

# Community Conversations

## *Planning for the Future of Mountain Biking in VT*

*A virtual workshop series hosted by the USFS, FPR, and VMBA and facilitated by IMBA.*



## Planning for Social Outcomes

### Workshop Focus

This workshop is intended to provide a collaborative exploration of how trails planning can help us meet our social and community goals. As a diverse group of stakeholders we have many different objectives for our trail systems. Community goals such as economic benefits, inclusion and diversity, attracting new residents, and providing relevant outdoor opportunities for youth are all important. We recognize that trail systems can help provide these goals for our communities. The best, most efficient, and successful method for ensuring we meet these goals is through collaborative planning.

### Panelists

[Steve Kasacek](#), IMBA Trail Solutions Project Manager



Steve grew up playing in the New England forests. He came to IMBA Trail Solutions with a civil engineering background focusing on stormwater management and stream restoration, and a love of riding. He has lived and pedaled up and down the Appalachians. His passion for rocky trails and technical problem solving have made him a key team member in design development, master planning, project management, and construction implementation. Steve's knowledge of low impact design, erosion and sediment management, and environmental permitting needs help ensure regulatory compliance and natural resource protection in a variety of trail projects.

[Jeff Alexander](#), Director of Strategic Partnerships and Business Development - Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports

Jeff's storied past consists of working in the NFL, MLB and Major Indoor Soccer League, as well as various minor league affiliates, owning a Marketing / Events firm in Philadelphia, managing Events and Sponsorships at Okemo and Killington Resort / Pico Mountain, but my claim to fame was being named to the Pro-Bowl twice, as one of the top Mascots in the NFL.

Mountain Biking, snowboarding, paddling and announcing are my main outlets, besides property and farm maintenance.

I believe that sports and recreation provide a physical, mental and social experience that is immeasurable in promoting self-confidence and independence in an individual.

Sports are for everyBODY and everyBODY deserves to play.



[Zac Freeman](#), ROC (RASTA)

Zac Freeman was born and raised in Vermont and now lives with wife and son in a timberframe home he built from the land. His passion for outdoor recreation started at a young age exploring the Green Mountains on two wheels and two skis. His love for adventure drew him west after high school and lasted for many years before landing back in VT. Adventures aside, he was an accomplished goldsmith for many years, designing and making high-end custom jewelry for his family owned business. Along the way he also curated strong woodworking, timberframing, trail building skill sets too. His love for community and gathering friends was always a part of his life, and now is front and center in his career. Based out of his hometown of Randolph, VT he now is a trail builder, event coordinator, community mover. He has devoted his recent years to growing the local trail organization RASTA (which has recently changed its name- Ridgeline Outdoor Collective) which offers backcountry skiing zones and numerous mtb/hiking trail networks across central VT. All of this work has had a transformational impact on a local level and beyond. Zac takes great pride in the work he does and is energized to continue for years to come making Vermont a better place to live, work and play!



**Kris Hunt**, Pride Rides VT

Kris is a bike mechanic at Vermont Bicycle Shop in Barre, VT. He's also the founder of Pride Rides VT (a non-profit LGBTQIA+ mountain bike organization) and is always ready to ride bikes in the woods.



**Abby Long**, Executive Director - Kingdom Trail Association

Abby considers herself fortunate to have served all over the world; teaching in rural China, Southeast Asia, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, and Belize, as well as Gulf Coast restoration efforts post-Katrina. Abby holds a B.A. in Public & Community service from Providence College, as well as a Master's Degree in Intercultural Service, Leadership & Management from the School for International Training Graduate Institute. As the past Athlete Service Manager for the Leadville Race Series in Colorado and Executive Director for the Leadville Trail 100 Legacy Foundation, she now serves as the Executive Director for the Kingdom Trail Association. Abby is motivated by her passion for outdoor recreation and abiding interest in the health and wellbeing of her community. She envisions a commitment to providing a safe, inspiring trail network to elevate the economic, social, cultural, and environmental vitality of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom.



## Workshop Resources

- Recording of Conversation:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pi06KvKWIO0&list=PLJVtSRTvzlhpOL-p1ExCaRsqtynV6BObw&index=1>
- Resources:
  - [IMBA-BLM Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience](#)
  - [Managing Mountain Biking IMBA's Guide to Providing Great Riding](#)
  - [IMBA's General Resource Hub](#)
  - [Adaptive mountain Biking 101](#)
  - Webinar Recording - [Improving Access for All: A Journey Through the World of Adaptive Mountain Biking](#)



- Webinar Recording - [Adaptive Mountain Biking Equipment 101](#)
  - Webinar Recording - [Trail Development: Considerations for Adaptive Mountain Biking](#)
  - [Adaptive Mountain Biking Move United Member Organizations](#)
  - [Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports](#)
  - [Trail Forks](#) – Trail Database & Maps where individual trails can be classified as suitable for adaptive MTBs.
  - [U.S. Forest Service – Accessibility](#)
- Key Takeaways:
    - Moving from a mindset of trails being simply trails to utilizing trails as a vehicle for social change and inclusion in our communities
    - In order to be inclusive we must be intentional with engaging different communities from the very beginning:
      - Be creative with who, how and where you engage others.
      - Be willing and ready to implement ideas they may differ from the original plans
    - The trail experience extends far beyond the trail itself. In our planning we should consider how our signage, facilities, and even our parking lots can promote inclusion
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## Planning for Environmental Outcomes

### Workshop Focus

This workshop is intended to provide a collaborative exploration of how trails planning can help us ensure trails have a minimal negative impact on our natural environment. Our land managers and owners have a wide variety of goals, protecting the natural environment is one of the most important. As trail visitors we want to enjoy the natural landscape and therefore, need to work together with stakeholders to determine the best possible actions for trail development. Environmental permitting is a core aspect of ensuring our trail projects are meeting environmental goals. Permitting is often obscure, complicated, and difficult for trail visitors and volunteers to do on their own. This session brings experts from a variety of permitting agencies or consultants who understand the permitting landscape and can help us learn more about navigating it as a trails community.

### Panelists

[Drew Pollack-Bruce](#), SE Group, Senior Recreation Planner

Drew is a Senior Recreation Planner with SE Group who manages trails and outdoor recreation projects throughout the US. He has worked as a professional planner, advocate, and journalist often focusing on the confluence of recreation, communities, and economics.





[Caitrin Maloney](#) – Sustainable Trailworks, Co-owner

Caitrin is co-owner of Sustainable Trailworks, along with her husband Hardy Avery. Sustainable Trailworks designs and builds trails throughout the northeast, and also provides consulting services in non-profit management and community development. Caitrin and Hardy are currently spearheading a multi-year trail development project in Poultney, VT. Caitrin completed a BS in Environmental Science and master's level work in Community Development and Applied Economics at the University of Vermont.

[Holly Knox](#), US Forest Service, Recreation Program Manager

Holly has devoted her twenty+ year career to public service and federal land management and currently serves as the Recreation Program Manager for the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests. As a tireless supporter of collaborative partnerships and publicly managed recreation opportunities, Holly works to engage outdoor enthusiasts in projects that support the creative economies of small, rural towns. She is driven to get people of all ages and abilities outside and enjoying their public lands.





[Jeremy Krohn](#), Civil Engineer, US Forest Service

Jeremy Krohn, P.E. is a Civil Engineer on the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest. He's been biking, skiing, and hiking on trails everywhere he's lived for the last 30+ years. Over the last 20+ years, he has accumulated a broad range of trail engineering, design, construction, and training/instruction experience with the USFS, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, as a private contractor, Student Conservation Association, and many local volunteer clubs.

[Jessica Savage](#), Recreation Program Manager, Vermont Forest, Parks and Recreation

Jess holds a Master's of Public Administration in Natural Resources Policy with a focus on water quality, and climate change. At FPR she coordinates and professionalizes outdoor recreation services on FPR-managed lands as well as provides technical and grant services to communities and non-profit partners. She supports the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (VOREC) and is also a member of the ANR Diversity and Equity Committee. Jess enjoys running, hiking, biking, backpacking, momming, guitar playing, singing and creative writing.





[Shannon Morrison](#), District Wetlands Ecologist for the State of Vermont

Shannon administers the Vermont Wetland Rules in Washington, Lamoille, Orleans and Essex Counties. She has held this role since 2000, and also has a hand in shaping policy for the program, rule interpretation, and outreach. Shannon is a beginner to intermediate mountain biker and has the scars to prove it.

## Workshop Resources

- Recording of Conversation:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrdd6yJKHFk&list=PLJVtSRTvzlhpoL-p1ExCaRsqtynV6BObw&index=2>
- Resources shared:
  - VT Department of Environmental Conservation permit assistance: <https://dec.vermont.gov/environmental-assistance/permits>
  - VT Natural Resource Atlas: <https://anr.vermont.gov/maps/nr-atlas>
  - US Fish and Wildlife System's Information for Planning and Consultation: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>
  - Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning's Natural Resources Guide: [https://vtcommunityforestry.org/sites/default/files/pictures/tf\\_natural\\_resource\\_guide\\_revised\\_9\\_23.pdf](https://vtcommunityforestry.org/sites/default/files/pictures/tf_natural_resource_guide_revised_9_23.pdf)
  - Example of a recreation user group uniting to support protection of natural resources: <https://climbersforbats.colostate.edu/>
  - NH Fish and Game's Trails for People and Wildlife planning tool: <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/trails/>
  - National Environmental Policy Act diagrams (You may need to copy and paste into your browser to function properly): [https://segcloud-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/dbruce\\_segroun\\_com/EssCvIRovBdJpEQvRco\\_v18BAcyOvWyfB94bzmG2KQuHcA?e=NhTSHk](https://segcloud-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/dbruce_segroun_com/EssCvIRovBdJpEQvRco_v18BAcyOvWyfB94bzmG2KQuHcA?e=NhTSHk)
  - US Forest Service's Schedule of Proposed Actions: <https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110920>
  - VT State Lands Long Range Management Plans: [https://fpr.vermont.gov/state\\_land/lands-management-planning/planning-documents](https://fpr.vermont.gov/state_land/lands-management-planning/planning-documents)
  - If you have an idea for a trail on state lands take a look here: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/using-state-lands-recreation>
  - VMBA's summary of the intersection of trails and Act 250: <https://vmba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Trail-Projects-and-ACT250.pdf>



- Key Takeaways:
    - Permitting, and compliance procedures are not the opposition. They protect the places we care for and ensure we can enjoy them far into the future.
    - Consider the environmental factors early on by identifying special and important resources. Often avoidance is the best and easiest way to mitigate these sensitive resources.
    - Connect with the appropriate specialists and agencies as early in the process as possible, and often throughout. This is the best way to ensure all goals are met between users and the land.
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## Builders Forum

### Workshop Focus

This workshop is intended to provide a collaborative discussion around trail building in Vermont. Utilizing local experts with decades of experience, this session will allow trail advocates and volunteers the chance to ask questions and learn more about trail building and maintenance. The opportunity for a variety of local professional contractors to discuss solutions to common problems, offer tips and new techniques, and reinforce typical sustainable trail elements will help build a stronger VT trails community.

### Panelists

[Hardy Avery](#), Sustainable Trailworks,  
Owner/Builder

Hardy is co-owner of Sustainable Trailworks, along with his wife Caitrin Maloney. Sustainable Trailworks designs and builds trails throughout the northeast, and also provides consulting services in non-profit management and community development. Hardy and Caitrin are currently spearheading a multi-year trail development project in Poultney, VT. Hardy founded Sustainable Trailworks in 2007, and has since designed and/or built more than 75 miles of mountain bike trails for a range of private, non-profit, municipal, state and federal clients.





[Mariah Keagy](#), Sinuosity: Flowing Trails, Co-Owner/Planner/Builder

Mariah began her career as a trail builder by learning how to roll and set rocks with the USFS in southern Vermont in 1996. She immediately fell in love with the work, which led to a pursuit of learning trail building skills and techniques (and finding better rocks). She worked on trails throughout New England and then around the US, before landing back in Vermont, acquiring a M.S. from Antioch University NE, and then becoming part-owner of Sinuosity: Flowing Trails, a member of the Professional Trail Builders Association.



[Tom Lepesqueur](#), Lepesqueur & Daughters LLC, Owner/Builder

Tom runs a small trail building business based out of Rochester, VT. With over 15 years as a professional builder he's worked on a wide variety of projects and is always striving to learn and improve.



## Knight Ide – IdeRide Trails, Owner/Builder

Knight Ide is a Vermont native, master stone mason and cofounder of Olde World Masonry, established in 2000, which later grew to include Ideride Trails. As an avid freeride mountain biker, based in Burke VT in the early 2000s, he gained recognition by applying his construction tools and knowledge first through his backyard jumps and volunteer work at Kingdom Trails and then as designer and builder at Buke Bike park and Victory Hill. Ideride Trails design/build firm has grown to 8 full time employees and has completed many design and construction projects in the public and private sector from Quebec City to Knoxville Tennessee.



## Workshop Resources

- Recording of Conversation:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wacs4FBOxMw&list=PLJVtSRTvzIhpoL-p1ExCaRsqtV6BObw&index=3>
  - Resources:
    - [Trail Solutions IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack](#)
    - [Bike Parks IMBA's Guide to New School Trails](#)
    - [IMBA's Trail Accelerator Grant](#)
  - Key Takeaways:
    - A successful trail build starts with thorough planning and design.
    - Before a trail even begins being built we should be considering the operation & maintenance program. Sustainable trails are maintainable trails.
    - IT DEPENDS... Every trail and every project are unique and should be viewed as such in every stage from planning to building to maintaining.
    - Trail building is a complex process, and takes many, many years to become proficient in. Connect with pro trail builders early on for the best results on your projects.
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## Future of Mountain Biking in VT

### Workshop Focus

This workshop is intended to provide a collaborative discussion around the future of mountain biking in Vermont. Intended to provide inspiration and fresh ideas for the community, this workshop will include a number of key Vermonters with important roles in the mountain biking community. From historical perspectives on how we got to where we are, to dreaming big about the next decade; this workshop will give the community an opportunity to dive deep and explore the growth of the sport in VT.

## Panelists

### **Rebecca Washburn**, Director of Lands Administration and Recreation, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Becca leads the division of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation responsible for land conservation and easement stewardship, state land survey and property ownership issues, the administration of leases, licenses and special use permits, support of state land management planning and state land recreation and community recreation programming. Becca's career in conservation includes leadership experience at state, regional, and national levels. She started with the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation when she worked as Grants Program Assistant and Lands Division Assistant. Previously she has worked for the Land Trust Alliance, Stowe Land Trust and the Green Mountain Club in a variety of roles. Becca also served as one of the founding board members for the Waterbury Area Trails Alliance. She brings direct experience in land conservation and stewardship, leadership and organizational development, program design and implementation, and strategic planning to her work with Forests, Parks and Recreation. She lives in Middlesex with her husband, son and black lab and is outdoors in the woods or the garden whenever she has the chance.



### **Patrick Kell**, IMBA's Senior Partnership Manager, IMBA

Patrick is from Belfast, Northern Ireland. He studied geography at John Moores University in Liverpool, England and started mountain biking there in 1992. Patrick lived in Vermont for 11 years, working for the VYCC and volunteering with several mountain bike clubs. He became Executive Director of the Vermont Mountain Bike Association in 2007, establishing access in the Green Mountain National Forest, furthering access on state land and presenting trainings to ski resorts. Since moving to Prescott, AZ in 2012, Patrick has been working for IMBA, initially as Regional Director for the southwest region working with the BLM, USFS, and city and county partners to develop trail networks. Patrick is currently IMBA's Senior Partnership Manager, focused on a portfolio of major donors and foundations who support IMBA's work around the country.







**[Nick Bennette](#), Executive Director, VMBA**

Nick originally hails from St. Louis, where he cut his teeth riding BMX and working in bike shops before catching the MTB bug in high school. Nick spent a decade in the Northeast for college and grad school, riding and racing throughout New England before moving to Seattle in 2011. During his time on the west coast, Nick worked as a consultant and advisor, first to large companies and eventually solely with mission-driven organizations. Nick became increasingly involved with the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance during his time out west, moving back to Vermont in late 2020 to pair his profession and passion for all things mountain biking.

**[Shelby Semmes](#), Northern New England Director, Trust for Public Land**

Shelby currently serves at the Northern New England Director for the Trust for Public Land, leading the teams and mission delivery across Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy livable communities for generations to come. In Vermont, TPL has been the force behind conserving some of Vermont's beloved mountain bike hot spots including the Millstone Trails at Barre Town Forest, Sport Trails of Ascutney Basin and Ascutney Outdoors home at the West Windsor Town Forest, and the Blueberry Lake addition to the Green Mountain National Forest, among others. Current focus areas for the organization include several community based projects around the state, a statewide partnership with Velomont and Vermont Huts, and an emerging partnership with IMBA across the country to develop trails on TPL parks and conservation projects - urban to rural. She lives in Warren, Vermont where her three-year-old Sylvan is getting started on a scooter bike with Mad River Rider's little rippers program.



**Russell Hirschler, Executive Director, Upper Valley Trails Alliance**

Russell came to the Upper Valley in 2001, where he was drawn to the amazing quality of life and recreational resources the area offers. He has been the Executive Director of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance since 2008, where he is responsible for the day to day operations as well as the future vision of the organization. He was formerly the Director of Education at Save The Bay in Providence, RI. He also served as the Development Director at the Upper Valley Land Trust in Hanover, NH, and the Development Director/Program Manager at Wolfree, Inc, a science education organization in Portland, OR. Russell received his undergraduate degree in Natural Resource Management and Environmental Planning from Binghamton University and his Masters Degree in Organizational Management from Antioch University, New England. Russell grew up in and around New York City, but found opportunities to explore the mountains of New England, Alaska, Wyoming, and Montana at an early age. Since then he has been traveling and hiking worldwide for the last 30 years. He lives in Lyme, NH, with his wife, two children, and chocolate lab.



**Josh Hanford, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development**

Josh has over 20 years of experience in the housing and community development field and was appointed Commissioner of the VT Department of Housing and Community Development, overseeing the state Housing, Planning, Historic Preservation and Community Development divisions, by Governor Philip Scott in 2019. He also served as Deputy Commissioner under Governor Peter Shumlin and Director of the Vermont Community Development Program. During his tenure he has implemented more than \$500 Million in Community Development, Disaster Recovery and Housing grants to hundreds of projects and communities throughout Vermont. He has also worked as a Projects Manager for several organizations in Vermont and New Hampshire, served in the Army National Guard and was recognized for his leadership as an AmeriCorps member by the Corporation for National & Community Service. Josh serves on the board of directors and founding member for several non-profit organizations. Josh enjoys spending as much time as possible outside fishing, skiing and mountain biking.



## Workshop Resources

- Recording of Conversation:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_JwwUXQU1hA&list=PLJVtSRTvzlhpoL-p1ExCaRsqytnV6BObw&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JwwUXQU1hA&list=PLJVtSRTvzlhpoL-p1ExCaRsqytnV6BObw&index=4)
- Resources shared:
  - Ride with Gratitude campaign: <https://www.bikeborderlands.com/sign-the-pledge>
  - Trust for Public Lands interactive map showing K-12 schools' proximity to open space and nature: [https://web.tplgis.org/nature\\_near\\_schools/](https://web.tplgis.org/nature_near_schools/)
  - Kingdom Trails Capacity Study (Put together by SE Group):  
<https://segroup.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=ff307acd023440d585c3c62aec25b47c>
  - VOREC Community Grants: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>
  - ERSA Trail Grants: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/enhancement-recreation-stewardship-and-access-ersa-trail-grants>
- Key Takeaways:
  - It is important to acknowledge where we came from, but what got us here will not get us where we are going. From the early days of rogue building to today we have matured as a community. This maturity combined with now having all the proper tools and partners we need we can now do things the proper way ensuring that what we have made and will make will last for future generations.
  - With the momentum and success we have seen over the last decade we must be aware that with success comes great responsibility and a lot of eyeballs. By embracing our roles as stewards of the land and members of the communities through proactive engagement we can ensure that we continue in a positive trajectory.