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VERMONT RAIL-TRAIL PROJECT DRAWS NATIONAL ATTENTION

Snowmobilers behind ambitious project to build longest rail-trail in New England

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A project to convert the disused Lamoille Valley Railroad corridor between Swanton and St. Johnsbury into a four season multi-use rail-trail continues to garner national attention.

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, which currently allows snowmobiling, skiing, sledding and snowshoeing on a few disconnected segments along the Lamoille River, is featured in the current issue of Rails to Trails magazine. Rails to Trails is published by the national trail organization, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and distributed to about 100,000 trail enthusiasts across America.

Written by Bethel-based writer Kristen Smith, the article in Rails to Trails highlights the stunning rural scenery of the area, and also features a number of local restaurants, cafes, accommodation providers and outdoor equipment retailers.

“Across the Lamoille, the landscape is breathtaking in the pale sunlight,” Smith writes. “It’s hard not to smile from ear to ear, cruising through meadows and woodland under the tall shadow of Smugglers’ Notch and the Green Mountains with the fresh air whipping my face. The terrain is relatively flat and easy—I can see that it would be very inviting for cross-country skiing. Just before we get to Johnson we cross the Long Trail, Vermont’s 100-year-old section of the Appalachian Trail running south to north.”
The article also draws attention to the effort led by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) to develop the corridor for use in spring, summer and fall by hikers and bikers. VAST is working with the Vermont Agency of Transportation on new bridges, ditching and drainage, brush removal, and a bike-friendly aggregate surface. Two sections of the corridor – 13.5 miles between St. Johnsbury and West Danville, and 16 miles between Cambridge Junction and Morristown – are currently in development.

The effort is being championed by U.S. Senator for Vermont Bernie Sanders, who believes local communities along the trail will benefit from the increase in tourism that four season trail use will bring. When complete in several years, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail will be the longest rail-trail in New England at 96 miles, spanning the breadth of northern Vermont, from New Hampshire to New York.

The Editor-in-Chief of Rails to Trails, Jake Lynch, said Rails-to-Trails Conservancy wanted to highlight the effort of VAST to make the trail available to a broader population beyond their own constituents.

“Not only does this demonstrate a tremendous generosity of mission, it’s also credit to VAST that it sees the enormous potential of a destination rail-trail like this,” Lynch said. “All over the country, communities lucky enough to have a trail nearby are tapping into a booming trails tourism market, which generates more than $600 billion in consumer spending each year. New businesses are opening up, main streets are attracting visitors, and locals are taking advantage of a terrific resource for recreation – it’s great to see.”

To read the full article, visit www.railstotrails.org/magazine.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members, is the nation's largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information visit www.railstotrails.org.