



Upper Valley Trails Alliance

Brief History

The Upper Valley Trails Alliance was founded in 1999 and has reached its 20th anniversary with a record of accomplishment. UVTA connects people and places through a regional trail network, leads a coalition of local trail groups and advocates, and uses programming to promote recreation, equitable access, health, conservation, and economic sustainability. UVTA has become an essential resource helping to ensure the health and sustainability of our communities, and there is no other entity coordinating and maximize the efforts of our regional trail-related organizations.

Although a small organization, UVTA uses the power of the Alliance to develop high impact projects and programs based on stewardship, outreach, and education. The Trails Alliance promotes stewardship by supporting, coordinating and leveraging a range of local partners, including town conservation commissions, recreation departments, non-profits like Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Upper Valley Land Trust and Hanover Conservancy, and generous individual landowners. In 2018 alone, the results of these efforts include the construction of a beautiful stair case at Smith Pond in Enfield, new trails in the Trescott Water Supply Lands in Hanover, improvements to the Cross Rivendell Trail, and town forest mapping and planning support for the town of Hartford, VT, among many other projects.

UVTA empowers volunteer organizations to engage a broad cross-section of their communities, including people with no prior trail-building experience, by leading trail-building/maintaining volunteer groups. These experiences not only increase the pool of knowledgeable volunteers, but also help us spread the word about UVTA services, including our trail mapping, consultation and construction, and well stocked lending tool shed.

Outreach is a major part of our work as we strive to ensure that all people and communities will benefit from trails. We introduce people to our work and motivate trail use through events like our Skate-a-Thon at Lake Morey in January (listed as one of Vermont's Top Ten Events by the Vermont), the Tour de Taste pedaling picnic in September, and the STOAKED trail run in August. Anyone, whether a UVTA member or not, is welcome to participate in any of these events. We also use the web and social media to reach out to our membership and beyond with our Trail Tales newsletter, a detailed event calendar, and regular Valley News contributions.

Education, especially related to both health, fitness and trail care, is also a focus of our work. Our education efforts were boosted early on when UVTA was selected for a five-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Active Living by Design program in 2003. UVTA assembled a multi-disciplinary partnership, called Upper Valley Trails for Life, to demonstrate the value of trails in increasing physical activity among Upper Valley residents. Over time, we have continued to successfully spread the word about the health and community benefits of trail use. For example, UVTA published the first multi-community Upper Valley trail guide, a Winter



Upper Valley Trails Alliance

Trail Guide, and also reinvigorated Trail Finder as unique online trail mapping resource for Vermont and New Hampshire. Trail Finder has become an invaluable regional resource, and arguably the only resource of its kind that fully honors and respects the roles and values of local trail users, managers, communities, and private land owners.

In order to combat childhood obesity and nature deficit disorder, we have also developed an award-winning program for young people. Our Passport to Winter Fun is now distributed to over 30 Upper Valley elementary schools and over 4,500 students. This incentive program is proven to increase healthy outdoor activity by children and families during the winter.

We are also kicking off another year of our Outdoor Odyssey High School Trail Corps. After 6 years of success, we are confident that Trail Corps is filling three vital needs in the Upper Valley: 1) Outdoor exercise and job training for local teens, 2) Inspiring and training the next generation of trail angels and conservationists, and 3) Providing outstanding professional trail building and maintenance for local trails. In fact, Trail Corps won the 2018 Project Excellence Award from the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals and plays an important role in supporting our trail building and maintenance services.

Last year, with the help of over 200 incredible volunteers and trail corps members, we completed more than 30 trail projects covering over 70 miles of regional trails. We provided a wide range of services including: fiscal sponsorship, meeting facilitation, project management, general trail maintenance, trail assessment, map creation and planning, and the building of bridges, stone steps, reroutes and brand-new trail connections. As an ambitious strategic goal, we want to fully meet the needs of all 43 Upper Valley towns and over 40 partner organizations.

In our 20th year of serving the Upper Valley, we are striving to meet the growing demand throughout the Upper Valley for affordable and expert trail consulting and contracting. We are proud of all the work we have done to help keep many of our local public trails safe, accessible and protected.