

~MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER VERMONT VISION~

FOSTER HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUTDOOR RECREATION

Purpose

Support partnerships, projects, and programs at the local, regional and statewide scale that protect Vermont's healthy, functioning environment, establish and maintain high-quality and inviting outdoor recreation spaces, and cultivate communities that are diverse in the people they engage and the opportunities they support.

Guiding Principles



Common Objectives

Equity

We will collectively expand opportunities and reduce barriers so that all people feel welcome in Vermont's outdoors.

Climate Resilience

We will collectively strengthen the sustainability, flexibility, and resilience of our communities so that we can weather the impacts of climate change.

Themes

Stewardship

PROTECT ● MAINTAIN ● CONSERVE

We will ensure that we protect the health of our environment and cultivate and preserve high quality outdoor recreation experiences.

Invest in stewarding and upgrading existing recreational infrastructure

Strengthen guidance and education about climate resilient strategies that help communities interact with their rivers and water bodies

Cultivate and promote a stewardship ethic among Vermonters and visitors.

Identify and support regional outdoor recreation planning and partnerships.

Create and promote a suite of technical assistance resources to strengthen the skills and expertise of non-profits, municipalities and businesses who manage recreation.

Reinforce and sustain public recreation on private lands.

Wellness

LEARN ● CREATE ● CONNECT

We will create and steward places and connections that welcome all people and allow them to heal, learn, grow, and live their lives fully.

Create and enhance in-community outdoor recreation opportunities that directly connect to where people live, learn, and work

Develop recreational opportunities and conserve open spaces that strategically fill gaps in experiences and distribution across the state

Create safe, welcoming, and environmentally sustainable entry spaces into the outdoors

Centralize, improve, and make more accessible informational resources about outdoor recreation opportunities and events

Support programs that reduce the costs of outdoor recreation

Strengthen connections between people working in health and wellness, people working in education, and people working in outdoor recreation

Strengthen community awareness about improved health and wellness outcomes through outdoor recreation

Economic Development

CULTIVATE ● INVEST ● BUILD

We will support communities to be proactive in using outdoor recreation to create a sustainable, vibrant, future.

Develop information and resources to demonstrate how outdoor recreation resources and vibrant local economies are connected

Strengthen the capacity of municipalities to engage in Vermont's outdoor recreation economy

Strengthen workforce opportunities in Vermont's outdoor sector

Foster resilience and flexibility in outdoor recreation communities, organizations, and businesses to withstand major weather events and a variable climate

Invest in organizations and businesses led by marginalized communities

Support innovation in Vermont's outdoor sector by supporting entrepreneurship, providing resources to businesses, and seeking solutions to challenges

Five Year Priority Actions

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2019-2023

Grant Funding

Over **\$1 million in Land and Water Conservation Funding** helped build recreational assets in Vermont's towns and state parks



Over **\$4.4 million in Recreational Trails Program** grants supported trail-based recreation projects in Vermont



State Agencies



The **Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation** provided the public with safe outdoor recreation opportunities through the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple severe flooding events



The **Department of Fish & Wildlife** initiated multiple programs and events to better connect with new Vermonters and traditionally underserved communities.



The **Department of Tourism & Marketing** identified large-scale travel and recreation projects to help stakeholders recover and improve visitor experiences following the pandemic



The **Vermont Agency of Transportation** completed the 93-mile Lamoille Valley Rail Trail through an investment of over \$30 million



The **Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative** hired its first Program Manager in 2021 and provided over \$10 million in grants to communities across Vermont

Statewide Recreation Partners

The **Vermont Trails & Greenways Council** received over \$700,000 to support growth in organizational capacity and programs



The **Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance** received financial support to enable workforce partnerships between outdoor industries and Vermont's education system



The **Vermont Recreation & Parks Association** began partnering with the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council (VTGC) to offer a Trails Symposium in tandem with their long-running conference



MFTV PROCESS

Technical Advisory (TAC) & VOREC Steering Committee

These advisory teams, comprised of recreation professionals and volunteers from across the state, guided the MFTV process.



User Surveys

Two identical Recreation User Surveys were distributed and analyzed:

A restricted-sample random-selection **Representative Panel Survey** of Vermont Residents, totaling **565 responses**

An **Invested User Survey** that was widely distributed and available to anyone who wanted to provide input, totaling **1,831 responses**

Recreation Provider Survey

This survey aimed to understand how outdoor recreation is being delivered across Vermont and captured **36 responses** from Vermont's public, private, and non-profit recreation providers.

Focus Groups

28 Focus Groups Conducted

185 Participants

123 Groups Represented

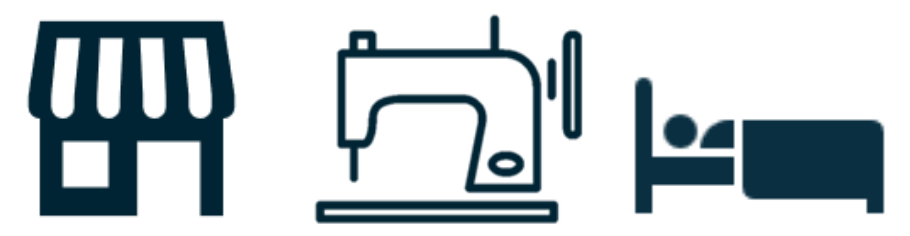
4 Guiding Questions Asked



Vision & Priorities Summit

In May 2024, FPR and VOREC hosted a day-long summit meeting with 40 outdoor recreation leaders from around the State.

Outdoor Business Survey



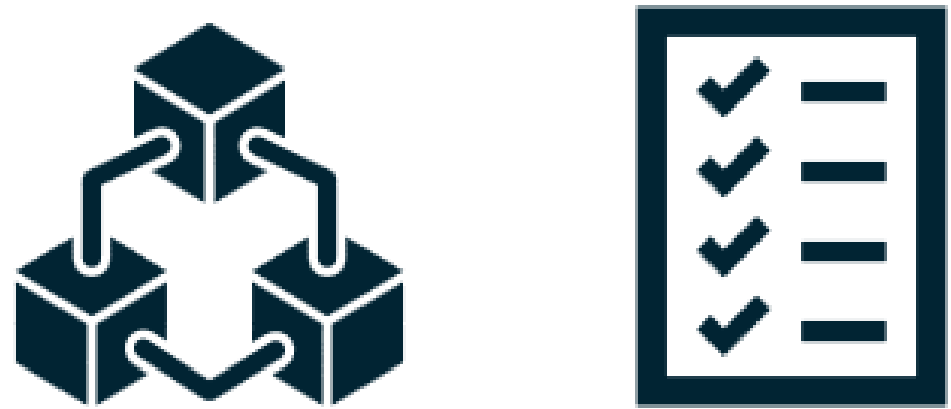
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Vermont-Based Outdoor Businesses Engaged

METHODOLOGY

What Changed?

This SCORP combined with the VOREC Action Plan in order to develop a unified vision and set of goals for Vermont.



The SCORP's public user survey was developed to align with the peer-reviewed Outdoor Recreation Access and Participation Survey (ORAPS).

In addition to an openly available Invested User Survey, a panel of Vermonters were recruited to take the public user survey, resulting in the first statistically representative information for outdoor recreation in Vermont.



An outdoor business survey was developed and conducted.

26 focus groups were hosted to collect a broad range of diverse input from specific management, user, and stakeholder groups.



MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER VERMONT TIMELINE

Spring/Summer 2023

Project development & planning
Technical Advisory Committee
recruitment



Winter 2024

Focus group discussions
User Surveys
Trails data compilation



Summer 2024

Public Outreach and Feedback on
Draft Vision and Priority Actions
Final draft of Vision and Priority
Actions
Report Compilation



Fall 2023

Website development & launch
Project launches at Vermont
Conference on Outdoor
Recreation and Trail Symposium
and VOBA Annual Meeting
Recreation Provider Survey

Spring 2024

Outdoor Recreation Summit
Outdoor Business Survey
Draft Vision and Priority Actions
Recreation Asset Inventory



Fall 2024

Final Report review and
approval
Outreach to public and
stakeholders

MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER VERMONT FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were designed to engage people and perspectives who hadn't been engaged in planning processes in the past and to solicit expert voices from across Vermont's outdoor recreation landscape.

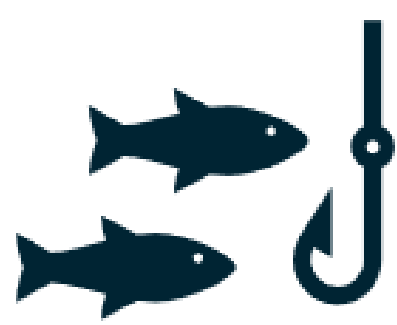
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Focus groups conducted between November 2023 & April 2024

185

Focus group participants



123



Organizations represented

45 Non-profit organizations

28 Private businesses

23 Towns and regional planning commissions

10 State government agencies/departments

8 Unaffiliated individuals

6 Educational institutions

Participants were asked the following:



What are the specific opportunities for outdoor recreation in Vermont?



Where are there gaps in strengthening outdoor recreation?



What resources are needed to be successful?



What does success look like in the next five years?

Focus Group Topics Included...

Health & Wellness

Agriculture

Climbing

Adaptive Recreation

Seniors

Conservation

Hunting & Fishing

BIPOC

Outdoor Businesses

State Lands & Parks

LGBTQ+

17 Other Topics

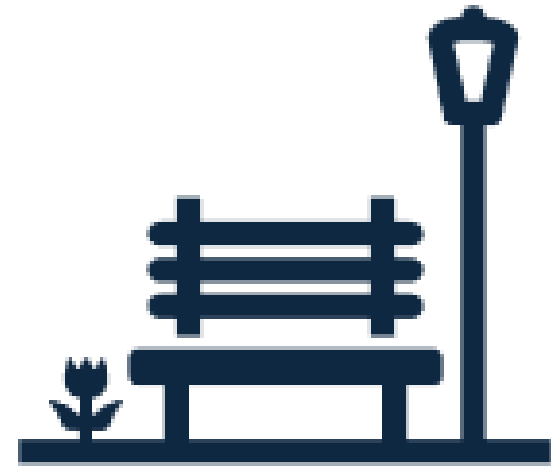
RECREATION PROVIDER SURVEY SUMMARY RESULTS

Led by the Vermont Recreation & Parks Association, the Vermont State of Recreation Survey first ran in 2019 to obtain valuable information about Vermont's recreation providers.

In Fall 2023, the survey was repeated and expanded in collaboration with the State of Vermont, VOREC, and the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council to better serve the Move Forward Together Vermont process.



36 survey respondents from towns, non-profits, businesses, statewide agencies, and organizations.



Respondents managed 7 individual parks/trail systems and 11 miles of trail, on average.



The average park or trail maintained by survey respondents was 56 acres.



On average, respondent agencies hosted 15 programs annually.



Most common programs managed by recreation providers included team sports (70%), summer camps (60%), and themed special events.



Every single respondent agency utilized social media to promote their programs, events, and assets



Respondent agencies most frequently partnered with libraries (74%) and schools (71%) when carrying out programs, events, and activities



Slightly over half of respondent agencies intended to expand programs; 74% intended to expand their park, facility, and/or asset offerings.



Trails, pickleball, and pump tracks were the highest ranked asset offerings that respondents intended to expand within their community.



Half of respondent agencies have grown in the past five years, while 45% have stayed the same size. Only 8% of agencies have decreased.



89% of agencies with paid staff intended to expand their staff in the next 5 years. None of the all-volunteer agencies planned to add any paid staff.



A strong majority (70%) of respondents indicated that increased funding or financial support was needed to meet their agency's mission.

VERMONT OUTDOOR BUSINESS SURVEY

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

Top Skills Desired by Respondents When Hiring New Employees

Customer Service 

Collaboration/
Teamwork 

Attention to
Detail 

Communication 

Problem
Solving 

58% Of respondents do not have a plan, program, or initiative in place to increase workforce diversity within their business



Among these respondents...

37% Do not intend to develop one in the next five years

16% Plan to develop one in the next five years

47% Are unsure if they will develop one in the next five years

87% of respondents had 1-2 physical operating locations

7% of respondents had no physical operating location

6% of respondents had 3-5 physical operating locations

58%  of respondent outdoor businesses were impacted by recent climate events

Outdoor Education, Professional Development, & Work-Based Learning Investment Priorities

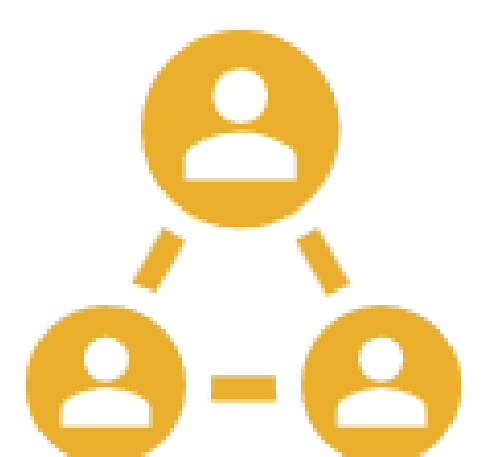
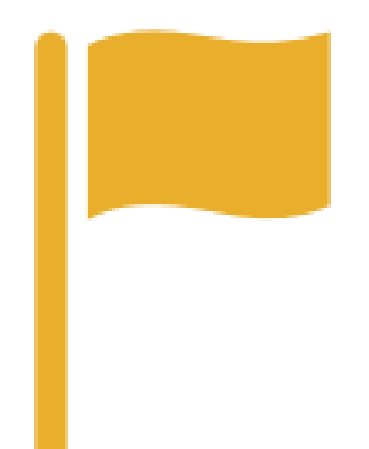
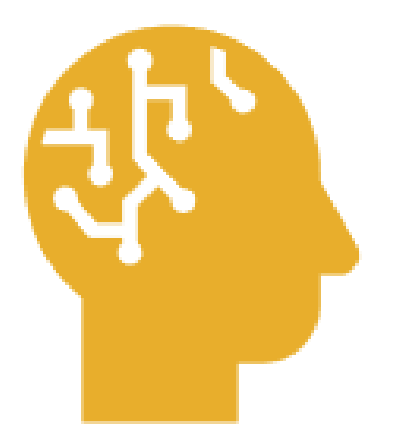
Internship/Apprentice Programs

Adult Education Programs Focused on Outdoor Career Pathways

Outdoor Career Development Programs for Underserved Communities

Industry-Specific Networking Opportunities

Industry-Specific Networking Opportunities



Observed Benefits of Training

Increased Employee Engagement

Consistent Work Processes

Reduced Skill Gaps

Reduced Employee Error

Increased Productivity



RECREATION ASSET INVENTORY HIGHLIGHTS

Vermont is home to...

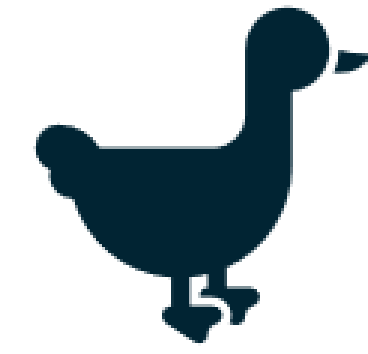
Federal Assets:

The Green Mountain National Forest - Nearly 412,000 acres, accounting for 6% of Vermont's land makeup!

The Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park - One of America's oldest managed woodlands

Two National Wildlife Refuges managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Five U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites providing opportunities on and near Vermont's waterways



State Assets:

239,000 acres of state forests and parks

1,000+ miles of trails on state lands

40 state park campgrounds and **134 remote campsites**

99 picnic/day use areas and **196 fishing access points**

Five historical sites with trails and **10 underwater preserves**

Over 150,000 hunting and fishing license holders in 2023

Seven state and jointly-managed **rail trails** totaling **210 miles**

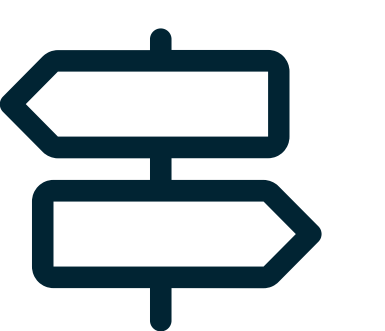
Municipal Assets:

387 sites containing park assets like playgrounds, picnic areas & shelters, and campgrounds

536 sites containing sports assets like softball fields, baseball fields, basketball courts, and tennis courts

133 sites containing aquatic assets like boating areas, pools, and natural swimming areas

Over 500 miles of trails within municipal-owned land



Private and non-government organizations in Vermont provide and help manage...

Thousands of miles of year-round trails



Programs and events for recreators of all abilities and interests



Nearly 50 cross-country and alpine ski areas that receive over 4 million visits per year



Unique assets like overnight huts, campgrounds, and world-class mountain bike systems

