessary at the moment.

### **VOREC 2.0 – Breakout Groups**

The steering committee divided into two small groups for facilitated discussion about VOREC 2.0—an updated action plan and priorities that reflect recent changes, needs, and opportunities related to outdoor recreation in Vermont—using a Miro Board notetaking system. Jackie then brought the group back together and invited each small group to share what they discussed. The group shared topics including the importance of data and metrics, VOREC social media, and project management and communications tools like ClickUp to provide a central place for steering committee members to share resources. See page 4 for the key takeaways from small group discussions.

### **Public Comment**

Rob Farley thanked the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation for working with him and his dog team at Little River State Park and promoting trail etiquette and a variety of trail uses. He also requested that recreationists keep their dogs leashed. He also asked that while the most popular recreation activities in Vermont are represented in this group, to please keep the less-popular recreation activities in mind as well.

### **Other Business**

No other meeting business.

### **Adjournment**

Karrie motion to approve, Hal second. Meeting adjourned.

## Small Group Discussion Key Takeaways

### ***Future VOREC steering committee meetings***

- Find more ways to meet in-person
  - Organizing informal opportunities for steering committee members to gather (e.g. happy hour, meet-up for a hike / ski tour / etc.)
  - Meet with communities again – present to communities about where VOREC is and where VOREC is going, listen to community needs/hot topics, share VOREC perspectives on hot topics
- Bring speakers to meetings

### ***Tools to connect Steering Committee members***

- Regular email update with news from VOREC staff and steering committee members
- VOREC Dashboard accessible to all steering committee members
  - Contains steering Committee bios, meeting materials, other informational resources
  - Have a space where steering committee members can share updates with each other
- Give steering committee small tasks to work on between meetings
- Lean on steering committee members to provide input on pressing issues related to their areas of expertise

### ***Tools for connecting with outdoor recreation community networks***

- Identifying key performance indicators that can be shared with communities
- Social media – need a presence so can share with partners and members of the public
- Meeting key takeaways that can be shared with communities / connections after VOREC meetings

### ***Key areas of interest not represented on the steering committee yet***

- Education/workforce development
- Youth
- Regulatory entities
- Public health
- Municipalities are represented but not as strongly



Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative

# NOVEMBER STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

## LETTERS OF INTEREST

- 104 unique applicants submitted LOIs
- Requested a total of \$21.5 million dollars
- 24 applicants were non-profit organizations

## FULL APPLICATION INVITATIONS

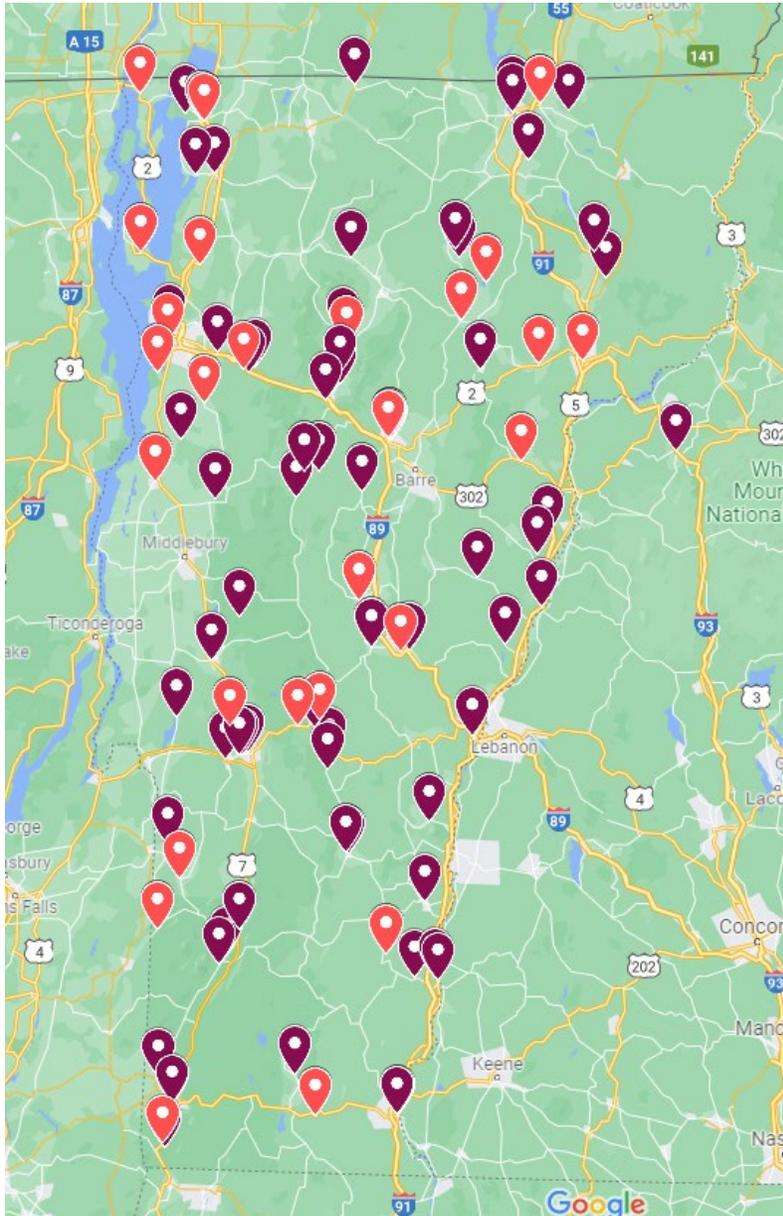
- 37 projects were invited to submit a full application
- Requested a total of \$12.8 million dollars
- 14 applicants are non-profit organizations

## LETTERS OF INTEREST THEMES – COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Building community connections to cross state trails such as the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, Velomont Trail, Cross Vermont Trail, and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail through master planning and better signage.
- Construction of new infrastructure to support outdoor recreation activities such as pavilions, bathrooms, and parking lots.
- Repurposing old buildings to create new gathering spaces in popular outdoor recreation locations.
- Encouraging diversity, equity and inclusion in the outdoors by making outdoor recreation resources ADA accessible and building programs to engage low-income and BIPOC Vermonters.
- Making outdoor recreation resources more accessible to residents and visitors by improving river and trail access, mapping assets, providing educational programming, and improving signage.
- Building volunteer programs to steward outdoor recreation resources in high traffic areas.
- Developing outdoor recreation workforce pathways.
- Acquiring property for outdoor recreation activities such as walking, hiking, mountain biking and cycling.
- Developing walking trails and better signage on farms to support agritourism.

## LETTERS OF INTEREST THEMES – NOT AS COMPETITIVE

- Financial support for ongoing outdoor recreation programming.
- Expanding snow making infrastructure at local ski areas.
- Restoring or building new recreation facilities or infrastructure (e.g. sport courts, skate parks, baseball facilities) without a clear connection to natural outdoor recreation assets (e.g. Forests, rivers, trails).
- Training horses to become calm and relaxed partners on shared trails.
- Financial support for roadway improvements.
- Creating new apps to share information about local outdoor recreation assets instead of utilizing existing resources like Trail Finder or Google maps.



## 2021 VOREC Community Grant Program Applicants

Purple markers = Letter of Interest Applicants

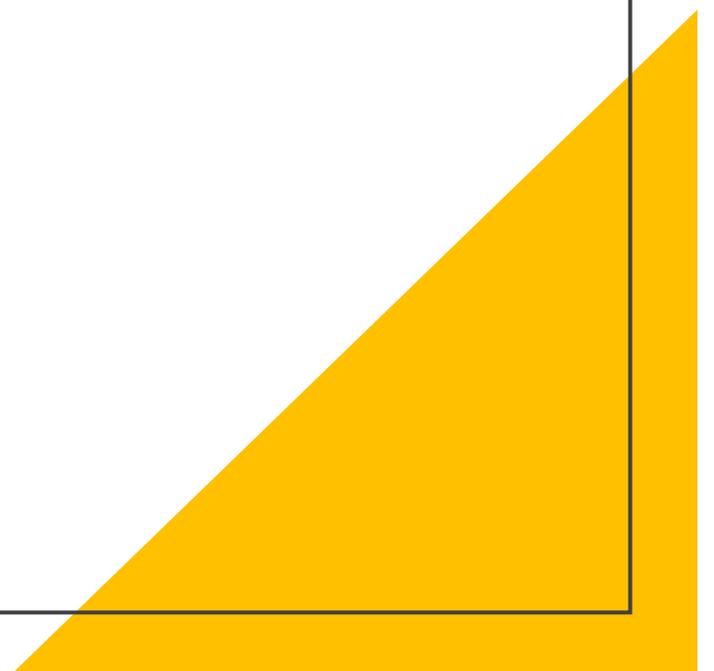
Pink markers = Applicants invited for full applications

## NEXT STEPS

- List of full application invitees will be posted to the website
- Full applications due by 5 p.m. on November 29
- Ranking Committee is expected to meet in mid-December
- Partner agency staff (e.g. Agency of Transportation, Fish & Wildlife, etc.) will also be reviewing letters of interest and sharing feedback

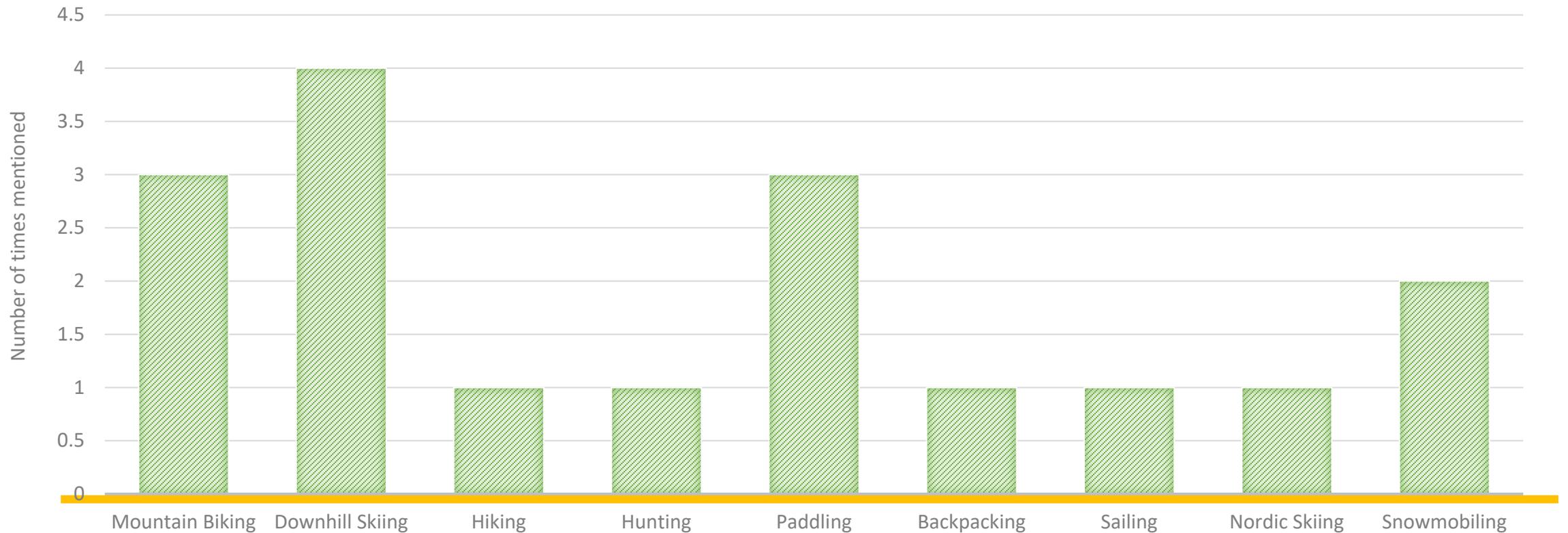
# VOREC 2.0

One-on-one Steering committee Interviews



# Steering Committee Favorite Activities

## FAVORITE ACTIVITY





# Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Economy in 2015

- Outdoor recreation was not widely viewed as an economic driver
  - World cup ski race was a big event at Killington
  - Mountain biking was just about to take off
  - Craft brewing industry and the local food movement were expanding
  - Participation in backcountry activities like rock climbing and skiing was low
  - Work happening to create better access and opportunities to outdoor recreation but not specific to diversity, equity and inclusion
  - Large volunteer base for trail groups to pull from for maintaining trails
-



# Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Economy in 2021

- Pandemic spurred more people to recreate in Vermont, both residents and visitors
  - Mountain biking has taken off and continues to grow in popularity
  - Backcountry skiing is growing in popularity
  - Airbnb market has expanded
  - Growing “outsidesy” community (e.g. Outdoor recreation = Taking a dog on a walk / setting up a hammock in a park)
  - Ski areas are seeing the impact of shortening winters
  - Vermont has lost key companies (IBEX, Garmont) and gained REI
  - Outdoor recreation communities are actively talking about issues of diversity, equity and inclusion
  - Cost of land in Vermont has increased significantly
  - Increased focus on developing rail trails
  - Trail builders are in high demand
  - New tensions between landowners and trail organizations due to change in usership
-



# What makes outdoor recreation in Vermont Unique

- Outdoor recreation on private lands allows for businesses to pop-up close to trails
  - Trails are highly accessible
  - Long standing tradition of neighbors providing access to each other
  - Link between outdoor recreation, music, and food/local agriculture
-



# Outdoor Rec Communities

\*Networks steering committee members have identified connections to

- Land Conservation Groups
  - Mountain Bikers
  - Trail Builders
  - Outdoor Businesses
  - Retail Representatives
  - Local Chambers of Commerce
  - Non-motorized Water Sports
  - Outdoor Recreation Media
  - Trail Organizations
-



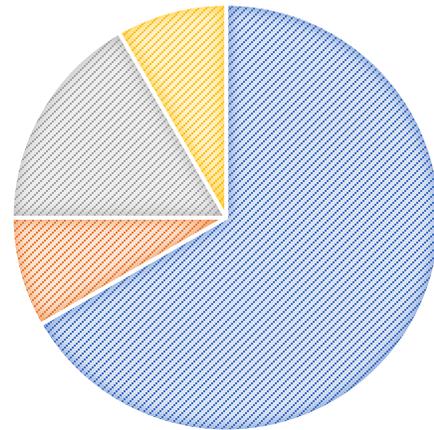
# Meeting format feedback

- Create more connections between meetings
  - Continue offering virtual options
  - More meetings in-person engaging with communities
  - Hear from more speakers
  - Send informational materials further in advance of meetings to help steering committee members better prepare
  - Share high-level meeting objectives and suggested questions for outdoor rec. communities ahead of meetings
  - Set a regular meeting time
  - Continue to meet bi-monthly
-

# What's the biggest priority for VOREC

## IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

■ Grant Program   ■ Act 250   ■ Making VOREC a central place for all outdoor recreation stakeholders   ■ Developing clear metrics / data





# Other priorities mentioned

- Attracting and keeping outdoor recreation businesses.
  - Learning more about people moving to the state (e.g. views about private land access for outdoor recreation, activities participating in, etc.).
  - Building a stewardship ethic amongst visitors and residents.
  - Building pathways for youth to enter the outdoor recreation industry, learn new skills, and find work in Vermont.
  - Building more inclusive outdoor recreation experiences for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and low-income Vermonters.
  - Developing more engaging messaging about VOREC and VOBA (e.g. informational one-pager).
  - Finding a place for people who are “outsidesy” in VOREC not just people who are outdoorsy
  - Building opportunities that support people with a variety of budgets – e.g. supporting affordable housing opportunities for employees in the outdoor recreation economy, finding affordable options for visitors on a budget (e.g. campgrounds).
-