



Questions to Ask Those Interested in Building Trails on Your Land

1. **Are you affiliated with VMBA?** Our association isn't the only way to enjoy trails on your land, but you can rest assured that if you work with a VMBA Chapter, you'll be working with an organization that has been helping to build trails on private land in Vermont for over 20 years, not to mention protected through VMBA's insurance. Your local Chapter will be able to share agreements that articulate the roles and responsibilities of the Chapter as they build trails on your land, in addition to documents that cover:
 - i. Landowner liability
 - ii. VMBA's insurance
 - iii. Act 250 clarification and jurisdictional exemptions
 - iv. Access agreements

2. **Do you plan to host any public events on my land?** Understanding how a trail builder or organization plans to use your trails should be an important factor in your decision. VMBA Chapters work with their landowners to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding any events, which our insurance will cover (up to 500 people).

3. **To map or not to map?** Whether or not to officially map the trails on your property is an important decision. Agreeing to submit mapping files with the state loosens ACT 250 restrictions and allows for more miles of trail before a permit would be required. It also is a great way to share your land with the community and supports you playing a more active role in trail construction and use. Publicly available maps, however, can increase rider traffic, though not always. Some landowners elect to have their Chapters keep maps exclusive to members, even if maps are submitted to the state. The choice is yours and VMBA will help inform and support your decision.

4. **How will you communicate about building, alterations, reroutes, and maintenance?** Asking that the trail builder routinely communicate with you is critical. It is suggested that an annual trail plan be discussed every spring as a minimum level of communication. VMBA Chapters are committed to developing long-term landowner relationships and tend to be proactive in communications.

5. **Where else have you built trails?** Learning about how builders have developed relationships with other landowners is a great way to learn how they will work with you in the future. Ask for references.

6. **If I agree to let you build and I change my mind someday, what happens?** In all cases a landowner's prerogative rules. However, we strongly encourage landowners to carefully consider their commitment in partnering with Chapters. The energy required to build trails is a sizable investment, and losing access can have profound impacts on a Chapter and its members. In some cases, a trail on private land provides a critical link between trail networks and losing access can alter the entire character of a trail system. Above all, we encourage Chapters and landowners to maintain open communication and ensure any underlying reasons that might lead to a desire to withdraw access are swiftly addressed.

7. **Where will everyone park?** While "on trail" issues are rare, we would strongly suggest getting clear assurance from the builder that they will play an active role in communicating to riders about parking. VMBA Chapters are well suited to do this, given their existing network of local members and access to VMBA's 7600+ members statewide. We also encourage landowners to get an assurance that the builder will assist in keeping the area clean and consider constructing a kiosk at the trailhead to help direct and educate riders of the area, common practice for VMBA Chapters.

8. **What if I want to log my land?** Again, the landowner's prerogative rules. It is very helpful that your forestry plan be shared with the Chapter. With this knowledge chapters can build with the future in mind and support your preferences.

9. **Can I temporarily close the trails at some point?** Trail closures can be very disruptive, particularly during the height of the season (June - September). If closures are shared well in advance, Chapters can share this content with its members. That said, not every trail user is a VMBA member (as much as we'd like them to be!), and users may show up expecting the trail to be open. This is another great reason for requesting the builder to host a kiosk at the trailhead.