

Landowner Access Agreement

Landowner Cover Letter



Introduction

Individual private landowners are integral to outdoor recreation in Vermont. Over half of the 800+ miles of trails VMBA collectively stewards are located on private property, providing singletrack access to the public at no cost and building upon Vermont's long standing tradition of neighbors respectfully accessing private land for shared use. Without the gracious involvement of private landowners, Vermont would not be the haven for outdoor recreation it has become and would not enjoy the related health and economic benefits it has brought to Vermonters statewide.

VMBA is the proud parent organization of 28 Chapters throughout Vermont. Individual Chapters develop and maintain local trail systems, as well as the critical private landowner relationships on which these networks often rely. VMBA also provides insurance coverage, which includes landowners as additional insureds to provide additional protection above and beyond Vermont's Limited Landowner Liability Act.

The accompanying Landowner Access Agreement (LAA) was born out of a need to formalize the involvement of private landowners in hosting public access recreational trails and provides clear ground rules for how the Chapter and Landowner will work together to uphold the rights and privileges of private property while retaining public access. Ultimately, our intent is that it will set the tone for a productive and respectful working relationship for years to come.

Summary

The LAA affirms the hosted recreational trails will remain open to the public for at least 10 years. This is commonly the minimum time frame in order to receive public funding for trail projects, and provides an important piece of mind for Chapters in justifying the extensive investment of time, energy, and money necessary for building and maintaining trails.

In exchange for graciously hosting public-access trails on your land, the LAA provides you certain liability protections, sets the terms under which you can close trails or otherwise limit access, and establishes how any conflicts that might arise will be resolved. While a bit long and dense, its format was borne out of the requirements of public grant applications - a key source of funding for trails - and was the first such agreement of its kind in the country. If the agreement is terminated and public access lost within this 10-year period, the Chapter or VMBA may be responsible for reimbursing to the State or Federal government any public funds used in construction.

Additional information

The "Landowners" page of our website (<https://vmba.org/landowners/>) includes several resources you may find helpful in better understanding what agreeing to host public trails on your land entails. These include questions to ask those interested in building trails on your land, a summary of Vermont's Limited Landowner Liability Act, and an overview of the limited jurisdiction of Act 250 over recreational trails.

On behalf of VMBA, our Chapters, and our members, I thank you for considering hosting trails on your property and continuing Vermont's legacy of private landowners providing the public good that is open-access outdoor recreation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Bennette", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Nick Bennette
Executive Director
The Vermont Mountain Bike Association