



Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance

Outdoor Recreation Day at the Statehouse
Senate Education
February 5, 2026
2:30 pm - 3:00 pm, Statehouse, Room 28

Good morning, I'm Brian Lamoureux from Green Mountain Sustainability Consulting in Newport Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance and for giving us time as part of our Outdoor Recreation advocacy day.

We applaud this committee's work on strengthening an education system that leads to rewarding employment opportunities for Vermonters. I'm going to talk about VOBA's workforce development initiatives, which not only provide technical skills training to trail builders, bike mechanics, and ski technicians but which also align the State and industry systems around jobs that are essential to climate adaptation and resilience in our outdoor businesses, organizations, communities and landscape.

First, a little bit about me. Growing up visiting Vermont for outdoor recreation attracted me to Lyndon State College and the Mountain Recreation Management program. In 2020 I got my undergraduate degree from what is now the Vermont State University - Lyndon Outdoor Education, Leadership and Tourism program. I learned all sorts of transferable skills, both technical and general, which made me very hireable across the industry. Winters I spent at Jay Peak making snow. Sugaring season brought me to Sweet Tree and Jed's Maple maintaining sap lines. Spring was at Northwoods Stewardship Center on a watershed conservation crew. Summer and Fall was spent with Green Mountain Club. This seasonal cycle working outdoors instilled in me a deep love for Vermont's natural landscape and close-knit communities, and I've loved being able to continually learn. Of course, I realized that I'd never be able to raise a family with so much bouncing around chasing employee housing, and I grew to understand more about Vermont's very real environmental and social challenges.

In seeking to understand how capitalism could be harnessed for the benefit of our natural and human communities, I enrolled in the Sustainable Innovation MBA program at UVM. My coursework led me to appreciate Vermont's outdoor sector that contributed \$2.1 billion in 2023 to the state GDP, employing 16,000 workers, and I began to understand how the sector is uniquely positioned to be a leading force for good.

Since then, I've been consulting with VOBA, a nonprofit organization of 155 businesses and organizations with a mission to educate Vermonters about outdoor recreation, strengthen Vermont's outdoor industry, and cultivate a skilled workforce in our urban and rural outdoor communities.

With state funding in 2024 and 2025, VOBA worked with industry experts to develop and instruct professional development workshops and credentials in the technical occupations of trail building, bicycle mechanics and ski technicians.

- We delivered 19 multi-day courses involving 140 professionals of which 23% were women, BIPOC and LGBTQ community members
 - These courses benefitted 70 employers and led to job placements and career advancement.
 - One success story is of Erin Vostal, who used 4 of VOBA's bike trainings to go from entry-level mechanic to part time manager at Outdoor Gear Exchange's Rider's Outpost in Madbush Falls.
 - Another good example is Alec Ellsworth of Montpelier Parks who credits the VOBA trail trainings as readying his staff to better be able to handle flood mitigation and clean up after severe wind storms
- VOBA co-developed a sustainable trail building certificate at Vermont State University - Lyndon and utilized the Randolph and Killington campuses for workshops, forging promising collaboration.
- A career pathways portal on VOBA's website with job board webpages and career spotlight videos draws job seekers and serves as a resource for career navigators including CTE coordinators.

Lyndon Institute has a leading example of an Outdoor Recreation CTE program in which students learn about outdoor occupations, businesses, and organizations that thrive in our state and the related skills of preparedness,

safety, emergency management, required certifications, and educational pathways to find a career in this industry.

- A key portion of this program is Project Bike Tech, a non-profit organization providing an accredited high school elective program, which teaches bicycle and e-bike mechanics, career-building skills, and integrates Common Core and STEM elements into coursework. Vermont is a strategic focus in Project Bike Tech's expansion plans. With four schools already operating programs in the state and a strong emphasis on green communities and sustainable economic development, Vermont's workforce goals align closely with the macro trends and values that guide Project Bike Tech's mission. In the last 5 years, Project Bike Tech has served over 200 Vermont students.

- Feedback from partner schools has identified two persistent structural challenges that affect program launch and continuity. First, the startup costs associated with establishing new technical education programs are difficult for many schools to support amid tight budget environments. Second, teacher turnover—combined with limited succession planning—creates continuity risks when instructors move to other schools or transition into different roles.

This year, VOBA's program expands again into a climate-resilient workforce partnership with the Climate Action Office, Dept of Labor, Office of Workforce Strategy and Development, and Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative. The Climate Outdoor Workforce Initiative (COWI) is designed to understand which jobs in the outdoor industry are critical for Vermont's businesses and communities to address climate adaptation and resilience, then sync those jobs with industry, education and service based learning opportunities.

- We're in the research phase of the COWI right now so it's still early but I can give two strong examples:

- Trail builders are one strong climate outdoor job. When trail builders are trained and educated with the best management practices for handling high-volume precipitation events, there are fewer trail closures when we have flooding. Instead of telling customers to cancel their lodging and dining reservations, communities that are dependent on trails can say they are still open for business.

-Another great climate outdoor job is bike mechanics. As Vermont experiences shifts in seasonal weather patterns, ski resorts and service shops are adapting their business models to bring in four-season revenue with biking infrastructure, products, and services. In order to implement this climate-adaptation strategy and meet the burgeoning bike service demand, mechanics are of critical importance.

CTE can play a role in helping prepare our workforce to fill these climate outdoor jobs. We know these jobs are growing in demand and professionalization requires skills, knowledge, and hands-on learning that CTE and work-based learning can uniquely deliver.

As this committee continues its work to align the education system with the State's goals, I encourage you to consider expanding funding and curriculums for the State's CTE system in areas that feed into the outdoor industry - natural resources, outdoor recreation, trail construction, manufacturing outdoor products, and services like guiding are a few examples - to foster career exploration and readiness that is accessible for all Vermonters.

Thank you for having me.