

Please support base-funding of \$500,000 for the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program which is within the Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation. The FY27 Gov's Recommended Budget currently includes one-time funding for the VOREC grant program which is a proven tool to strengthen communities, grow local economies, and inspire stewardship of natural resources.

The VOREC grant program has a strong return on investment from \$11.2 million in 84 grants to businesses, organizations, and municipalities across all 14 counties since 2019.

I am the Ex. Director, Mad River Valley Recreation District (MRVRD) and here is our story:

The Mad River Valley Recreation District, on behalf of five local partners, received the largest VOREC Grant in 2022, \$408,019 for the Mad River Valley Recreation Hub. The project included an indoor Welcome Center with an interactive trip planner, an 85 ft. bike and pedestrian bridge that connects trails from the Howe Block, near Sugarbush Resort, to downtown Waitsfield including a riparian buffer to protect the Mill Brook, an enhanced trail to get from the Rec Hub to downtown businesses and a community-wide project called Conservation and Recreation Visioning (CRV) to balance recreation and trails with environmental sustainability that includes an online interactive map and can be used as a template for other Vermont towns. Since finishing the project in 2025, we have seen three new restaurants open, one in the same building as the Rec Hub, the other two within .2 miles of the Hub. Multiple local business owners have sent in testimonials about increased business due to more bikers and walkers in Waitsfield. We urge the Governor to put at least \$500,000 into the budget to continue the excellent results of VOREC investments to date.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Laura Arnesen  
Ex. Director, Mad River Valley Recreation District