

RIDE 2017

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A JOINT PUBLICATION OF THE STOWE REPORTER AND THE STOWE MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB.



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## ENJOY THE RIDE!

With the constant barrage of emails, text messages, status updates and bleak news, it's tough to stay on top of what's what these days. But for many of us who have a passion for mountain biking, carving out a bit of time each day to nerd out on the latest suspension technology or trail construction projects is a cathartic break from the rigors of our hectic schedules.

So it's with that same sense of stoke and inspiration that we're proud to present the 2017 RIDE issue.

There's a lot going on in the mountain bike world in Stowe right now and we hope this issue gives you some insight into what the future holds, as well as into some of the movers and shakers who are pushing the needle of progress.

It's our genuine hope that something in this issue will resonate with you and inspire you to get involved. Maybe that means finally helping your son or daughter move past the training-wheels phase. Maybe that means entering your first downhill race. Maybe it's joining in at the next trail workday, or maybe it's as simple as airing up your tires and getting back on your bike to experience Stowe's trails.

Whatever it is that keeps you rolling, we appreciate your support and we appreciate you picking up this issue of RIDE. So cheers to another great mountain bike season and we hope to see you on the trails.

*Evan Chismark, Stowe Trails Partnership*

*Tom Kearney, Stowe Reporter*



PHOTO BY MIKE HITELMAN

Local ripper Adam Ogden samples one of Stowe's many purpose-built mountain bike trails.

### 2017 RIDE

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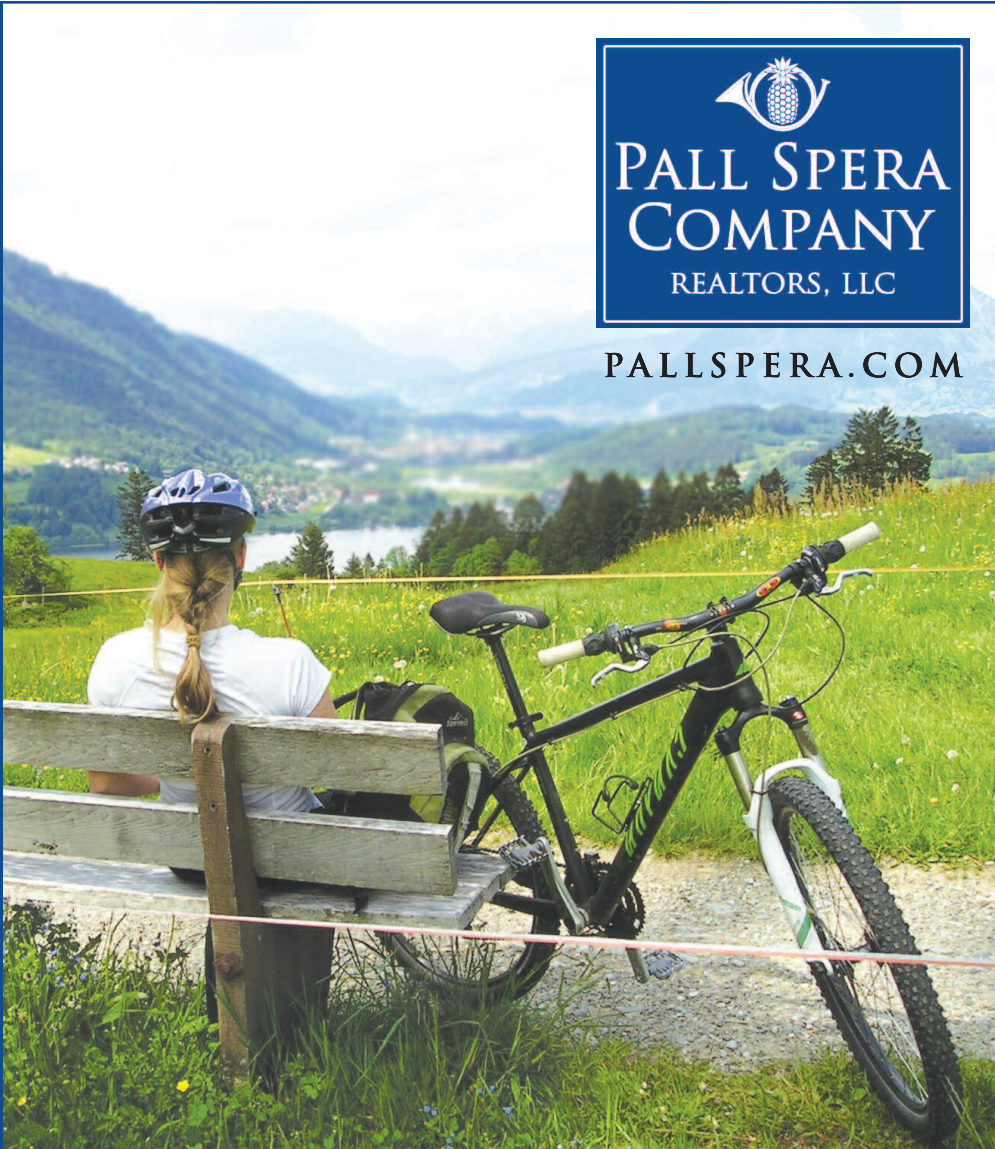
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## THE POWER OF THE TRAIL

**MOUNTAIN BIKING**, despite its steady rise to popularity over the past decade or so, has managed to retain a grassroots feel and an organic vibe that's growing more elusive in other non-stick and -ball sports.

We've avoided the pitfalls of over-commodification that fundamentally altered some of the sports that were thrust into the X-Games spotlight in the early 2000s.

Our collective evolution as mountain bikers has been steady, if not unpredictable; the fringe group of renegades building trails of dubious legality on parcels of unknown ownership are now the leaders of a respected movement that's helping to buoy seasonal economies while bolstering townships and communities around the country.

For many of us who are tethered to a desk for work or school, mountain biking provides a much-needed outlet and some natural sensory stimulation, as well as a gateway to the world outside of our computer screens.

The mainstay of mountain biking's sustained success, I would contend, is not mountain biking itself, though. (Bear with me.) The foundation, the linchpin of mountain biking's staying power is the trails themselves. Mountain biking has simply been a catalyst for trail building, and the trails (the trails!), they are the true source of this community's longevity.

The trails are a rallying call, a social connector, and the truest means by which to build a sense of personal ownership in a resource that's largely dependent on volunteer engagement to survive.

Here in Vermont, we enjoy an enlightened sense of inclusivity on the trails — take to any of Stowe's trail pods on a sunny day, any time of the year, and you're likely to encounter dedicated riders from around the Northeast and beyond, as well as any number of other trail users ranging from runners and hikers to Nordic skiers and fatbikers.

The beautiful part is that we coexist through our mutual love of and respect for the outdoors. And the trails are at the heart of that coexistence. Utopian, is it not?

So it's with that sense of community and inclusivity in mind that the Stowe Mountain Bike Club is preparing to embark on the next step of its evolutionary journey. Through the course of the 2017 season, the club will drop its current moniker and adopt a new name — the Stowe Trails Partnership, a name that better represents our position as trail stewards and mountain bike advocates working on behalf of the entire community.

This evolution is the product of many years of advocacy and toil, and represents the next



PHOTO BY MIKE HITELMAN

**Evan Chismark, executive director of the Stowe Mountain Bike Club/Stowe Trails Partnership, doesn't spend all his time in the office. You're likely to see him out on the trails.**

step in this organization's ability to expand and enhance trail access throughout Stowe.

Adopting a name that's focused on greater inclusivity creates a more broadly representational platform from which to advocate. We can leverage that sense of community that got us to where we are today in order to continue building trails and connecting the trail pods for all users.

And as we pursue trail-building opportunities on state land and explore different funding sources to do so, this new identity opens up doors.

The evolution from the Stowe Mountain Bike Club to the Stowe Trails Partnership is not indicative of some fundamental sea change — quite the contrary. From an organizational standpoint, we'll continue building mountain bike trails — more specifically, "multi-use trails suitable for mountain biking."

This language is excerpted directly from the signed documents we have in place with both the town of Stowe and the Stowe Land Trust. We are, quite literally (and happily), contractually bound to build mountain bike trails. So let that allay any fears of the

Stowe Trails Partnership losing sight of its roots or core mission; we're still building mountain bike-specific trails, but we're now positioned to advocate for those trails on behalf of all trail users.

The past year has revealed a host of untapped trail-building opportunities in Stowe — some of which are likely under construction as you read this. In the process of hunting down potential trail avenues, we've established some key relationships that will not only help the mountain bike community open up new trail corridors, but will foster a sense of collaboration that multiplies our collective resources while benefiting the greatest number of trail users. Opportunity abounds, and it's incumbent upon us as a community to seize those possibilities and capitalize on both the human and financial resources at our disposal.

As part of Vermont's statewide mountain bike advocacy movement (the Vermont Mountain Bike Association), we're now even better positioned to collaborate and leverage our past success toward a more sustainable future. We've achieved the suc-

cess we have as a result of the relationships and partnerships we've established.

The world-class trail network we're so fortunate to ride was built on the backs of volunteers, on forward-thinking town employees who recognized the civic value of trails, and in partnership with conservation organizations that recognized the need for collaboration. These trails are ... wait for it ... a partnership.

So the question is: What next? Do we rest on our laurels? Sit back and enjoy what we've constructed and bask in the glory of success?

Heck, no. We evolve, we advocate and we continue building on the strength of this community. Remember, the mainstay of this movement is always you, the rider. Your feedback, your voice and your participation are key ingredients to ensuring the sustainable evolution of these trails and this community.

See you on the trails.

*Evan Chismark is executive director of the Stowe Mountain Bike Club, which is evolving into the Stowe Trails Partnership.*



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# STOWE MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB

## rider profile: Audra and Michael Hughes

**Hometown:** Stowe, Vt.  
**Favorite local trail:** Go with the FLO!  
**Favorite non-local trail:** Fusters (Pittsfield, Vt.)  
**Occupation:** Owners, Commodities Natural Market  
**Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty:** Both!  
**Weapon of choice (current bike, list any fancy or unfancy upgrades):** Michael and Audra: Rocky Mountain Altitude bikes  
**Post-ride beverage of choice:** Michael: Idletyme outside on the deck. Audra: Water!

### Audra and Michael Hughes Q&A

#### How did you two get into riding mountain bikes?

Audra: I worked at Sony Music for a long time. Twenty years ago, a little song by Celine Dion called "My Heart Will Go On" from a little movie called "Titanic" struck gold and I thought I might get a nice bonus because that's what happens when you work at the No. 1 music company in the world. Well, after taxes, it amounted to \$500. I went to a bike shop on the Upper West Side and put down my hard-earned cash and bought a basic Specialized mountain bike. Then I booked a camping, mountain bike and rafting trip in Moab even though I never rode a mountain bike and had only camped one time ever. On Day One, we rode our bikes 25 miles uphill through BLM land in the La Sal Mountains and on Day Two, mostly downhill through Moab to the Colorado River. Good thing we were rafting the next two days because I could not sit on a bike seat for one minute longer. I was hooked after that though (and bought a gel seat). The first present I gave Michael when we began dating was a helmet for snowboarding. The second, was a Gary Fisher mountain bike. It's a relic. And it's in our

garage if you want to take a spin. Michael: Before Audra gave me the prized Gary Fisher hardtail, I first rode a mountain bike at the trails in Ringwood, NJ. It was awesome! Residing in NYC doesn't make for convenient trail access so my love for riding definitely took off when we finally moved to Stowe for good.

#### Did you jump into the MTB game together or was one person the catalyst for becoming dedicated trail shredders?

Audra: I kicked it off, but Michael totally surpassed me in enthusiasm, dedication and skills. He's a trail junkie — out there at 6 a.m. and whenever he can fit in an hour or two. I also love spinning and riding a weighted wheel almost daily and year-round so I can totally get in the zone and pedal uphill for what seems like an hour from Adam's Camp to the Trapp Cabin.

#### So is it true that couples who ride together stay together?

Audra: Absolutely! I've had my moments, say, on Burnham Up in NEK where I reached my limit and I suspect you could hear my roar from quite a distance away. I've calmed down a lot and my riding has since improved, too. I think there may be some benefits for couples who don't always ride together, too.

#### What happens when you add kids into that mix? Two-wheeled alchemy or recipe for disaster?

Having three little kids means we don't get to ride together that often. We're so excited to get our kids on bikes and not for lack of trying! One of our kids just started riding last weekend. If only we could teach him how to brake. Michael took the boys hiking up Cady Hill early one morning last year so they could see where we usually ride. We thought

it would inspire them to greatness but instead they came home and yelled at us, "So you want to KILL US!" Needless to say, they did not learn to ride last year. I'm pretty psyched that Liam Newhouse is our neighbor and the boys' idol. He doesn't realize, or maybe he does, that he's about to become their mountain bike instructor and guide. I also hoping for either a pump track or mini practice-loop for kids. Hint, hint.

#### As relatively new riders, what is it about these trails that you guys like?

Audra: I love the proximity. I have no excuse except to get out there. I love how in less than one minute, the town drops away and I'm in the middle of wilderness. I'm spoiled because Cady Hill and Adams Camp trails are so beautifully maintained. Oh, look over there on the left, there's a leaf blocking my view of Sap Bucket! Evan, can you please clean up the pine cones on the side of Zogs?

(Editor's note: we've embarked on an aggressive pine-cone remediation plan, set to begin on February 31st. -EC)

#### Advice for new riders or anyone considering jumping into the mountain bike game?

1. Demo bikes for a whole season. Go to sponsored events and take a spin or two. At the end of the season you may save a few bucks by buying it, however, more important is that you'll definitely know what works for your body type. My mistake: I demoed a bike worth as much as one of our cars. It was fun. It was free. It was three times what I had budgeted for a bike.
2. Take a lesson. There are several great teachers in the area.
3. Since the Stowe rides often start at the bottom of a climb, I recommend warming up — do a little loop on the Rec Path or park at an adjacent lot just so you can warm up your legs.
4. Group rides are fun.
5. Tell someone if you're going out for a ride alone.

## rider profile: Andrea Elias

**Hometown:** Montreal, Québec  
**Favorite local trail:** Anything in the downhill direction :)  
**Favorite nonlocal trail:** B-Line in Whistler  
**Occupation:** Producer/journalist  
**Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty:** Smooth and groomed!  
**Weapon of choice (current bike; list any fancy or unfancy upgrades):** My brand new Giant Reign  
**Post-ride beverage of choice:** A latte from PK Coffee

### Andrea Elias Q&A

#### When did you start riding mountain bikes and how did you first get into it?

I started riding mountain bikes when I met my now-husband, Mike, about eight years ago.

#### What's your advice to other riders who are just getting started?

Invest in a seat dropper — it makes the downhills a lot less terrifying!

#### How does the riding here in Stowe compare to some of the other places you've ridden?

Stowe is an incredible place to ride. I love that there is a variety of areas to choose from that are constantly evolving so you never really have a chance to get bored.

#### Is it hard being the de facto model every time you ride with you husband? (Andrea's husband, Mike, is responsible for many of the photos you see in this publication)

Only on the days that he catches me falling off the bike!



Andrea Elias

PHOTO BY MIKE HITELMAN

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## STOWE MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB

### rider profile: Heather Lavoie

**Hometown:** Hopkinton, N.H.

**Favorite local trail:** That's like asking which of your children is your favorite. If I have to choose, then I'd say Kimmers (going up). But I honestly love them all.

**Favorite nonlocal trail:** The Greenway Loop in Hopkinton, N.H. It's my morning ritual when not in Stowe.

**Occupation:** chief strategy officer of Geneia and CEO of Illume Advisors

**Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty:** Rough and rooty – I like kicking it old school.

**Weapon of choice (current bike; list any fancy or unfancy upgrades):** My everyday love is a Liv Lust Advanced 27.5, long-distance is Cannondale Scalpel Carbon 29er (used for races like Whiteface 100K and Leadville 100), winter ride is a Trek Farley (fatty), road/gravel is a Cannondale Synapse – all stock.

**Post-ride beverage of choice:** Scratch Labs (that's for my coach). Truth be told – Hill Farmstead Edward, either at Sushi Yoshi or The Bench.



Heather Lavoie

**Do you still find time to get out for a mellow rip with the kids, even though your training needs are pretty significant?**

Absolutely — I love getting the kids out on the trails. I learned about the Blueberry Lake Trails over in the Mad River area from Mud City Adventures here in Stowe. They were perfect to get the kids comfortable, and now they rip it up at Cady Hill all the time. It's just a matter of time before they leave me in the dust.

**Now that you've conquered the Leadville 100, what's next?**

This year I am doing a Skyrunner running race to celebrate my friend's 50th, then I am going to jump into the IRR (Irreverent Road Ride) race again, and Race to the Top of VT. I've been looking for a great stage race but couldn't get one to fit with the schedule for my kids, but that is definitely on my radar.

There are a lot of fast people out on the trails, my husband being a primary example, but I am more like a diesel engine. I can go a long distance with a lot of consistency. A stage race would allow me to string a set of long races together and add the element of managing nutrition and fatigue over a number of days. Pisgah at 120 miles and 25,000 feet of climbing, Transylvania Epic in Pennsylvania and La Ruta across Costa Rica rise to the top of my list.

**How long have you been riding?**

26 years (it hurts to admit that).

**As a person who competes at a pretty high level and has ridden all over the U.S., what is it you like about the riding here in Stowe?**

Stowe is magical on so many levels, not the least of which is the extensiveness, quality and variety of the trails. But what makes it truly special is the vibe — the culture of biking in town that brings together amazing, inspirational, humble and fun people. Combine that with an ability to bike everywhere safely, particularly for my kids, and I can't imagine being anywhere else.

### rider profile: John Hirce

**Hometown:** Stowe

**Favorite local trail:** Bear's

**Favorite non-local trail:** Tap & Die

**Occupation:** Dentist

**Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty:** Both!

**Weapon of choice (current bike; list any fancy or unfancy upgrades):** Devinci Troy Carbon X01, but during the day when I'm awake it's a Santa Cruz Nickel on 19 wheels – yes, 26 inches!

**Post-ride beverage of choice:** Coffee (usually done by 7 a.m.).

#### John Hirce Q&A

**How did you get into riding mountain bikes?**

High school club team back in '93, riding on hiking and equestrian

trails in New Jersey. Things have come a long way!

**How long have you been riding?**

24 years.

**What keeps you busy when you're not crushing miles on your MTB or looking after the dental health of the Stowe community?**

Three daughters and splitting ride-time with my lovely wife, Cathy.

**Advice for other riders?**

Ditch the roadie helmets and get a MTB-specific one with MIPS technology. This revelation came to me early one morning while wearing a neck collar and strapped to a backboard, sliding through a CAT scanner at Copley — not good!



John Hirce

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## Young riders



### Tim Bettencourt has some ideas for getting young people on trails

Tim Bettencourt is a man on a mission: to make biking more accessible to both kids and parents in Stowe. In partnership with the Stowe Mountain Bike Club, Tim and his contemporaries at the Stowe Rotary Club are working to expand the Stowe Bike Night program this year to get more kids on bikes and out on the trails (every Wednesday at 5:30 in the Sushi Yoshi parking lot).

**HERE ARE SOME WORDS** of wisdom from Tim on how to get your kids hooked on riding.

- Community events like Stowe Bike Night encouraged my kids to ride — kids want to be where other kids are and seeing so many other children cruising around on their strider bikes was instrumental in getting my kids interested in riding their own bikes. My son ditched his training wheels at Bike Night!

- Biking is a huge confidence booster, especially for my daughter. It's a safe, fun way for her to gain a sense of independence. The progression from strider to regular kids bike is a tangible way for her to see that her effort is paying off.
- My kids LOVE the Stowe Recreation Path and I've found that it's the best place to get kids started doing some "real rides." There's easy access from a lot of different places in Stowe and there's always something to see or do along the way. And it's not too challenging either.
- We're fortunate to have a lot of really good introductory terrain here in Stowe — mellow terrain that kids and parents can enjoy together. Once you've mastered the Rec Path, use some of the gentler terrain close to town to try riding on dirt for the first time.
- Recently my son made it all the way up to the Green Chair (at the top of Cady Hill Forest). It was his first attempt at doing that climb on a bike, and now all I hear is that he wants to do it again! His goal is to pedal all the way to the top by the end of the year. Little milestones like this are huge for kids. That sense of accomplishment is what keeps them coming back.

PHOTOS BY TIM BETTENCOURT

Olive Bettencourt, above, and Bram Bettencourt, with his father, Tim, are part of a movement to get young people out on the trails. Wednesday bike rides at 5:30 p.m. are being scheduled just for kids.

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## Young riders

Kyle Robin and Liam Newhouse: Just go for it

**Name:** Kyle Robin  
**Hometown:** Stowe  
**Occupation:** fifth, almost sixth-grader in Stowe  
**Number of years riding:** five years  
**Favorite local trail:** Florence at Cady Hill  
**Favorite nonlocal trail:** Hellion at Highland MTB Park  
**Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty:** I enjoy more smooth and flowy trails.  
**Weapon of choice:** My weapon to the battlefield is a 26-inch 2012 Santa Cruz Butcher. I enjoy the bike's flow through the trail and sensitivity on the bars. Along with the light weight, I would call it amazing.  
**Flat pedals and skate shoes or clipless pedals and bike shoes?** I prefer flat pedals with skate shoes even though I now have more scars on my shins than stars in the sky.

**Flat pedals and skate shoes or clipless pedals and bike shoes?**  
 I ride Deity flat pedals and Five-Ten bike shoes.

### Kyle and Liam Q&A

**Tell us how you got into mountain biking.**

**Kyle:** I had ridden a couple of times with my mom and dad before I really got into the sport. But then two summers ago I started watching videos and really learning about riding; that's when I really got out there.

**Liam:** I had a little mountain bike and a couple of times a month I went for a ride on the trails behind my house and I started to enjoy it more and I got a nicer bike and started to bike more.

**Name:** Liam Newhouse  
**Hometown:** Stowe  
**Occupation:** fifth-grade student going into sixth grade  
**Number of years riding:** four years  
**Favorite local trail:** Florence at Cady Hill  
**Favorite nonlocal trail:** Cady's Falls in Morristown  
**Smooth and groomed or rough and rooty:** Smooth and groomed  
**Weapon of choice:** My weapon of choice is a 26-inch Turner Flux with custom components. I enjoy the suspension and how light the bike is.

**You guys were instrumental in getting the Stowe Bike Night started this season. What were your motivations for putting this together?**

**Kyle:** I realized that not many younger kids had been riding out on the trails. I wanted to change that.

**Liam:** I just wanted to get more kids into mountain biking because not many kids mountain bike. But that is changing.

See 'Young riders' on Page 10



COURTESY PHOTO

Kyle Robin, who's going into sixth grade, styles it out on one of the features on Cady Hill's Florence trail.

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## HELP KIDS HAVE FUN ON BIKES

Randy Torcom, a Stowe local, happens to be one fast dad. Randy's son Taylor is part of an up-and-coming crew of young shredders who are helping shape the future of mountain biking in Stowe.

Here are a few tips from Randy on how to introduce your kids to trail riding in a way that's safe and fun.

- As a parent, lead by example and create an environment that's fun and unthreatening. Kids will want to follow suit if they see their parents have a good time on the trails.
- Sizing is everything — if your child

has a bike that's too small or too big, it can make or break their experience.

- Introduce technology to aid in progression — once your child gets the basics of riding down and they're riding a 20-inch bike, don't be afraid to introduce bikes with more high-end components you can tweak and tune to your child's height, weight and ability level. Yes, it's a bigger investment — but, just like for us adults, it will make a world of difference with their ability to more easily handle terrain on the trails. And this leads

to progression and more fun.

- Set destinations for your rides that have fun things to do. Whether it's a swimming hole, a pond to catch frogs, a secret tree or the ice cream stand, giving your kids a goal for their destination will keep them motivated and engaged.
- Knee and elbow pads are a must. Again, remember to size accordingly. Outsized pads can be a hindrance to a child's mobility.
- Make it social! Bringing friends for the kids to ride with helps keep the enthusiasm level high.

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COURTESY PHOTO

Liam (left) and Kyle, pictured here at SMBC's 2017 Spring Trail Work Day understand the importance of getting involved in trail maintenance.

## YOUNG RIDERS

Continued from Page 9

Since this is the first year of the program, where do you see this going in the future?

Kyle: I could see it bringing more and more kids together to have a good time on the trails.

Liam: I see the program growing and people beginning to enjoy mountain biking.

What advice do you have for kids who are thinking about getting into mountain biking but might feel a little intimidated?

Kyle: I would say just go for it. It's way more fun than you would think.

Liam: I would tell them to give mountain biking a try and see if they like the sport.

How about advice to parents — how can we help them get their kids on bikes and out on the trails? (Pssst, they can bring them to Kids Bike Night!)

Kyle: Parents could show some awesome videos about the sport to get their kids excited to ride. It helps to support them with what they like to do.

Liam: The parent could show them some cool stuff having to do with mountain biking and they could also bring them to some camps and rides to get them into riding.

What's your favorite part of mountain biking?

Kyle: I love feeling the air rush by my ears as I shred down the trails. And the feeling of my tires rolling down the trails.

Liam: I like being with my friends and being in the wilderness and seeing cool sights. I also like going downhill and feeling the wind on my face.

If you could go on a mountain bike trip anywhere in the world, where would it be?

Kyle: I would take a trip to Whistler.

Liam: I would go to Utah, New Mexico or Arizona and ride the mountains.

If you had unlimited funds and resources to build a trail in Stowe, what would you build?

Kyle: I would build a really flowy trail somewhere nearby with lots of features such as big dirt jumps, whale tails and drops. (Editor's note: a whale tale is a curved wooden jump-on/jump-off feature)

Liam: I would probably build some downhill trails on the mountain so I wouldn't have to travel to get to the downhill trails. I would also build some easier trails so the riders who are just beginning have some simple trails to start on.

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COURTESY PHOTO

Mountain-biking students at Stowe High School now have an organized way to compete; a club team has been formed at the school.

## MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB TEAM TAKES SHAPE AT STOWE HIGH

By Roger Murphy

Stowe High School is smack-dab in the middle of some of the best mountain biking in Vermont, and next year local youth will be taking advantage of it by joining the first-ever Stowe High mountain bike team.

Set to compete in the Northern New England High School Mountain Bike Series, students will be able to ride and train with their friends and attend races throughout Vermont and New Hampshire.

The students who have grown up shredding the trails around Stowe with their families and friends will

get the chance to explore new terrain and meet other kids from around New England who love mountain biking as much as they do.

An informational meeting was held in the last few weeks of school, and over 25 Stowe High students have already expressed their enthusiasm for this new opportunity.

The team will officially be a "club" and not a varsity sport, so students will have a lot of flexibility with their commitment and be able to continue playing school sports as well.

Now, races are held on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and

they are all within a couple hours or so of Stowe.

The plan is for students to ride together regularly with club advisers Roger Murphy and Anastasia Schafer, both teachers at Stowe High, as well as with other parents and even some professional racers who are enthusiastic about the program and working with students.

Look for more news and information about the team as plans progress.

In the meantime, anyone who would like to make a contribution to this non-school-funded biking initiative can contact Roger Murphy at Stowe High.

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PHOTO BY ZACH FAULKNER

Dylan Conte, a professional mountain bike racer based in Stowe, says he has gained a much better understanding of how the concept of “quality over quantity” relates to his life as both a mountain bike racer and a person.

## DYLAN CONTE, BUILT FOR SPEED

Dylan Conte is a Stowe-based mountain bike racer who’s notched impressive results in downhill, enduro and pump track disciplines. He’s raced the Pro MTB Gravity Tour (also known as the Pro GRT), the U.S. Open, and UCI World Cup, among others.

More impressive, though, is Dylan’s outlook on life, his contagious smile, ubiquitous stoke, and desire to inspire those around him.

The Stowe Mountain Bike Club/Stowe Trails Partnership is

proud to sponsor Dylan in his quest to become one of the fastest racers on the planet.

We asked Dylan to share with us some lessons he’s learned as a professional mountain biker, and advice he can pass along to up-and-comers looking to make a career out of riding their bikes.

...

**GROWING UP,** I never quite grasped the fact that life is about quality, not quantity; be it friends, sponsors, training, etc.

After many years of continental travel, racking up results all over the country, and more injuries than I care to recount, I’ve gained a much better understanding of how the concept of “quality over quantity” relates to my life as both a mountain bike racer and a person.

The saying ties back to making decisions and forming relationships for the long haul and not just the short term. I have been fortunate enough to have met most of my best friends through our shared passion for bicycles, going fast, and having fun doing it. When I followed my heart, it’s always led me down the right path, whereas every time I chose a shortcut, those decisions inevitably left me at a dead end or dumped me out right where I started.

In years past, I rode for companies that barely knew I existed and were in it for the bottom dollar. When my race results were good, these relationships were strong. But racing is bound to take its toll and injuries are inevitable, no matter the amount of training. And it was at these times that I learned the hard way that some brands didn’t necessarily have my best interest at heart when it came to our sponsorship arrangement; they were out to prove that their marketing budget was justifiable on a year-to-year basis.

While this may look good on paper (admittedly for both me as a sponsored athlete and for the brands trying to build their roster), it is challenging to have a rider sell something — or, for that matter, someone — that they don’t fully believe in.

This led me to the realization a

See ‘Conte’ on Page 13

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## Conservation, partnerships key for sustainability and access

By Caitrin Maloney

**AS A CONSERVATIONIST** and a mountain biker, I am proud of the work Stowe Land Trust has done to protect open space in Stowe.

As a result of this good work, the trust has provided public access for many types of recreation, including mountain biking, and has forged partnerships to support the sustainable management of the land and the trails.

Together with the Stowe community and willing landowners, the land trust has protected nearly 3,500 acres of productive farm and forestland over the past 30 years. Almost all of the land we have conserved has recreational value, from trails to space for hunting to river access.

Keeping land open for the public to use and enjoy is a huge part of what we have always done and continue to do at Stowe Land Trust.

As the popularity and importance of mountain biking have risen in the Stowe community over the past decade, Stowe Land Trust has responded by helping to protect key trails and areas where additional access for bikes and other trail uses could be developed.



Caitrin Maloney

Adams Camp, Maple Run and Cady Hill Forest are the trust-conserved properties best known for their world-class bike trails. Riders can also enjoy trails and access along Alex's Trail at DuMont Meadow and Kirchner Woods, both of which are owned and managed by Stowe Land Trust.

The Stowe Trails Partnership/Stowe Mountain Bike Club plays a critical role in partnering with Stowe Land Trust, the town of Stowe, and other landowners to maintain access and trails after they've been built and

protected. Keeping trails in good shape — particularly as ridership rises and new uses like fat biking emerge — is where the wheel hits the tread over the long run.

As we completed a 10-year update for the Adams Camp Recreation Plan last year, I was reminded especially of how much great land and trail stewardship work we can accomplish when we work together. Since 2006, Stowe Trails Partnership/Stowe Mountain Bike Club, the town of Stowe, and Stowe Land Trust have worked with Trapp Family Lodge to build and maintain 5 miles of new trail — including Hardy Haul and Kimmers — add a new parking lot, restore bridge

access over the West Branch of the Little River, and cooperate with partners to maintain public access and connections for hiking, skiing, hunting and other recreational uses.

I can't wait to see what we'll accomplish together in the next 10 years!

Having the Stowe Trails Partnership and other partners doing a great job of keeping up with trail stewardship also frees up Stowe Land Trust to focus on protecting additional key access and trails. As part of updating our Strategic Conservation Plan in 2015, we heard loud and clear from many recreation partners and stakeholders that securing connec-

tions between existing trail networks in town such as Cady Hill Forest, Trapp Family Lodge, Adams Camp and Sterling Forest is a top priority.

So we're going to keep doing that important land protection work, as well as supporting the Stowe Trails Partnership and other partners in their great stewardship of existing trails.

And, of course, we'll be doing our fair share of enjoying the trails, too — as riders, walkers, runners, four-legged riders and more. Happy riding!

*Caitrin Maloney is executive director of the Stowe Land Trust. Information: stowelandtrust.org.*

## CONTE

Continued from Page 12

few years back that I only wanted to work with the people and brands with whom I have extremely strong relationships/friendships, and are truly in it for the love of what they do and the people they work with and support. Working with amazing friends like iRide, The Alchemist, Stowe Mountain Bike Club/Stowe Trails Partnership, Stowe Hardware, The Reservoir/The Bench, and Deity Components is a dream come true. These are all people that, if you took away the bikes and the business, we would still be great friends who support each other and the community.

When I made the decision to redesign my sponsor program, it was impossible to foresee breaking my neck, blowing out my knee, or not completing two seasons in a row. These obstacles and challenges truly tested each and every one of these relationships and their loyalty.

Paradoxically, the string of injuries I suffered validated my decision to walk away from the big-name sponsors and focus on real relationships; every one of these people had my back, visited me, contacted me, sent me surpris-

es to lift my spirits, and were just as excited as I was to see me get back on the bike and succeed.

The successes I have had since then have been so much more meaningful, knowing that I have such a strong community in my corner.

Everyone listed here understands and is an amazing example of the fact that, when you have a great product, it will sell itself. But what will set you apart from others is how you treat the people in your life and how loyal you are to those you support and those who support you.

My takeaway advice after years of working toward my goal of becoming a professional mountain bike racer is to stick to your roots, do what you love — do it solely for the love of whatever that thing is — and don't take yourself too seriously. Set serious goals and shoot for the moon. Make decisions knowing that, if everything you have accomplished and built disappears tomorrow, you would be happy and confident in the people who surround you and the decisions you have made.

And most of all, go ride your bike — because it's a whole lot of fun!

*Cheers,  
Dylan*



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PHOTO BY ANDREW MARTIN

Hank Glowiak, owner of Chuck's Bikes in Morrisville, test-drives a fat bike.

## FAT BIKING ON THE RISE

by Andrew Martin

Not long ago, heads turned and eyebrows were raised at the sight of a bicycle with tires measuring 5 inches wide.

Not so much anymore. The bikes have become more common in recent years, and even if a person isn't quite sure what that bike is called or used for, odds are that someone nearby will have the answer.

It's a fat bike, of course, and those extra-wide tires make it possible to pedal across snow without sinking in.

From roots in Alaska, fat bikes and the sport of fat biking have exploded in popularity, and now those wide-tired bikes can be seen outside any bike shop where snow is in the winter forecast.

"They really took off in Vermont about five years ago," said Ryan Thibault, owner and editor of Mountain Bike Vermont.

Stowe and its extensive network of mountain biking and winter trails has quickly become a center of the fat biking movement in Vermont. Thibault, an avid fat biker, spends a lot of time pedaling around Stowe's expansive trail networks in the winter.

Why the sudden rise in the popularity of fat bikes? Jarrod Ogden thinks it's partly because fat biking offers avid mountain and road bikers a winter option.

"A lot of those people, they don't have a winter sport unless they ski," Ogden said. He works at iRide in Stowe, and he joins Thibault on the winter trails in Stowe whenever they can.

"Riding the roads is miserable" in winter, Ogden said. The arrival of fat bikes gave all those cyclists and bikers "a way to continue riding all year."

But it's more than an alternative, Ogden said. It's fun.

"I'd say it's one part mountain biking, and one part Dukes of Hazzard," Thibault said.

The bikes are geared fairly low, so riders go a bit slower than they do on normal mountain bikes. But the fact that there's all that powdery white stuff to fall into if something goes wrong means many riders throw caution to the wind. Riders can drift around corners and try stunts they'd normally avoid because of the rocks and tree roots just waiting for a crash landing in warmer months.

"It adds an edge of looseness; you're falling in snow," Thibault explained. "You're just barely in control — or just barely out of control."

Fat bikes also appeal to some people because taking a spin on one isn't quite so weather-dependent as, say, cross-country skiing. Periodic winter thaws can close down cross-country ski trails until more snow falls to cover those bare spots.

Not so with fat biking. Riders can just roll over those patches of grass and dirt, then keep on going when they're back on snow.

"You can hit roads or ride over snow or dirt," Ogden said.

The sport isn't quite weather-proof, but it's close. When Stowe endured the dismal low-snow winter of 2015-16, fat bikers had one of their best seasons ever.

A good fat bike normally runs

between \$500 and \$1,000, "cheaper than regular mountain bikes," Thibault said.

However, fat bikes can't go everywhere. Certain trails don't allow fat bikes, and the bikes can damage bare trails during a thaw.

Trail grooming is another challenge. The trails need to be groomed for fat-bike use, but there aren't any motorized groomers for mountain bike trails. So, volunteers do the grooming by hand, dragging an old tire loaded down with cinder blocks behind them.

"It looks like something out of 'Rocky IV,'" Ogden said.

One day spent grooming can pave the way for several days of fat biking — but maybe only one day, if Vermont's having a snowy winter.

And if volunteers are otherwise occupied, there's no grooming.

"You can't just go out and freestyle," Ogden said. "The trails can be hit or miss."

Fat-bike enthusiasts envision a permanent home in Stowe, with motorized trail grooming. That may not be far off, considering how quickly the sport is growing. Just take a look at Stowe's annual Überwinter Fatbike Festival, a day of fat biking and celebration of the sport put on by the Stowe Mountain Bike Club and Mountain Bike Vermont. About 40 people showed up for the first festival a few years ago; this year's fest drew 300.

You can learn more about fat biking in Stowe on the Stowe Fatbikers Facebook page or on the fat bike section of stowemountainbike.com.

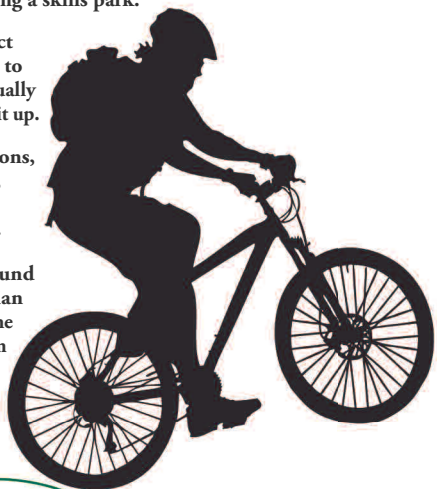
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## HOW THOSE BIG TIRES WORK

The average fat bike tire measures between 4 and 5 inches wide, double the width of the tire on a normal mountain bike. Those wide tires create more contact area between bike and snow, spreading out the combined weight of rider and bike. Fat bike tires also have very low pressure — between five and 10 PSI normally — to help create even more contact area and make for a smooth ride.

The result is a tire that acts more like a camel's foot than a horse's hoof. Instead of punching through like a normal bike would, a fat bike rides along the top of the snow.



## Trails are tremendously valuable

By the Stowe Reporter

A groundbreaking study last year confirmed what mountain bikers and hikers already know: Trails are tremendously valuable.

We don't know the whole story, but we did get this snapshot: More than \$30 million per year is poured into Vermont by out-of-staters who come to use the Catamount Trail, Long Trail, Kingdom Trails Association and Vermont All-Terrain Sportsman Association networks, according to the 2016 study by Camoin Associates.

The study, commissioned by those four networks and aided by a grant from the U.S. Department of

Agriculture's rural development program, broke down the biggest spending impacts from out-of-state trail users.

Food and drink topped the list, at \$5.6 million a year.

Next came overnight lodging at \$3.4 million, then transportation at \$2 million.

Equipment, recreation fees and gift purchases made up the rest.

In addition, the study says those trail systems account for 365 Vermont jobs per year.

The value of trails statewide is much, much larger, said George Twigg, who directs Congressman Peter Welch's Vermont office.

The numbers would have been much higher if the study had included the many other trails that

aren't part of the four trail networks, and if the study had taken into account money that comes from inside Vermont.

Still, the study was the first to quantify the economic benefits of trails in Vermont, according to Twigg.

"This shows that our trail systems are basically products," said Danny Hale, executive director of the Vermont All-Terrain Sportsman Association, at a conference hosted by the Green Mountain Club in Waterbury Center. "They're an economic driver."

"Much good comes of this," said Mike Snyder, commissioner of the

See 'Trails' on Page 17

## TRAIL MAINTENANCE IS VITAL

Trail-building is equal parts art and science — and sometimes there's a bit of luck involved too.

But trail maintenance, on the other hand, is a much simpler undertaking. Most of Stowe's trails are maintained by volunteers, with all but a few of the most technical projects being handled by everyday trail users.

Being part of the maintenance effort is not only simple, but it requires very little time on your part. Here's a quick list of ways you can get involved with helping to maintain the trails:

- Before spring has sprung — That time of year when the mountain has closed but the trails are still too wet to ride can be tough, but it's also an especially important time of year in terms of trail maintenance. Simply walking your favorite trail in the spring with a rake and saw is a great way to get ready for the season ahead.
- Attend a trail workday. Organized trail workdays are a great opportunity to meet some new folks and learn some basic trail-building skills. The Stowe Mountain Bike Club supplies tools at the organized trail workdays and crew leaders can lead small groups in tackling projects that range from bridge-building to rock armoring and new trail construction. The amount of work that can be accomplished by a small motivated crew never ceases to amaze.

- Bring your snippers! Here in the Maple Jungle, the greenery encroaches on the trails at a pretty alarming rate once the temperatures start to migrate upward. Stash a small set of snippers or pruners in your pack on your next ride or trail walk and trim back some of the leaves and branches that inevitably creep into our line of sight on the trails.

- Just say no to trail braiding. Trail braiding is a phenomenon whereby an alternate line or lines develop in the trail, generally around an obstacle. These ride-arounds can lead to widened trail corridors and erosion. So if you see it happening, you can grab some sticks, logs, etc., and

cover up the new line to encourage people to stay on the main trail and help preserve the line as it was originally intended to be ridden.

- Blowdowns. Living in the shadow of Vermont's tallest peak means we're subject to some pretty severe weather patterns and they inevitably lead to branches and debris on the trail. Clearing smaller stuff is pretty easy and takes only a minute. If you encounter a big tree or branch that warrants a chainsaw and/or multiple people to move it, get in touch with the folks at the Stowe Mountain Bike Club via the website or Facebook page.

- Drain the swamp! Precipitation management is a never-ending battle here in these parts. Thanks to the hard work and planning of some seasoned trail-building veterans, Stowe's trails are becoming more

and more resistant to moisture and precipitation. But there are still some outliers and places where water wants to pool. When you see those places, it's easy to clear any nearby culverts or diversions that may have been clogged with leaves. That will ensure the water has a place to divert and means the trails recover faster after it rains, snows, sleet, hails....

- Set up a trail workday with your co-workers. Many employers offer paid community-service days. It's a great way to escape the office for a few hours and go play in the woods — um, that is, it's a great team-building exercise. Contact the Stowe Mountain Bike Club/Stowe Trails Partnership for more info.

So don't be afraid to lend a hand in the trail maintenance crusade. Every bit helps. See you on the trails.



PHOTO BY LAUREN BEEMAN

Trail-maintenance workdays like this one, organized by the Stowe Mountain Bike Club, are a great way to become involved in and learn more about the local mountain bike trails network.

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PHOTOS BY MIKE HITELMAN

Mike Hitelman captures mountain bikers in motion on trails and in the air at a Whistler's Red Bull Joyride Crashworx event in British Columbia. He advises aspiring mountain bike photographers to use what they know and build on it to make their ideas happen.

## TRAILS AND TRIALS:

### Mountain bike photographer talks challenges, advice

By Caleigh Cross

Hopefully, Mike Hitelman takes his helmet with him on mountain bike rides as often as he takes his camera.

These days, the Stowe photographer takes his camera with him every time he's on his bike. He's afraid of missing that next key shot — "photographer's regret," he calls it.

"I always end up bringing it. You never know when it's going to be the perfect day for that shot," Hitelman said.

He'd left his camera at home one day, for fear of rain, then this happened: "It had gotten really dark out and there was a storm moving through, and the light got really cool in there, because the sky was black but the light was shining through at the top of Cady Hill. It was a euphoric moment." And there was Hitelman, without his camera. Lesson learned.

His passion for mountain biking came before his love of photography. Hitelman loves winter sports, but "I kind of needed something to do in the summer. I just kind of gravitated toward mountain biking. I've always spent time on a bike," but he never took to road biking. When he hopped on a mountain bike for the first time, it was love at first trail.

For Hitelman, mountain biking is a time to relax and reflect in the forest, not to work toward a speed or endurance goal.

Hitelman calls his weekend adventures "party rides."

"It doesn't matter how long we go; they're party rides. No one's timing us, no one's watching us. The group of people we ride with are all on the same page," he said.

Some of his favorite places to ride and shoot are the loops in

Stowe, such as the ones that connect to trails at Trapp Family Lodge and Adams Camp.

Adams Camp has more dynamic features than the other trails, so Hitelman likes to take action shots there. When it comes to scenic beauty, especially in the fall, he likes the trails at Trapp Family Lodge and the other loops in town.

When he's shooting mountain bikers or their natural habitat, Hitelman says his camera skills go back to basics. He focuses on the same things he focuses on in other types of photography, such as the light in the scene and any motion present, whether that's a biker screaming through the trees or the rustle of a few orange-tinged leaves in the wind.

"Concentrate on what you know and everything will fall into place," Hitelman said.

He found himself most challenged on a recent trip to Whistler, British Columbia, for a Red Bull Joyride Crankworx event, a slopestyle mountain biking competition.

He was invited there to take official photos of the event, and on his first day, he was shooting downhill bikers from a gondola.

"Initially, I was kind of, like, overwhelmed by the whole thing," Hitelman said. He was surrounded by photographers he'd admired and followed on Instagram. He texted his wife, telling her he was in over his head, and she reminded him of what he already knew: "Take a deep breath, do your thing and you'll fit in just right."

When he got home, Hitelman took the same relaxed approach to his mountain biking photography here in Stowe.

"I've learned through shooting really big mountain events that you never know what you're going to get until you just shoot. I've been given some really good advice over the years from all different types of sports photographer professionals. One of them in particular said if the camera's not covered in mud, getting dirty, or you're worried about breaking it, then you're not using it right," Hitelman said with a chuckle.

And for weekend warriors hoping to snag that perfectly Instagrammable biking shot?

"Just go out and shoot, and don't be afraid to take the wrong shot. There's no such thing as the wrong shot," or the wrong gear, pardon the pun. A cellphone photo is better than no photo at all.

"There's so many means of photography out there today. ... If you have an idea, make it happen."

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PHOTO BY LAUREN BEEMAN

Kyle Robin and Liam Newhouse, young mountain bikers, help clean a new trail corridor.

## TRAILS

Continued from Page 15

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. “These are impressive numbers. People are coming here, spending the night, putting heads in beds. It’s good for local businesses.”

Twigg said Welch will use the study to push a bill that would require the federal government to conduct a national economic analysis of the value of outdoor recreation.

In 2005, the Outdoor Industry Foundation commissioned the first of the economic studies to measure the industry’s heft. The initial report returned impressive statistics, but it was the follow-up study six years later that stirred the giant from its slumber: the outdoor recreation economy, all \$646 billion of it, was nearly as much as Americans paid for pharmaceuticals and motor vehicle sales and parts, combined.

Last year, the Welch bill sailed through both the House and Senate last year and was signed into law by President Obama on Dec. 8. The Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016 authorizes the Department of Commerce’s Bureau of

Economic Analysis to assess outdoor recreation’s contribution to the nation’s gross domestic product, or GDP.

“It’s one of the most significant policy decisions in support of our industry in the last ten years,” says Amy Roberts, executive director of the Outdoor Industry Association.

“It’s been done in other sectors,

but not this one,” Twigg said. “We know how valuable this sector is. It just makes sense to understand the economic impact.”

“We’re putting numbers on a long tradition in Vermont,” Snyder said. “It’s good to sharpen a pencil and put the numbers together and acknowledge that this has impact like everything else.”



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# THANK YOU!

The Stowe Mountain Bike Club would like to extend a huge thank you to all of the members and partners that enable this organization to continue building, maintaining and protecting Stowe's ever-expanding trail network.

If you haven't yet had a chance to join or renew for 2017, it's not too late! The season is just getting started and your membership contribution is as meaningful as ever. We're proud to represent Stowe's mountain bike community and look forward to more great things in the years to come. Happy trails!

[www.stowemountainbike.com](http://www.stowemountainbike.com)

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