

2/2/17 VT Legislative Testimony Ascutney Outdoors
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The support of the Vermont Housing and Conservation board enabled the Town of West Windsor with support of the Trust for Public lands to purchase the 469 acres of the defunct Ascutney Mountain Ski area and combined it with the adjacent town forest. The project protects a 30 mile non-motorized trail system and through conservation easement ensure permanent protection to 1580 acres. Mount Ascutney contains one of New England's finest examples of elevation-dependent biodiversity providing wildlife and plants with a diversity of microclimates in which to find refuge as the climate changes. To maintain and support the highest quality natural communities, nearly half of the expanded West Windsor Town Forest has been designated as a Natural Area in the conservation easement, which will result in an extensive old growth forest, rare in Vermont and New England. At the same time the trail system brings visitors and economic vitality to the community.

This is now a part of a 6,640 acre east/west corridor of conserved land.

Total Project cost: \$915,000

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board \$302,500

Open Space Institute's Community Forest Fund \$177,050

Town of West Windsor \$105,000

Various grants and over 115 individual community donations \$330,450

Ascutney Outdoors was formed as a non-profit to provide exceptional recreational activities on Mount Ascutney and promote economic vitality in our community while promoting conservation of the mountains natural resources.

Timeline:

2010 Ascutney Mountain ski hill—bankrupt

2013—Property is up for sale: Lifts and Equipment sold off

Town of West Windsor begins to work with Trust for Public land for possible purchase of 469 acres of ski property and to protect non-motorized trail system on property and adjacent town forest property. Ascutney Trails which is a 30-mile network of non-motorized, recreational trails that scale the peak and hug the western base of Mount Ascutney, built and managed by Sport Trails of Ascutney Basin (STAB). The Trails have become a recreation destination, providing a desperately needed boost to the local economy which declined precipitously following the 2010 closure of the Ascutney Mountain Ski Area.

Oct. 2014. Special town meeting residents vote overwhelmingly in favor of negotiations purchase of property, many hoping a ski area could be reestablished and mountain bike trails would be protected. The town itself was not in a position to operate a recreational network or ski area, but was hopeful a not-for-profit would be willing to lease the land.

January 2015—unoccupied base lodge on property burns.

December 2015 469 acres former Ascutney Mountain Resort purchased and added to adjacent town forest land.

A conservation easement on the entire 1,582 acres is co-held by the Upper Valley Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

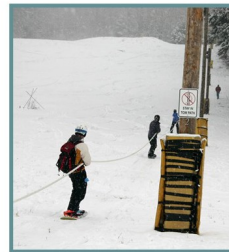
Jan. 2016—Rope tow opens on acquisition property bring sustainable skiing back to Mt Ascutney.

Dec 2016—Lights and a warming hut added to rope tow area to take advantage of natural snow and extend opportunities for the skiing community.

Dec 2016 purchase of burned out base lodge for \$1.

Feb 2017-Remediation and removal of base lodge in progress.

Future: AO community building to be built as we continue to develop sustainable year-round events and programs to support recreation, arts and conservation education for the benefit of our community and visitors alike.



<http://ascutneyoutdoors.org/>



sources: Press release Dec 2015 Trust for Public land
and Ascutneyoutdoors.org.