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H.673

Introduced by Representatives Rice of Dorset, Sims of Craftsbury, Anthony of Barre City, Boyden of Cambridge, Christie of Hartford, Cole of Hartford, Harrison of Chittenden, Headrick of Burlington, Jerome of Brandon, LaBounty of Lyndon, Lalley of Shelburne, Lipsky of Stowe, Logan of Burlington, Morris of Springfield, Nugent of South Burlington, Priestley of Bradford, Roberts of Halifax, Surprenant of Barnard, Templeman of Brownington, Torre of Moretown, and Williams of Granby

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Conservation and development; recreational trails

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to direct the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative to conduct an outdoor recreation economic impact study. It would also create a position at the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council. It would also appropriate funds to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to oversee the development of best management practices for recreational trails in cooperation with the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council.

1 An act relating to Vermont's outdoor recreation economy

2 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

3 Sec. 1. VERMONT OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC IMPACT

4 STUDY

5 (a) The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC),
6 in consultation with the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC) and
7 the Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance (VOBA), shall conduct the Vermont
8 Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Study (the Study).

9 (b) The Study shall evaluate the following:

10 (1) the overall statewide economic impact of outdoor recreation;

11 (2) the county-level economic impact of outdoor recreation across the
12 State;

13 (3) how the economic impacts are distributed across recreational
14 activities and land ownership;

15 (4) the current carrying costs of outdoor recreation asset stewardship;

16 (5) the return on investment in outdoor recreation in Vermont;

17 (6) the top three opportunities for growth in the sector; and

18 (7) recommendations for future investments to maintain and grow
19 Vermont's outdoor recreation economy.

20 (c) The organizations leading the Study shall hire a consultant to conduct
21 the economic analysis required.

1 (d) The Study may include additional data points as identified by VOREC,
2 VTGC, VOBA, and the Department of Forests, Parks and Receptions. The
3 Study shall also incorporate findings from VOREC’s Move Forward Together
4 Vermont planning process.

5 (e) In fiscal year 2025, the sum of \$200,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to VOREC to hire the consultant to conduct the economic
7 analysis required under this section.

8 Sec. 2. POSITION; VERMONT TRAILS AND GREENWAYS COUNCIL

9 In fiscal year 2025, the sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the
10 General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for one full-
11 time program support specialist whose duties shall be to the Vermont Trails
12 and Greenways Council (VTGC) to:

13 (1) administer membership to the VTGC;

14 (2) manage VTGC meetings, activities, operations, and budget;

15 (3) routinely assess the needs of the Vermont trail stewardship

16 community;

17 (4) develop, manage, and deploy technical assistance resources for

18 VTGC members; and

19 (5) execute the VTGC’s advisory role to the Agency of Natural

20 Resources, as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 443.

1 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

2 In fiscal year 2025, the sum of \$50,000.00 is appropriated from the General
3 Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for the purpose of
4 hiring a contractor, in partnership with Vermont Trails and Greenways Council
5 to develop of a set of universal trail best management practices (BMPs). The
6 BMPs shall aggregate existing BMPs from both the Department and nonprofit
7 trail stewardship organizations, with the intent of these BMPs being adopted
8 for the Vermont Trail System to ensure all public access trails are built and
9 maintained to a high standard.

10 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.