



RIDE 2020

# RIDE

*The greater Mt. Mansfield region · Stowe, Waterbury, Morrisville and beyond*

RIDE IS SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE STOWE REPORTER



## This is the ninth annual RIDE section in the Stowe Reporter, and like everything else about this year, things have changed

**R**IDE, perhaps the first mountain-biking special section in a New England newspaper, was launched because it was clear the sport was taking off in the Stowe area. People were out in the woods, building trails and bridges and then trying them out, and then celebrating with a well-earned adult beverage afterward.

A highly individual sport quickly broadened, first into the Stowe Mountain Bike Club and now into the Stowe Trails Partnership, with sponsors and members, volunteer

workdays and a youth riding academy.

Year by year, the sport built. And suddenly, between national politics and the coronavirus crisis, things got complicated.

- The U.S. imposed tariffs on goods imported from China, and that included lots of mountain bikes and mountain bike parts.

- The prices of bikes and bike parts have spiked upward. If you can find a new bike, it's going to cost you. Used bikes could be a hot market, provided parts are available.

- Social distancing required during the pandemic has cut into volunteer workdays and social gatherings in a highly social sport.

- Money is harder to come by; a lot of the biggest supporters of mountain biking efforts have been hit hard by pandemic-related restrictions on economic activity.

- And, in some parts of Vermont, trail networks are being disrupted over landowner objections to trail use. Negotiations are under way, but it's tough to build

a trail network exclusively on public property or on conserved land that's required to be open for public use.

This year's RIDE section explores some of those consequences of the pandemic and other issues.

Nevertheless, mountain biking itself remains a blast. We'll introduce you to some people who wanted to stay safe in the pandemic, but wanted to take to the trails, too — and so they made their own, on their own land.

And when things return to nor-

mal, as they one day will, mountain biking is sure to regain its joyful progression.

— Tom Kearney

### ON THE COVER:

Madeline Doiron, a competitive mountain biker from Stowe, takes a spin on her family's backyard track. See story, Page 17.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has hit our communities hard, and it will take time for all of us to recover, including your hyper-local community newspaper. We'd like to keep our reporters on the ground to empower our communities, to encourage pride of place, to strengthen civic participation, and to fight disinformation.

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## Volunteers come through for the Stowe trail network

By Roger Murphy  
President, Stowe Trails Partnership

Each year, members of the Stowe Trails Partnership dedicate hundreds of hours to prepare the trails for the riding season.

Trail stewards walk every foot of the over 30 miles of public and privately owned trails in our network, identifying areas for repair or sustainability concerns, and during the next couple of months individual and family group volunteers, board members, and paid trail crew ensure that the riding will live up to our mission statement: To partner with the community in building and maintaining a world-class trail network.

This year, we also had trails under construction in Adams Camp, trail recovery from a logging operation in another pod, and plans in the works for new trails that will hopefully connect different pods with singletrack instead of road.

With all of these things that needed to happen for our season to get off to a stellar start, one would think that the impact of COVID-19 would be felt on our trails in addition to other parts of our community — schools, restaurants, small businesses, etc. We could have forgiven ourselves had things gotten off to a slower start than normal, given the challenges and uncertainty of it all.

Thankfully, that was not the

case. Community members, finding that they had some previously unavailable spare time to help prepare the network, reached out and offered their help.

Volunteers showed up in remarkable numbers for our COVID-aware trail work days, excited that they could be a part of the early season magic that is full of anticipation.

Travel restrictions and a dry spring meant that there were so many bikers, hikers, dog walkers and other trail users eager to get on the trails that we managed to really live up to the most important part of our name: Partnership. So, from this avid rider and board member, thank you!

I have been thinking a lot about how trails bring our com-

munity together.


All of the stages of life of a trail — the planning, fundraising, construction, enjoyment and maintenance — require input from the whole community. Over the years, we have developed and continue to care for vital relationships with the Town of Stowe, the Stowe Land Trust, Trapp Family Lodge and other private landowners, because without their support, the trail map would look vastly different.

These folks know the importance of trails to the community, and it's not just recreational, economic, or conservation. It's part of our identity. Whether they are covered with snow, dirt, rock or even pavement, trails are an integral part of the Stowe experience

in any season.

Seeing kids out on bikes with friends, some visitors checking out the trail map at Cady Hill, and the wide smiles of riders earned on a high-speed descent on Flo or Bears keeps me enthusiastic about the work Stowe Trails Partnership is spearheading. In lives that for many of us have become isolated, the trails provide an opportunity to remind us that we are part of a greater community, whether that be the Stowe community, the community of outdoor enthusiasts, Vermonters, or simply humans who like to get out and breathe fresh air and work our bodies as they were meant to be worked

See 'Murphy' on Page 5

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## MURPHY

Continued from Page 4

instead of crouching over a computer and attending one more Zoom meeting.

When I get on my bike and start climbing, I can zero in on the experience and moment at hand, and I remember that things are going to be OK, and hopefully soon.

There's still a lot of work to be done, from the micro level of fixing drainages or repairing bridges, to the macro level bringing more diversity to both our membership and leadership within the trails partnership. As we work on those important and transformational objectives, though, we will never lose sight of our overarching mission, which is maintaining a partnership that has provided for our shared success over the years.

I hope to see you all on the trails this summer — biking, running, walking, bird watching or whatever activity gets you outside and in the woods. I'll be sure to give you a little space, but not so much that we can't share a smile and a little conversation.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Top, a band of volunteers beams after finishing a bridge project on the Stowe trail network. Above, Roger Murphy celebrates a good day on the trails.

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COURTESY PHOTO

There's a magical atmosphere out there on the woods trails, a place to relax with space to breathe.

## In this trying time, access to green spaces is essential

By Rachel Fussell  
Executive Director, Stowe Trails Partnership

The outdoors has always been my happy place — a place where I can relax, let go, seek out adventure, and find space to breathe.

Whether I am trail running under a canopy of green leaves, taking a dip in a nearby swimming hole, or mountain biking through the lush maple jungle, I am met with a deep sense of gratitude. This gratitude stems from the fact that I live in a place

where access to the outdoors is all but guaranteed for me.

And as I duck and weave my bike through the dense fern understory that blankets the woods this time of year, I am reminded that my access to miles of multi-use trails was not built overnight. Stowe is conveniently located at the base of Mount Mansfield and is host to a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities. Historically, Stowe has also been forward-thinking, in that our leaders saw the value in public outdoor recreation and capitalized on our

diverse natural terrain.

Our success as a trail organization and the trails I ride every day were built on the backs of the leaders who came before me, who had the foresight to see that trails and public green spaces build community during good times and bad. During this unusual and trying time in human history, access to green spaces has become essential for so many around the world.

The generosity of our land access partners and their willingness to support our shared vision of promoting outdoor recreation is a

constant source of inspiration to me and our organization.

Even though the outdoors may be a place that some people visit in order to decompress or become the best version of themselves, simply being outside has historically been a challenge for ethnically diverse communities and people of color. And the more outdoor spaces become a necessity during these challenging times, the more passionate Stowe Trails Partnership becomes about

See 'Fussell' on Page 7



## A sense of what makes mountain biking so much fun

*Editor's note: We've published this in the past, but for newcomers to mountain biking, here's a great explanation of what makes the sport so appealing.*

By Biddle Duke

The Stowe area is all about interesting, tricky, long, challenging, technical, beautiful singletrack riding. Add to that: jumps, ramps,

drops, log-rides and other technical features.

And Stowe is about riding in the woods, in nature, following trails up and down and taking forks in the road that you might not have noticed the last time around.

Great riding around here is about time to explore, to get a little lost, to go see where some trail takes you, to hook up with friends on a ride you've never done.

Singletrack riding in the New England woods is a rush, it's a thrill, and it can be a root-jostling challenge. But, at its core, mountain biking in Stowe is in keeping with the nature of so much about life here — it's intimate.

For the most part, you don't ride armored and you don't soar through the air, but you can go fast, and you can take risks. And for those who do neither of those, you can still

ride, and ride deep into the woods, and see a lot of nature.

You can also see mind-boggling trail engineering: long, narrow, winding bridges, rock ramps, stone walls, banked turns. Trail builders have looked for features, such as rocks and logs, to challenge and assist riders through sections. On Kimmer's and Hardy's Haul trails, both part of the Adams Camp loop, you'll find it all — little hops and jumps, long bridge sections, bermed and banked turns and drops.

Near the bottom of Kimmer's, you come flying around a right-hand turn and face a challenging choice: up a 6-inch-wide, 15-foot ramp and over and down a huge rock, or around it. If you slip off,

you're likely to skin some knees, if not break a bone or two.

Trail builders have incorporated these little detours — which you have to look for — all over the place. Some are more obvious, or treacherous, than others. Keep your eyes peeled.

The best way to find the best features is to ask, but some of the most well-engineered rides are Bear's, behind the Golden Eagle (and the trails around Bear's), the Pipeline from Stowe High School up to Trapp Family Lodge, and the trails at Adams Camp. Others include the mind-boggling array at Perry Hill in Waterbury and the Wall off the back of Barnes Hill.

Have fun, be careful and be courteous.



COURTESY PHOTO

Rachel Fussell on her bike, outdoors in her happy place.

### FUSSELL

Continued from Page 6

working diligently to create a welcoming trail community for everyone, forever. We cannot succeed without one another — our humanity is tied together, and one of the areas we can influence most directly is through our organization.

Now is certainly a time for action; so, in addition to our member and volunteer-driven committees — such as the Trails

Committee — we created a new Equity and Inclusion Committee. This new committee was created to formalize our commitment to the issues of equity and inclusion within our organization and the outdoor recreation community at large, and to pursue strategic avenues that support and improve these topics in our membership and programs.

There is so much more work to be done, but we can start by increasing our commitment to achieve diversity, equity and inclu-

sion in the outdoors by four action items — listening, advocating, partnering and promoting — and we hope to be held accountable to these terms through our community of members and trail users. I implore you to join us in this work, as it is urgent that each of us to do our part to lead in this transformation.

After all, everyone deserves to have the outdoors be their happy place.

Thanks for being on this ride with us.

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## Bike sales have exploded leaving scarce supply

By Josh O'Gorman  
Staff Writer

Be it on a paved road, gravel or a wooded trail, cycling of all types has exploded in recent years.

And with the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people are looking to remain active while also maintaining a safe social distance from one another.

But, if you're looking for a new bike — or accessories or repairs for the one you own — you'll have to be patient.

"I've never been busier," said Hank Glowiak, owner of Chuck's Bikes in Morrisville. For the past few months, Glowiak has offered curbside service for customers looking for something new, or maintenance for their beloved bike.

"At first, we were just busy on Saturdays, because kids were still in school, kind of," said Glowiak — children have been learning remotely since school buildings were closed in mid-March. "Now, with the kids out of school, we see kids every day. It's been chaos. Every day has been nuts."

While bicycles in general are flying off the shelves — rolling out of the showrooms — mountain bikes and gravel bikes have been particularly popular, said Caleb Magoon, owner of Power Play Sports, just around the corner from Chuck's Bikes in Morrisville.

"In general, the whole bike industry is seeing a boom. People are seeing what they can do alone



PHOTO BY GORDON MILLER

Chuck's Bikes in Morrisville has been busy, just like all the other local bike shops, right through the virus crisis.

and with social distance. With mountain biking, it seems like the sky is the limit," Magoon said. "It's hard to see where the market will top out. The mountain bike culture

here — and I grew up in Hyde Park with the mountain biking culture, when it was really small and underground — it seemed to simmer and was slowly building. Now, it's exploded, and I can't see a ceiling to it yet."

For someone entering the sport for the first time, it is common to experience sticker shock, with high-end bikes easily going for \$4,000. But like that adage — buy once, cry once — you get what you pay for.

Also, customers who are looking to dip their toe in the sport might have no choice but to buy a high-end bike, said Matt Niklaus, primary owner and manager of Bootlegger Bikes in Jeffersonville.

"Bike dealers can't get bikes in the \$500 to \$2,000 range," Niklaus said. "We've had a lot of times where someone comes in looking for something in the \$2,500 range

and walk out with a bike in the \$4,000 range."

COVID-19 — one of the driving factors in the sport's popularity this spring — is also behind the current shortage in stock. Many bikes — as well as parts and accessories — are manufactured in China, which shut down much of its manufacturing earlier this year in an attempt to quell the spread of the virus.

"When production stopped in January and February, that last round for 2020 wasn't made. So, bikes and parts that usually arrive at my door in May or June, that didn't happen," Magoon said.

Two months ago, he couldn't get any bikes at all from manufacturers Giant or Trek, despite being an authorized dealer.

"Bikes will be lean through the summer, but it's not a total desert yet," Magoon said. "It's good for inventories to flush out, and it's what's going to allow bike shops

to survive."

Back at Chuck's Bikes, Glowiak noted that big bike dealers engaged in behavior seen in supermarkets earlier this spring — hoarding.

"Big shops bought up everything, like toilet paper, so the smaller shops are screwed," he said.

However, the lack of stock has been a boon for dealers such as Niklaus, who has fielded customer inquiries from as far away as Nevada.

"We've shipped bikes down the East Coast and out to the West Coast," he said.

Not only are shops short on items, they're also short-handed, and are scrambling to keep up with repairs.

"We didn't hire new people, so the timing on service and repairs is taking longer than usual," Niklaus said. "We're working hard to keep up volume and we're asking people to please be patient."

"IN GENERAL, THE WHOLE BIKE INDUSTRY IS SEEING A BOOM.

PEOPLE ARE SEEING WHAT THEY CAN DO ALONE AND WITH SOCIAL DISTANCE.

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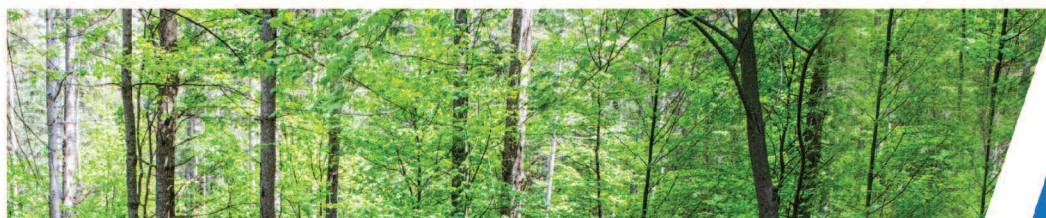
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# On the trail: Dos and don'ts

Most of these things are obvious – all it takes is respect for other riders, trail users and nature – but just in case, some reminders from the Stowe Trails Partnership.

- 1. Don't use the trails when they are wet. Walk your bike through wet and muddy areas – not around; that makes the trail wider.
- 2. Ride with care. Excessive speed, skidding and hard braking cause erosion.
- 3. Keep single track single. Vegetation around trails is sensitive and easy to damage

- or destroy. Avoid widening the trail by taking care when passing others.
- 4. Taking a break? Move off the trail so others can pass.
- 5. Share the trails. They're for everyone. When encountering other users, such as hikers, families, dog-walkers, be friendly and courteous.
- 6. Don't leave a trace. Pack out what you pack in.
- 7. Riding on private land? Be considerate and quiet to ensure continued access.

- 8. Ride open trails. Respect trail closures – and keep an eye out for updates on the Stowe Trails Partnership website. Don't trespass.
- 9. Control your bicycle. Ride in control and within your limits.
- 10. Yield appropriately. Let your fellow trail users know you're coming and try to anticipate others as you ride around corners. Riders should yield to other non-riders.
- 11. Who has the right of way? Riders traveling downhill should yield to ones headed

- uphill, unless the trail is clearly signed for one-way or downhill-only traffic. You can never go wrong by taking the initiative to yield.
- 12. Make way for animals. Give them enough room and time to adjust to you.
- 13. Promote goodwill among all your fellow riders, and have fun!

Sources: Stowe Trails Partnership, Black Hills Mountain Bike Association, International Mountain Bicycling Association.

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COURTESY PHOTOS

Above, volunteers with the Stowe Trails Partnership finish off a woods bridge. Below, they fine-tune a hill trail.



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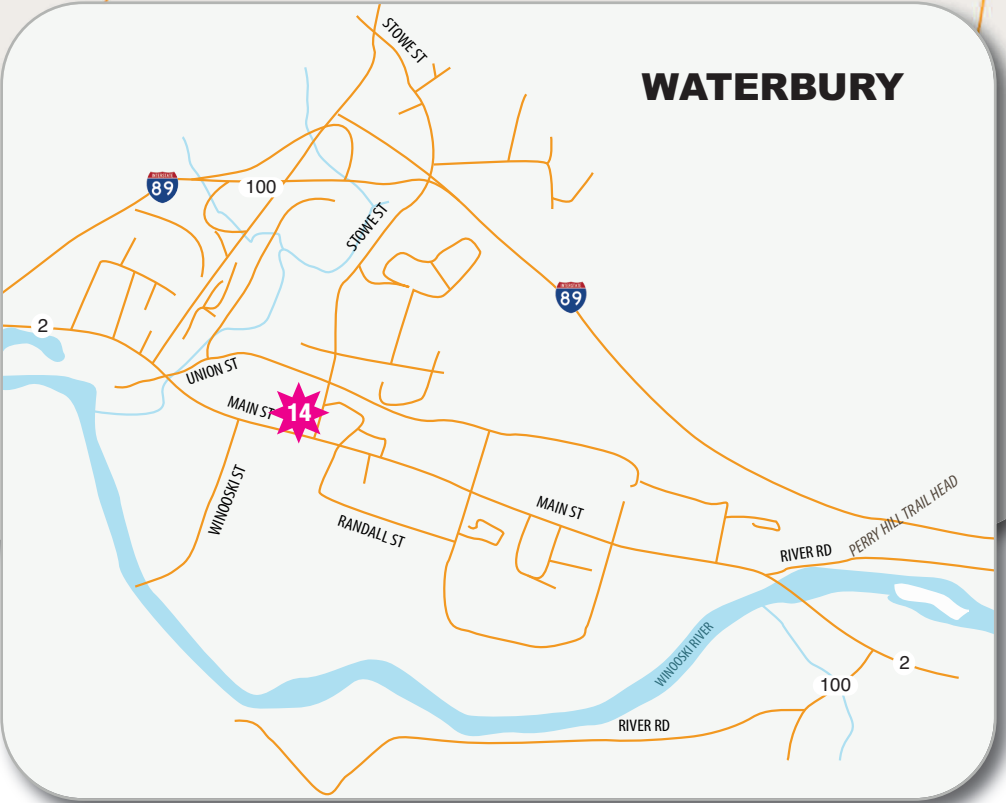
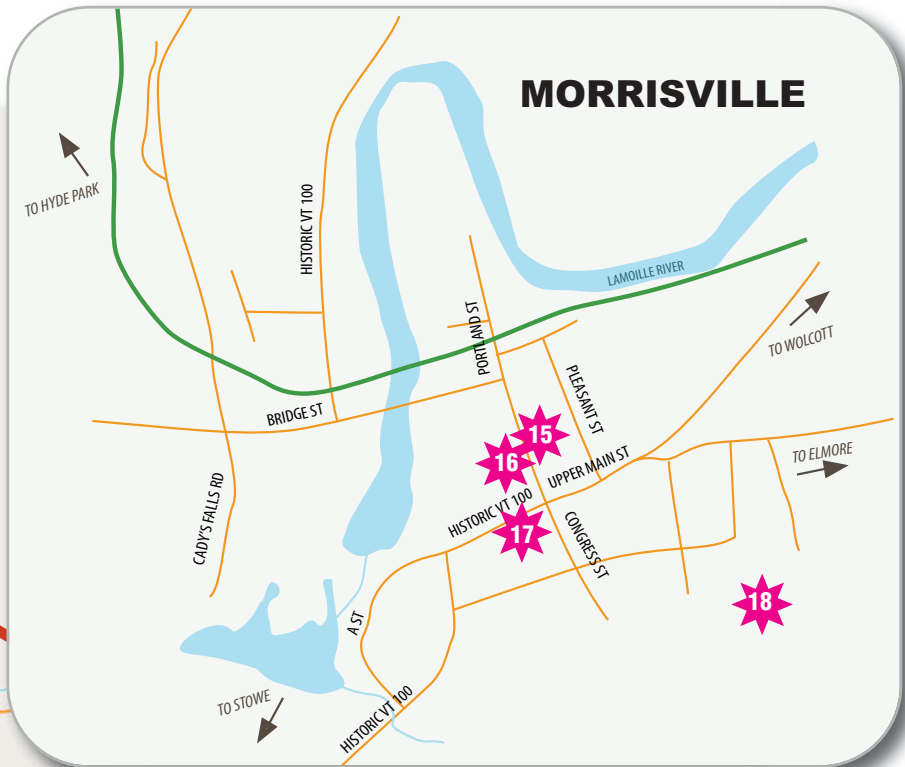
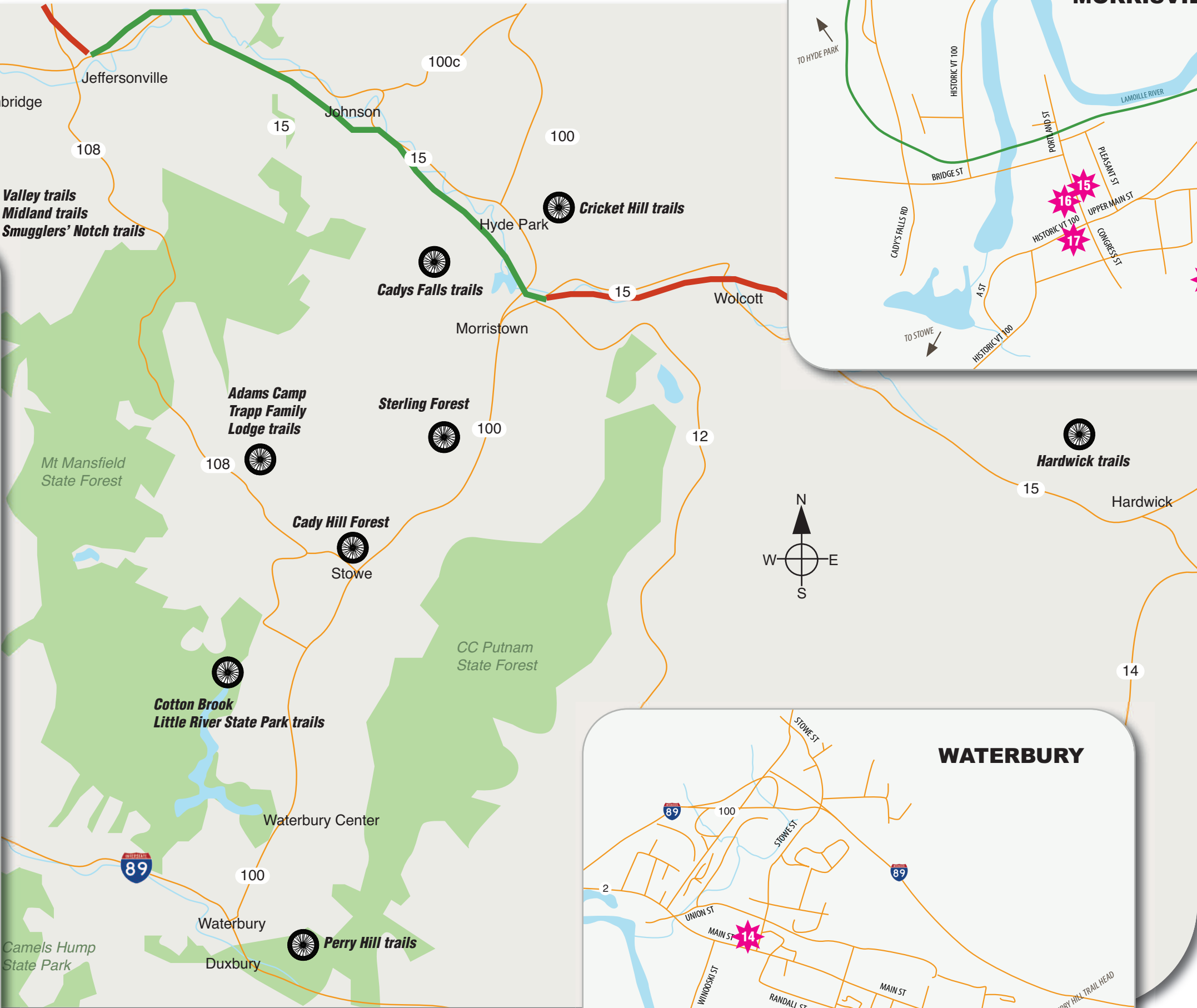
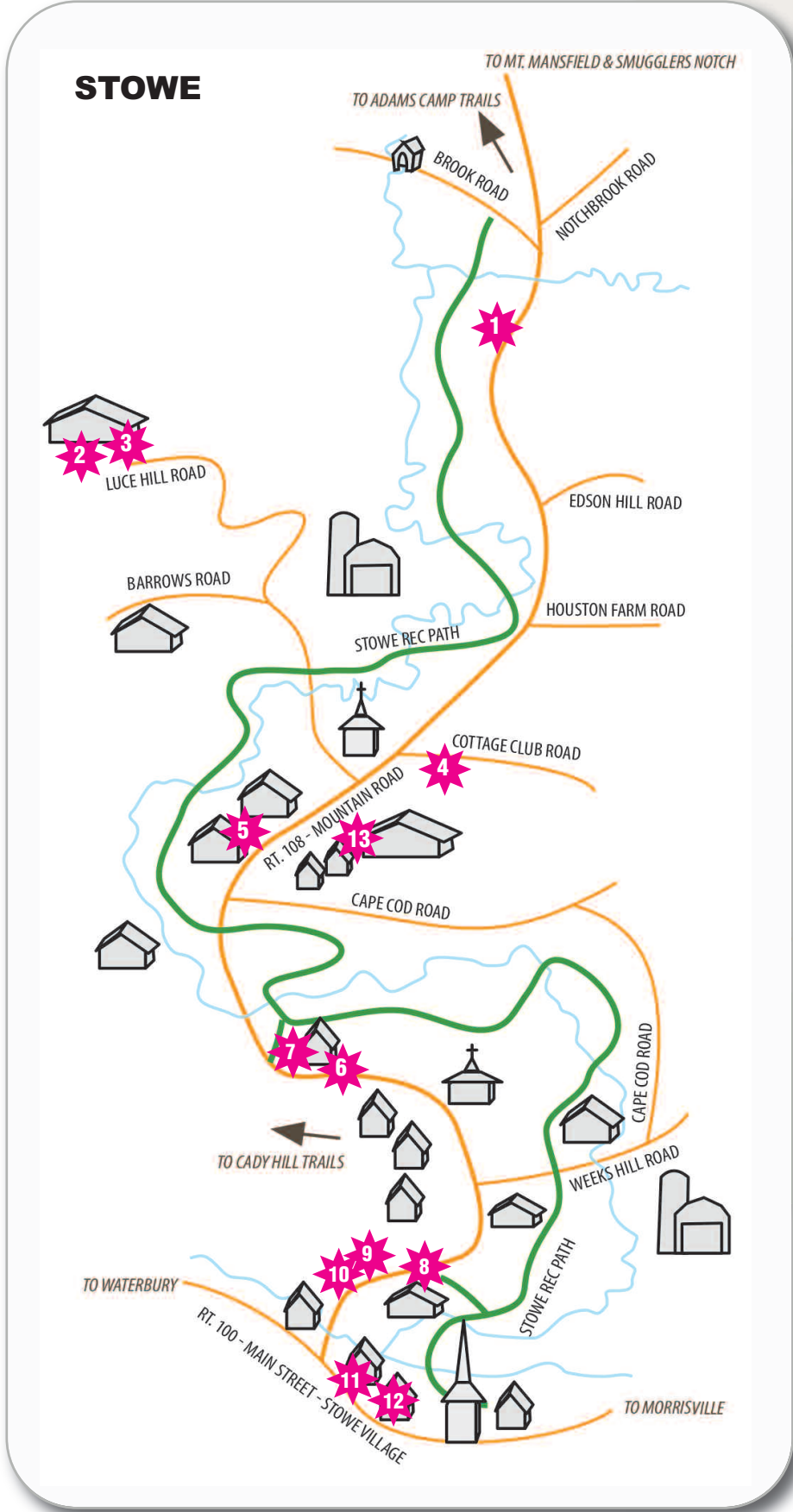
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MAP LEGEND

- RIDE Advertisers
- Mountain Bike Trail
- Rail Trail - open
- Rail Trail - planned



## A Way Forward:

### Kingdom Trails' plan to keep trails open

*Editor's note: The boom in mountain biking has led to some friction with landowners. Here's a look at how a Vermont group is working to solve these issues.*

By The Mountain Flyer

In January, New England-area mountain bikers were devastated to learn that access to key portions of the Kingdom Trails network in Lyndonville had been closed to mountain biking.

That eye-opening move, spurred by decisions of private landowners to close access to their land on Darling Hill within the network overseen by Kingdom Trail Association, was followed by another blow shortly after: The New England Mountain Bike Association canceled its annual NEMBA Fest slated for the same location in June.

Both actions cast a pall over the mountain bike community, leaving some to wonder what the future would hold for riding access in a part of the U.S., where the majority of routes go through private land.

The nonprofit Kingdom Trails Association, based out of East Burke, was originally developed to help navigate those very concerns. Founded in 1994, the association has focused its mission on provid-



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MOUNTAIN FLYER

**Youngsters learn to ride precisely across the kinds of bridges they'll find in the woods.**

ing recreation and educational opportunities by managing, maintaining and building trails to foster the health of the community, surrounding environment and regional economy.

This Trail Anatomy report looks

at the challenges and solutions to accessing Kingdom Trails Association trails on private land. Here, the association's executive director, Abby Long, talks about its initiatives going forward.

- Trail system: 100-plus miles of nonmotorized, multiuse, four-season trails for all ability levels, covering an estimated 30 square miles.

- Locations: Burke, Lyndonville and Kirby in Caledonia County and East Haven in Essex County.

- Managed by: Volunteer board of directors made up of community leaders, business owners, trail users and Kingdom Trails Association landowners.

- The challenge: Balance the needs of landowners on trails that are seeing a rapid rise in use, particularly mountain biking. The increasing number of trail users has put pressure on rural village infrastructure, including the land, parking, local amenities and in-town pedestrian/rider safety.

Mountain bikers who are furthermore not practicing proper trail etiquette are causing conflict with other trail users and landowners, especially in high-use spots such as the heart of the system at the Darling Hill Ridge area.

- The solution: "The solution is listening," Long said. "To proceed responsibly, have a sustainable future and be good stewards, we have to be engaged in the community who so graciously host us and listen to the landowners who allow us to even exist."

Long outlined three main action items on which the association is moving forward and a fourth action item/opportunity that presented itself after the December 2019 closure of lands.

- 1) A trail network capacity study.
- 2) The development of a code of conduct for trail users.
- 3) A ramped-up trail ambassador program.
- 4) The association's purchase and conservation of nearly 270 acres in the Heaven's Bench area of Darling Hill, one of the heavily used zones.

#### Trails capacity study

Kingdom Trails Association was awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant and, in January, launched the Kingdom Trails Network Capacity Study, led by SE Group, a recreation consultant from Vermont and Colorado. The goal is to address growth issues and capacity of the network and enhance the network's positive impact on the host communities.

The study will explore a new

See 'Kingdom' on Page 15

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## KINGDOM

Continued from Page 14

welcome center location, trail access improvements, connections and crossings and opportunities to disperse users, as these issues will help relieve pressure and stress caused by an increasing number of visitors.

The planning process so far has included a public workshop in February attended by more than 200 community members; an online survey that resulted in more than 950 responses; and meetings with businesses, landowners, road crews, town select boards, first responders, trail users and other community members. The study is a yearlong process and recommendations are expected to be adopted by the end of the year.

### Code of conduct

The code of conduct for trail users will go above and beyond the existing trail rules and policies that are already posted on the trails association website, maps, signage and at trailheads. The board of directors envisions something “bold and catchy,” Long said.

More importantly, trail users and Kingdom Trails Association members will read and initial the code of conduct, and the association will hold users accountable if they’re not acting in compliance.

The code of conduct will be shared with partnering organizations, including the Vermont

Mountain Bike Association, New England Mountain Bike Association, Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance, additional bike and outdoor gear shops and Borderlands (a mountain bike collaborative that includes several northern border New England states).

“Having a more uniform message out there among the region will only help reach a broader audience,” Long said. “It’s comforting to know it’s not just Kingdom Trails willy-nilly making something up. We’re being responsible by having a bunch of people at the table, with different voices and perspectives to help us create this together.”

### Trail ambassadors

The trails association has had an ambassador program, with about 10 staff members working Friday-Sunday and Monday holidays throughout the summer, but those staffers typically have been pulled from the trails to help with parking concerns.

“We were no longer a presence on the trails, educating people and keeping people safe and holding people accountable for their behavior. So we needed to take a step back, revamp that and get our priorities shifted,” Long said.

Seeking advice from many resources, such as the Catskill State Park in New York, the association re-envisioned its ambassador program and plan to station ambassa-

See ‘Kingdom’ on Page 16

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Young mountain bikers smile proudly during an outing at the Kingdom Trails, a big network based in East Burke.

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## KINGDOM

Continued from Page 15

dors at trailheads, where they will engage and educate trail users, run through the code of conduct and leave-no-trace policies, and inform them that they're on private land and to be respectful.

An additional crew of ambassadors will be on foot and bike, making strategic rounds on the trails, so recreationists know that no matter where they are, somebody will be close, enforcing the code of conduct. Upon the recommendation of the Vermont Horse Council, Kingdom Trails Association may also have an ambassador on horseback to help teach trail users proper etiquette when encountering horses.

### Land purchase

In February, Kingdom Trails Association bought nearly 270 acres in Lyndonville that was in federal receivership after having been acquired from Ariel Quiros, the disgraced former owner of Burke Mountain Resort and Jay Peak Resort who is facing charges in an investor fraud scandal.

The land near Darling Hill abuts that of the private landowners who, last December, had closed off access to all modes of cycling (on dirt and snow).

"Not only can we conserve the natural resources on the ridge — the outdoor recreation opportunities, the

stunning landscape — but we can also be good neighbors because it actually abuts the neighbors who have restricted access," Long said. "They want less traffic and congestion, and that property was at risk of becoming a 10-house development with driveways and roads. We didn't want to see that, and we know that they didn't want to see that. It was a big win for the community."

Working with the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the association will conserve and protect 270 acres of this land in perpetuity. The purchase ensures access to roughly 5 miles of existing trails, including Heaven's Bench, and will help mitigate bike traffic on the roads to avoid dangerous situations between bikes and cars.

As of now, the focus for this land is not on building additional trails or installing welcome centers or other infrastructure.

"We're focusing on proving and showing our landowners that we're listening, learning and then taking action," Long said. "We need to prove to them that we're making responsible decisions. We're not reacting; we're responding, rather. We're being thoughtful and taking into account our community's and our landowner feedback, then going forth."

*The Mountain Flyer / The Mountain Bike Journal is based in Jeffersonville and Crested Butte, Colo.*



## Stuck at home, biking families build their own trails

By Mike Verillo  
Staff Writer

When the pandemic abruptly slammed the door on normal life in Vermont in mid-March, mountain bikers were just getting the itch to ride. Snow was melting, trails would have been drying out soon and roads would be open for cyclists to get into shape.

And then: Stay home, stay safe. Wear a mask, keep your distance.

What's a mountain biker to do?

If you have enough land, you can build trails for your family.

That's what the Doiron and Macdonald families did in Stowe. Other people did, too, but weren't eager to disclose their trail networks to the public because they could lose that safety factor if other riders discovered them.

In the early weeks of staying home, staying safe. Lots of workplaces were closed. The schools were shut down. It was easy to go stir-crazy.

McKee Macdonald and his family kept busy for a while with their sugar shack, but then needed something else to do. Macdonald grew up in Stowe, and as an adult had developed a passion for mountain biking. Then, he had an idea.

"As the sugaring season wore down and we were stuck at home with this virus, I said, 'Let's build a mountain biking trail back here,'" Macdonald said. His 8-year-old twins, Tallulah and Matilda, were delighted by the idea.

They got to work, shaping trails that weave in and out of the sugar maples. Using a yard rake, a steel rake, and a shovel, they built an easy-going loop around a big maple tree.

"They were so into it," Macdonald said, and the one loop wasn't enough.

"They started pointing in different directions," he said; let's build a trail here, let's build a trail there.

Eventually, their backyard loop around-the-maple loop expanded into a web of trails connecting with other local runs.

Macdonald refined the trails, adding banks when he noticed the kids getting to the trees on certain turns, and repurposing fallen lumber for trail features.

For instance, he took one log, made a few modifications and added particle board to make a mellow teeter-totter. Another log formed a ramped bridge resting less than 6 inches off the ground.

Those aren't the kind of features an avid biker would look for, but they were a good start for the kids.

"I wanted to make some features they could get more comfortable



COURTESY PHOTOS

The 8-year-old Macdonald twins, Tallulah and Matilda, helped build family mountain biking trails. Below, the sign for the TNM Loop they designed together.

on," he said. "It's a backyard-fun confidence builder."

The girls got to name their trails, too. Matilda designed Mushroom Alley, a route looping around a tree covered in mushrooms. Tallulah designed a trail called Maple Dream. The original loop, a joint effort, is named TNM Loop, named after the twins.

There's some fun for the adults, too. An unnamed trail ventures into steeper, more difficult terrain.

"It has a good little tricky climb section and a fun downhill," Macdonald said. It's his own personal run, and where he gets his legs in shape for the season ahead.

### Building help

The Doiron family got some professional help to boost their home track to a different level.

They started with a track around

the property with a couple of bridges and features, built by Brooke Scatchard of Sinusity trails. It was used mostly by dad Jason and the kids after he got off work.

"Our kids got really into riding and started riding the public trails," Ellisa Doiron said. Their three kids, Madeline, Lillian and James, are avid bikers.

"When we put in the trail, I think that was my husband's dream," she said.

Now, they have a pump track on their property — a dirt track with high-speed, open rollers and large banks — that the Stowe Mountain Bike Academy uses to train.

Their oldest, Madeline, bikes competitively. The family traveled to Whistler Mountain in British Columbia for the

See 'Backyard' on Page 18







COURTESY PHOTOS

The Doiron family's trail network includes a pump track built by Brooke Scatchard of Sinuosity trails. The Stowe Mountain Bike Academy uses it, too. Below, Madeline Doiron, a competitive biker, takes a turn.

## BACKYARD

Continued from Page 17

Crankworx competition, where Madeline raced in the enduro and B-line events. They were there for a week, and Madeline started using the pump track. She loved it, and she signed up for the pump track race, too.

"She just got better with every round and ended up placing third," Doiron said.

Last fall, Doiron commissioned Scatchard to build the family's pump track.



See 'Backyard' on Page 19





A woods trail through the Macdonald family's property in Stowe.

COURTESY PHOTO

## BACKYARD

Continued from Page 18

While the pump track riding leans more toward BMX than traditional downhill biking, Doiron said a lot of the skills needed to ride it effectively translate directly to biking through mountain woods.

While the stay-at-home order was in place, the pump track was a great outlet for the family, and Doiron is grateful they have their bikes and track and backyard trails in such a crazy time.

"I think a lot of kids were finding things to jump off and ride through; it was a very popular thing to do in quarantine," she said.

And, right now, it's all about having a good time.

"Right now, not having any competitions on the calendar, it's really

just riding for fun," Doiron said. "Silver linings."

With pandemic restrictions gradually lifting from sports, Doiron and the mountain bike academy are looking to the pump track again.

Biking camps started a couple weeks ago, with limited enrollment, so bikers won't be crowded together.

"We're thinking about limiting groups to four," she said, but the real issue is travel. The academy would bring the kids and their bikes to the track in a sprinter van, but having coaches and kids in a tight space doesn't line up with safety recommendations.

So, the academy might have parents drive the bikers, and pedaling there isn't too far a trek.

"It's just figuring out those logistic issues," Doiron said.

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If you haven't yet had a chance to join or renew for 2020, 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!

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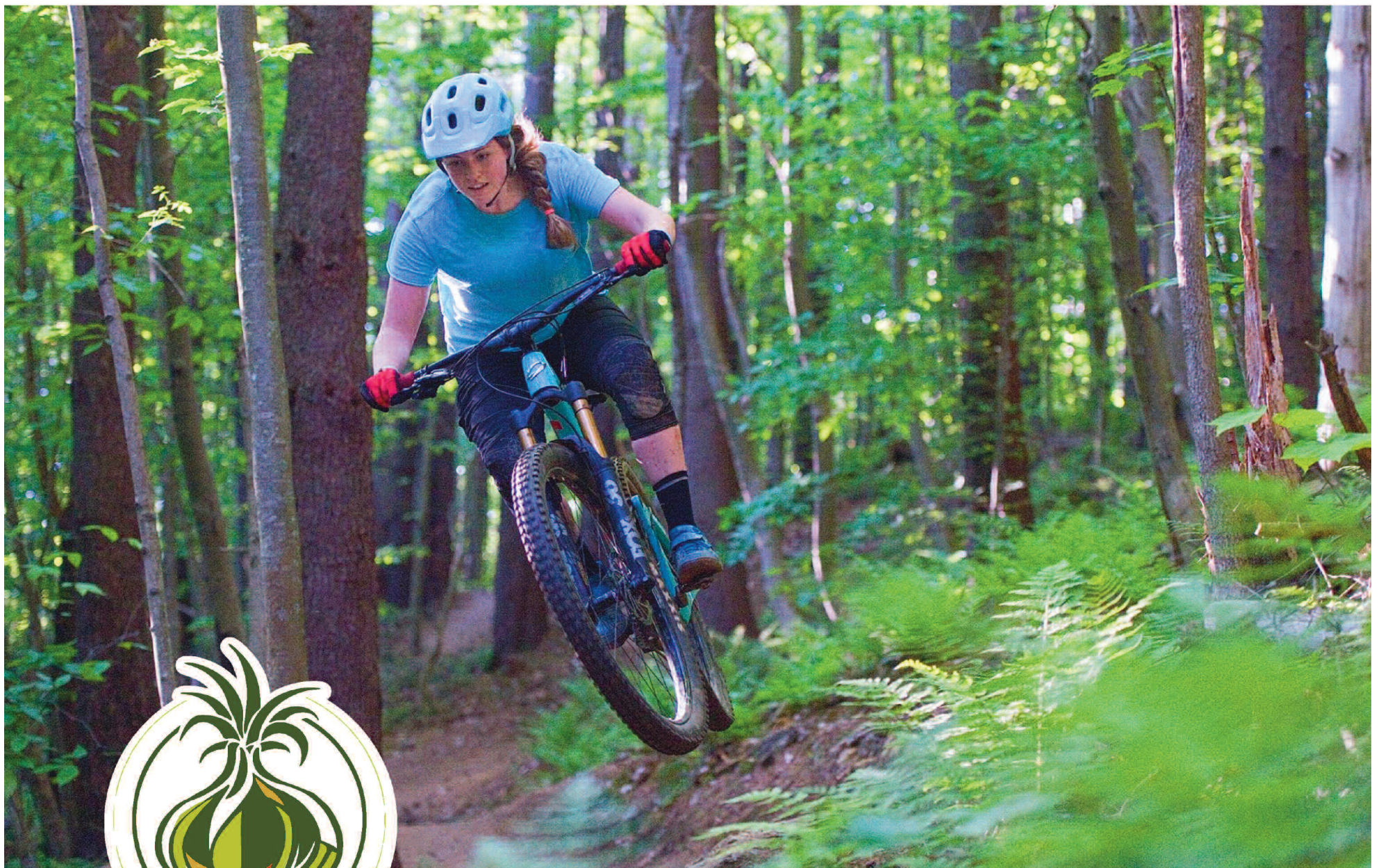


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