

Vermont Trails System.

notes by Greg Western (CVTA). 2018-01-05

The railbed in the town of Groton is a part of the "Vermont Trails System" (VTS). This was created by statute in the early 1990s. Full text of the Vermont Trails System statute is at: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/10/020>.

The definition of trail by VTS is: "Trails means land used for hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding and other similar activities. Trails may be used for recreation, transportation and other compatible purposes." (10 V.S.A. § 442). (NOTE: there is no expectation that all trails are open to all uses, landowners and trail managers determine which trail uses are allowed in each case.)

Trails are designated as a part of the VTS by the "Trails and Greenways Council", which was also created by the VTS statute. "The Vermont trails system shall consist of those individual trails recognized by the agency of natural resources with the advice of the greenways council. The agency, with the advice of the council, shall establish criteria for recognition of single use and shared use trails." (10 V.S.A. § 443). Both VAST trails and trails on the Cross Vermont Trail route are designated as being in the Vermont Trails System.

The criteria established by the Council are attached at end of this document. Essentially the criteria are that the trail must have landowner permission and be open to the public. The attached criteria document is from 1995, and CVTA has confirmed recently with Vt ANR that these are still the current criteria, though they may be revised in the future.

Class IV roads, and VTrans "legal trails", may be also included in the Vt Trails System, if they are maintained as trails and not as roads. They may receive Recreation Trails Funds, if the Selectboard commits to maintain as a trail, and not as a road, for a certain period of time - usually the "life of the improvements" that would be paid for by the Recreation Trails Fund. (This is derived from the current grant program information, linked below.)

The benefits of being in the VTS are:

- * State is committed to coordinating with private and municipal landowners so that trails can be continuous between state, town and private land, where town and private land owners so desire.

- * Trails in the system can apply for grant funding from the "Recreation Trails Fund".

(Actual language at: 10 V.S.A. § 446.) Current grant program information at:

<http://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/grants/rtp>.

- * Landowners of trails in the system benefit from enhanced liability protection. (Actual language at: 10 V.S.A. § 448.)

Vermont Trails and Greenways Manual:

The Trails and Greenways Council has written a manual for help with managing trails. Full manual is at http://crossvermont.org/get_involved/resources.php. The manual expands on the definition of "trail" from the statute with examples of some types of trails and the values they have.

page iii: "Vermont's Vision for Trails and Greenways: The vision held by the Trails and Greenways Council is a well-mapped network of trails and greenways throughout the State of Vermont that will provide recreation opportunities for all types of trail users, preserve wildlife habitat, help protect water quality, link schools, places of work, parks and neighborhoods with safe, traffic-free routes; link and protect natural and cultural resources, promote economic development, and create open space for all to enjoy."

page 2: "Shared Use Paths-These multiuse paths (sometimes referred to as recreation paths or bicycle paths) serve a multitude of purposes such as exercise, recreation, and transportation. These trails are generally designed to be usable and accessible by people of varying levels of agility and ability. ... Some of these paths are components of regional trail plans that should eventually link many communities together and provide a unique long distance recreation opportunity. Shared-use paths often form the backbone of a community network, as they can be enjoyed by so many people, and can include side trails connecting users to specific destinations."

page 4: "Conservation Greenways-These are natural corridors that are established to promote both environmental conservation and trails. These "linear parks" often follow natural corridors such as ridges or waterways, or link conserved areas together in a network. Establishing a greenway can allow a community to meet combined objectives of conservation, recreation, public access to special places, and alternative transportation (i.e. bicycling) corridors. ... The Town of Newbury has successfully combined conservation and trail projects where the Cross Vermont Trail corridor parallels the Wells River."

APPLICATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE VERMONT TRAILS SYSTEM

May 1995

Criteria for Inclusion.

- Trail must be a designated trail. It must have a recognized trail name or number and/or be part of a larger trail system.
- Trail must be on public land, land owned by a not-for-profit organization or, if on private land, must have the approval of the landowner through an easement, written permission or verified verbal permission.
- Trail must have a sponsor who manages and maintains the trail. Sponsor must be a governmental entity, organization, business or individual. The sponsor must make the application to be recognized as part of the Vermont Trails System.
- trail must be open for public access subject to designated uses and relevant laws and regulations.

No Criteria for:

Length of trail - trail may be any length;

Tread base - may be dirt, paved, stone, snow, water, etc.

Type of use - may be motorized, non-motorized, single use, shared use, etc.

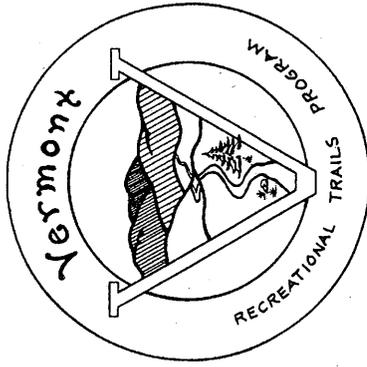
Application Process.

An application will be made by filling out a simple, one-page form and mailing it, along with a map of the trail and any descriptive literature, to the Recreation Section. The suggested map base is USGS but other maps will be accepted. Applications may be submitted at any time.

Review and approval will be by a three-person committee appointed by the Commissioner of the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation on advice by the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council. One person will represent all trails interest, one will represent motorized recreation, and one person will represent non-motorized recreation. Appeal will be to the Commissioner.

Recognized trails will receive a Certificate of Acknowledgement and will go in a state listing. Recognition will be permanent unless withdrawn by the sponsor or the Department. The Department may withdraw recognition for failure to meet the criteria, and after due notice and opportunity of reasonable length to correct deficiencies. the continuation of the trail as part of the Vermont Trail System will be verified approximately every five years.

VERMONT TRAILS SYSTEM



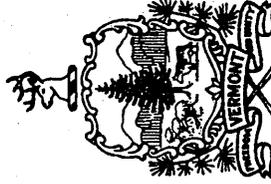
THE **Cross Vermont Trail**

IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AS AN OFFICIAL
PART OF THE VERMONT TRAILS SYSTEM



May 21, 1996

DATE



GOVERNOR, STATE OF VERMONT

COMMISSIONER, FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION