

Vermont Trails System Recreation generates \$29.6 Million in Economic Activity

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BARRE, VERMONT - A recent study revealed that recreational trail activity within the Vermont Trails System generates \$14 Million in economic impact and \$15.6 Million in economic activity annually to the State of Vermont.

The Vermont Trails & Greenways Council received funding through the USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grant to perform an Economic Impact Study on organized trail based recreation in Vermont. The purpose of the study was to convey the financial significance and impact from specific forms of recreation on parts of the Vermont Trails System and their contribution to the Vermont economy. The four organizations that were studied are the Catamount Trail Association, Green Mountain Club, Kingdom Trails Association, and the Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA). These member-based private organizations manage trails systems across Vermont and cover recreational activities from backcountry and Nordic skiing, to hiking and mountain biking, to ATV riding.

Executive Director of VASA and Chairman of the Trails & Greenways Council, Danny Hale believes this study has been long overdue. "We finally have accurate numbers to demonstrate what we as the represented user groups of the Vermont Trail System bring to the state; as individual groups and as a combined recreational entity. Having solid numbers that outline the benefits of these trails allow our organizations as well as the state and legislature to rightfully prioritize recreation in Vermont as a major source of tourism income. It's high time that we all capitalize on this opportunity."

This is the first generation and study of its kind. The unique nature of combining multiple forms of motorized and non-motorized recreation, all managed by non-profit statewide and regional organizations is unprecedented. "We are very pleased to demonstrate the local economic driver that the Kingdom Trails has had on the Northeast Kingdom region"; states Tim Tierney, Kingdom Trails Association's Executive Director; "This sampling of localized impact shows the importance of recreation and the managed trail systems to the physical and financial health for Vermont."

"This study is a solid starting point for better understanding the economic impact cross country and backcountry skiers have on the state's economy." Executive Director of the Catamount Trail Association, Amy Kelsey believes this user group is already investing substantially in Vermont visits. "Current work to increase the opportunities available to backcountry skiers on our public lands will only increase the economic benefits for local communities."

The Trails & Greenways Council is a non-profit organization established by the Vermont Legislature in 1995 whose mission is to ensure that people will always have access to adequate land and water-based trails and greenways in Vermont. The Council's driving force is the diverse membership of organizations managing recreational trails systems and infrastructure. One of the key components to the success of the Council is the cohesiveness that it provides in bringing these groups together under a unified voice. The Trails and Greenways Council assists the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in shaping recreation policy and fosters partnerships with private organizations, municipalities, and trail based communities. One of the primary objectives of the Council is to manage the Vermont Trails System.

For more information, visit www.vermonttrailsandgreenways.org.

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