

Feb. 14, 2025

Senator Becca White
115 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Becca,

Thank you for co-sponsoring s.4, the Legal Trails bill. Hartland has seven legal trails (almost 3 miles), and they are an important recreational resource for us. The Hartland Conservation Commission, of which I am Chair, looks after Hartland's natural and cultural resources, including the legal trails. Clarifying the Selectboard's role vis-à-vis legal trails would be a welcome step.

Over the past decade, I have experienced several instances where landowners, through whose land a legal trail passes, misunderstand their rights and responsibilities. One landowner built a large structure right across the legal trail, assuming they could do whatever they wanted with their land. The Town had to go through a complicated process of relocating the legal trail, at the landowner's expense.

Sometimes, landowners tell people that they are trespassing while walking on a legal trail. A previous Town Manager and I were told to quit trespassing or the landowner would "sic the dogs" on us. At other times, I have removed signs that landowners had posted declaring what sort of traffic could or could not use the legal trail.

In 2021, the Conservation Commission undertook to write a Town policy for legal trails. We consulted landowners whose land abuts legal trails and worked closely with the Town Manager and the Selectboard. In 2022, the Selectboard approved our legal trails policy. The policy spells out what type of vehicles are allowed on legal trails in what circumstances. Senate bill S.4, if passed, would confirm the Selectboard's role in setting policy for legal trails.

Finally, if you have not done so recently, I would encourage you to come to Hartland and walk on the Cady Brook Trail, a 2-mile long legal trail that is some of the prettiest hiking you will find in the Upper Valley.

Best regards,

Rob

Rob Anderegg
Chair, Hartland Conservation Commission