

Dear esteemed Vermont state lawmakers and committees:

I am writing today to urge you to support \$500,000 in base funding for the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program within the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. While the FY27 Governor's Recommended Budget includes one-time funding, ongoing base funding is essential to provide stability for communities and maximize the program's impact.

Since 2019, VOREC has invested \$11.2 million through 84 grants in all 14 counties—supporting municipalities, businesses, and nonprofits. This program is a proven tool to strengthen communities, grow local economies, and inspire stewardship of Vermont's natural resources.

Here in Middlebury, the Middlebury Area Land Trust recently received VOREC funding to help the community recover from the devastating 2023 floods. The project restores and strengthens a heavily used section of the Trail Around Middlebury in Wright Park, on town property, rebuilding trails, bridges, and boardwalks to be more resilient to future flooding while protecting water quality in Otter Creek through native vegetation restoration. The project also expands outdoor recreation accessibility so more families, students, and visitors can safely enjoy nature year-round.

Investing in resilient outdoor infrastructure now helps towns like Middlebury avoid significantly higher repair costs in the future while supporting local businesses and Vermont's vital outdoor recreation economy.

Please support base funding for VOREC to ensure this successful program continues delivering economic and community benefits across Vermont including here in Addison County. Feel free to reach out if you would like additional information or to discuss the program's impact in more detail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin

Kevin Fox
Executive Director,
Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT)