

# Rallying Around a Beloved Mountain



Tucked away in the small town of Woodford sits Prospect Mountain Nordic Ski Center, a network of 30 kilometers of skillfully groomed trails with consistently good snow. The mountain is a hub of activity with skiers of all ages and abilities exploring the trails, and college and high school ski teams using the area to train and race.

But, a few years ago when word spread that the ski center would be up for sale, the fate of Prospect was not clear. That's when the tight-knit community surrounding the mountain declared that it was unwilling to let their cherished ski area go.

"We realized this was our window of opportunity," says David Newell, president of the Prospect Mountain Association (PMA). The nonprofit group was formed by devoted Prospect skiers determined to keep the mountain open. "We wanted to be sure the mountain was secured for the community."

In September of 2018, PMA successfully purchased Prospect Mountain and its 144 acres were conserved with help from VLT. Major funding for the purchase came from Williams College and the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board—but the rest came from community members who adore Prospect.



When the fundraising campaign began, donations poured in. They came from people who've skied at Prospect for decades and those who never have. Local businesses chipped in and so did the Town of Bennington. "Once we got going, the fundraising just kind of took on a life of its own," David says. "It was tremendous, the momentum we had." Before they knew it, they had raised \$55,000 more than the goal.

With the future of the ski area now secure, members of PMA are putting the surplus funds to good use, making Prospect an even more enjoyable place to ski. Projects like improving trails, updating infrastructure, and exploring the possibility of snowmaking are underway.

"Prospect Mountain is an incredible community asset," says VLT's Donald Campbell, who worked closely with PMA. "It's not always easy for people to talk about the land that they love. It's so wonderful that this community was able to articulate that love in time to do something about it."

VLT works with community groups to save recreation spots, like Prospect Mountain in Woodford, where people can connect to land.