



## **Planning for the Future of Mountain Biking in Vermont: the Community Conversations Workshop Series**

*Authored in partnership with the US Forest Service*

**October 15, 2021:** Mountain biking in Vermont is booming. From long winding singletrack trails in pastoral landscapes to gravity-fueled descents between sugar maples at ski areas, the opportunities for riding bikes on naturally-surfaced trails in the Green Mountain State are ten-fold what they were a decade ago. And as the saying goes—if you build it, they will come. Come they have, and with this continual growth and evolution came the associated and unavoidable growing pains. But how best to use these teachable moments to inform the future?

During this past summer, the US Forest Service (USFS) partnered with the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation and the VMBA to host a four-part discussion series facilitated through a USFS partnership with the International Mountain Bike Association. The virtual series, dubbed *Community Conversations: Planning for the Future of Mountain Biking in Vermont*, utilized panels of experts to explore planning for social outcomes, planning for environmental outcomes, the art of trail building, and visioning the future of mountain biking in Vermont. Participants had the opportunity to pose questions to thought leaders, environmental regulators, land managers, and premier trail designers and builders. Panelists addressed the lessons learned over the past decades and provided best practices for informed design and construction.

The series highlighted the power of trails as not just places to ride a bike but as economic drivers and catalysts for social change. It also underscored that success is found in collaboration with and involving stakeholders early in the process. We now have the tools to design and build sustainable, community-supported trails, as described in the [Series Summary](#), providing resources for those interested in steering the future of mountain biking.

Recordings of the Community Conversations are now online at <https://vmba.org/community-conversations/>, which we hope will prove valuable for those seeking to get involved as well as the conservation commissions, land trusts, and land managers considering the development of mountain bike trails. If history is any indication, the future trail networks in Vermont will serve a greater number and broader variety of users than those that exist today. The partnerships that made the series possible make something very clear—the future of mountain biking in Vermont is bright and space for community conversations will be increasingly important.