

Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT)--Universal Accessibility Project

Project Overview

Opened in 2020, the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) is a 2.8-mile, flat, family-friendly walking trail along the Ottauquechee River that offers an exposure to Woodstock's beauty and provides our community with abundant opportunities for exercise and river access. Originating at the East End Park, this low impact grass trail runs along the edge of fields on private property with some of the return loop located on the old Woodstock railroad bed.

This project will upgrade the first 0.3 miles of ORT to enable universal accessibility. The remainder of the trail has to remain "natural" given it is in the Ottauquechee River floodway. By making ORT accessible, Woodstock will have a trail along the river that is usable by everyone regardless of physical abilities.

There are two elements to this project: 1) to create an ADA-compliant ramp at the trailhead combined with the hardening of the trail material to meet accessibility standards; and 2) to upgrade the trailhead section of ORT to provide a better first impression, which will enhance the experience and usage.

Grant Request

\$20,050.00

Total Project Budget

\$28,625.00

Applicant Information

Name of Applicant / Organization / Business

Ottauquechee River Trail (owned by the Village/Town of Woodstock)

Mailing Address

31 The Green, Woodstock, VT 05091

Name of Project Coordinator

Tom Weschler (6936 N. Bridgewater Road, Woodstock, VT 05091)

Contact's Email Address

Project Description/Budget

Telephone

8022910134

Organization's Website URL

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080796572580>

EIN

03-6003791

Applicant / Organizational Description

Five years ago a group of approximately 15 people came together to develop a walking trail in Woodstock's East End. The group's mission was to create a 3.0 mile, flat, family-friendly walking trail near Woodstock's center of town that had extensive interaction (both views as well as direct access) with the Ottauquechee River. Driving this goal were three principal factors: 1) Woodstock is a town bifurcated by the Ottauquechee River but there was limited public access; 2) Woodstock is blessed with numerous outdoor resources, but there were no "flat" walking trail; 3) The town's leadership felt that Woodstock's East End was underutilized and that a walking trail could encourage development.

On Labor Day 2020 the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) opened. The founding group had been successful to gain local and state approvals, agreement by the property owners, funding from Woodstock's Economic Development Commission (EDC) and trail construction by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance.

Woodstock and Woodstock's EDC wants to continue to develop Woodstock's East End. They feel this area of town is a priority. The creation of ORT was felt to be a critical piece to the puzzle since many studies have shown that walking trails along rivers to be a key success factor that encourages further economic development. Also, the combination of ORT with the new East End Park would greatly leverage usage/visitation. Recent construction/development projects in Woodstock's east end clearly demonstrate that this area is recovering.

However, ORT is not usable by those with mobility issues and this restriction should be rectified to the extent possible. This is now ORT's highest priority and we believe Woodstock will benefit by having an ADA-compliant trail along the Ottauquechee River.

If you are applying on behalf of an organization, what is your total organizational budget?

\$6,000 per year for trail maintenance

Project Information

Detailed Project Description

Please click on the link below to access information about ORT Detailed Project Description and Budget

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ddzi1x3tj6sm3ww/EDC-2%20Detailed%20Project%20Description.pdf?dl=0>

Project Timeline

We are planning to start these projects in the spring of 2023. Not all phases of this project will happen concurrently. The first phase of work would be trail hardening and ramp building to enable universal accessibility. This work could begin once the ground recovers from winter and after any permitting/approvals are obtained.

After this phase is completed, ORT volunteers would complete the trailhead beautification efforts with the help of a contractor that would clear the brush/invasives from the one-acre parcel that houses the trailhead.

It is hoped all of this project's anticipated work would be completed by July 4, 2023. ORT is planning on having a family fun walk/run (5k) on the Fourth of July (morning) to celebrate the trail and as a fundraising effort.

Project Champion

“It takes a village”.....and that’s why ORT has been so successful so far. We are all volunteers who share in the commitment that a flat trail, with direct access to the Ottauquechee River, that is family-friendly and that is close to Woodstock’s center is critical to Woodstock and Woodstock’s East End in so many ways. ORT success has also greatly benefited from our partners: 1) the four landowners who have given us permission to locate a trail on their property; 2) the EDC who provided us with a sizable grant to enable the initial construction of ORT; 3) our dedicated and active volunteers who have helped to maintain the trail since inception; 4) East End Park, Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Park, WES/WUMS/WUHS, Upper Valley Trails Alliance, and other groups who have worked with us to provide programing; 5) the Woodstock Community who have embraced ORT from the beginning and support our fundraising efforts.

Project Budget Narrative

Please click on the link below to access information about ORT Detailed Project Description and Budget

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ddzi1x3tj6sm3ww/EDC-2%20Detailed%20Project%20Description.pdf?dl=0>

Project Budget - Itemized

Income Category	Total	Applicant	EDC	Other	In-Kind
EDC Universal Accessibility Grant	\$20,050	\$0	\$20,050	\$0	\$0
ORT Fundraising	\$8,575	\$6,575	\$0	\$0	\$2,000

Expense Category	Total	Applicant	EDC	Other	In-Kind
Universal Accessibility Project	\$20,050	\$0	\$20,050	\$0	\$0
Trailhead Beautification	\$8,575	\$6,575	\$0	\$0	\$2,000

What will success look like?

The answer is quite simple for this project. Success is when anyone, regardless of physical abilities, can use the Ottauquechee River Trail and enjoy a river/nature experience close to the center of Woodstock. This is universal accessibility. As a community we are blessed to be centered on the Ottauquechee River. Access has been limited until recently. With the opening of the ORT and East End Park, river access has greatly increased for many. However, those with mobility issues remain underserved. With the completion of this project, all will have equal access and the opportunity to enjoy river views.

Clearly ORT has had success to date given we are averaging 500 users per week. But more needs to be done to beautify the trailhead area. Currently the trailhead 'works' but, frankly, it is a little underwhelming. The ORT trailhead needs to be upgraded to help create more of an “aha” moment. We can achieve this goal with better landscaping and clearing of the brush in the one-acre parcel, which will provide a clearer, panoramic view of the river and surrounding countryside. It is still to be determined but the cleared portion of land could be used by the community.....maybe trails/seating.....maybe a play area for children.....maybe outdoor park fitness stations.

We will again install trail counters after all project phases are completed to determine if usage has increased.

Community support for this project

Woodstock has embraced the Ottauquechee River Trail since its opening on Labor Day in 2020 and now ORT is part of the fabric that is our community.

Examples include:

Attachment #2 includes letters of support from key community members. These were originally written for ORT's efforts to obtain a grant from Bernie Sanders for universal accessibility.

Attachment #3 includes selected news coverage of ORT along with pictures of the trail and at some of the events held at ORT.

ORT is averaging 500 users of the trail per week since its opening.

ORT is totally community driven and supported

15 volunteers came together to start ORT development

8-20 volunteers come to the frequent "volunteer workdays"

5 volunteers meet yearly to organize ORT plans/projects

200+ people have attended programs offered by ORT and its partners

ORT has many great partners

4 excellent property owners allowing us to use their land for the trail

MBR National Park actively supports ORT and hosts multiple workshops at ORT

Vermont Youth Core and Upper Valley Trails Alliance have had multiple crews at ORT

WES and WUMS/HS—Held classes and helped us with the development of our logo

VINS/MBR National Park are active—kestrel boxes, bat houses and other efforts

Vermont Center for Ecostudies is actively helping ORT with our vernal pool

The Thompson Senior Center, Woodstock Terrace and Zack's Place frequently use ORT for walks

The Woodstock community has actively supported our fundraising efforts including picnic tables and benches.

One example of how ORT is part of Woodstock's fabric and providing economic benefit to the town is this recent American Express promotion that features ORT.

https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/travel/discover/get-inspired/trending-destinations-vermont?utm_source=Organic%20Send%20list%20%28Use%20this%29&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WEDC_January%20Organic%20Email_010123%20%2801GNFNH1V48J0EFZ12TJBFV4QK%29&_kx=g79roX9yzsO7sXaQbxOZnmuhzxUwS3n0WAD0Gi249CM%3D.TdxZsZ

Community support for this project

The simple answer is yes.....ORT has established itself as viable and necessary to Woodstock. As an organization we do have the reserves necessary to support the annual \$6,000 maintenance cost.

ORT is owned by the village/town and, at some point, maybe Woodstock will provide funding and oversight to its many parks and natural resources. Until then ORT will fundraise (grants, donations, events) to remain financially viable and continue to utilize our active volunteers to manage affairs.

Project Description/Budget



Letters of Support



News Articles and Photos

Woodstock, VT



Visit
Live

Community Calendars
Sitemap

Contact

31 The Green
PO Box 488
Woodstock, VT 05091

Phone: (802) 457-3456
Fax: (802) 457-2329
Email: municipalmanager@townofwoodstock.org

Visitors 0 0 1 8 7 3 0

Ottauquechee River Trail

EDC Grant Request Attachment #3

Please click on the link below to access information about ORT news articles and photos.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/8eiarkuzypka2ah/ORT%20News%20Articles%20and%20Pics.pdf?dl=0>

Letters of Support for the Ottauquechee River Trail Project

Attached are letters of support for the Ottauquechee River Trail Universal Accessibility Project. These letters were prepared earlier in 2022 when ORT was attempting to earn a grant from Bernie Sanders for the same objective.

1. Alison Clarkson, Vermont State Senator, Windsor County
2. Charlie Kimbell, Vermont State Representative, Windsor-5
3. David Simmons, President of Woodstock Foundation
(Woodstock Inn and Billings Farm)
4. Jonathon Spector, Chairman of Woodstock's Economic
Development Commission
5. Dail Frates, Executive Director at Zack's Place
6. Charlie Rattigan, Executive Director at Vermont Institute of
Natural Science
7. Randy Richardson, Development Director at Upper Valley
Trails Alliance



STATE OF VERMONT
SENATE CHAMBER

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS
1 Church Street, 3rd floor
Burlington, Vermont 05401

21 April 2022

Dear Senator Sanders –

It gives me great pleasure to write in support of the Ottauquechee River Trail's (ORT) grant request of \$100,000. Woodstock's outdoor and recreational life has been greatly enhanced by the recent creation of this beautiful trail along the river.

As the former chair of Woodstock's Park's Commission, the Billings Park Commission, I've appreciated the volunteer work that went into the creation of this special addition to our extensive trail system. And, once completed, we've all been impressed by the number of people using the ORT every day, all year long. Over 500 hikers a week are taking advantage of this trail which is accessed from the heart of Woodstock. Our trail system, complemented by our National Park, make Woodstock a hiker's destination and add enormous economic development value to the Upper Valley.

However, our hope is to make the first half mile of this trail wheelchair accessible. And, it is to this end that we seek funding – to help finance the trail construction work needed to build a ramp up onto the ORT and to harden the first half mile. Woodstock hosts one of Vermont's best after school programs for our disabled community, Zack's Place, and this would be an enormous asset for them, as well as those Vermonters and visitors who are either permanently or temporarily disabled.

Thank you for your consideration. When you are next in Woodstock, we'd love to host you for a hike.

As always,

Alison Clarkson
Vermont State Senator
Windsor County District

115 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT 05633-5201

PHONE: (802) 828-2228
FAX: (802) 828-2424



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Senator Bernard Sanders
1 Church Street
3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 04501

To the Honorable Bernard Sanders,

I write to you in support of the \$120,000 funding request to make the Woodstock Ottauquechee River Trail handicap accessible.

This is an issue of equity in many ways. Handicap access to scenic points along Vermont's waterways is limited, and that is true in Woodstock as well.

The Ottauquechee River Trail is a citizen-led effort to improve recreational access to the river for all residents and visitors. It had been contemplated for more than 20 years before a motivated group of volunteers worked with the landowners and abutters to get permission to establish the trail. Now we have an opportunity to extend its impact.

Thank you for your consideration of this modest request.

Sincerely,

Charlie Kimbell
State Representative, Windsor-5
19 River Street
Woodstock, VT 05091
ckimbell@leg.state.vt.us

THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION, INC.

Founded by Mary French & Laurance Spelman Rockefeller

April 18, 2022

Senator Bernie Sanders
1 Church Street, 3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Sanders,

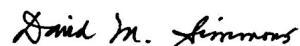
As President of the Woodstock Foundation and Executive Director of Billings Farm & Museum, I am delighted to write in support of a grant request from Woodstock's Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT).

The trail courses along the Ottauquechee River for more than a mile and continues around the bounds of nearby hayfields, offering trail goers the enjoyment of multiple natural habitats right on the edge of the Village of Woodstock. While there are several extensive trail systems within and around the town, the ORT stands out for its ease of navigation on relatively flat terrain and is now enjoyed by some 500 people each week.

The ORT has not been available to everyone, however. Uneven, hilly terrain at the trailhead and beyond precludes handicap accessibility. Through hardening of the trail and creation of a ramp at the trailhead, funds from the ORT grant will redress this issue, making the first half mile of the trail handicap accessible – a win for this wonderful, new asset to our community.

I have been a proponent and supporter of the Ottauquechee River Trail since its genesis, and I am pleased to see the trail join the area's rich outdoor recreational offerings in providing enjoyment to residents and visitors alike. I am excited at the prospect of expanding trail access to those with physical limitations, and I hope that a favorable review of the ORT grant request will make it so.

Sincerely,



David M. Simmons
President, Woodstock Foundation

JONATHAN SPECTOR

April 18, 2022

Senator Bernie Sanders
1 Church St.
3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Sanders

I'm writing as Chair of the Economic Development Commission in Woodstock, Vermont in support of a grant request from the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) to make the trail handicap accessible.

The ORT has been a huge success since its opening 18 months ago on Labor Day 2020. We're averaging 500 people using the trail each week. Along with the East End Park, ORT provides the foundation for economic growth in Woodstock's East End. Most importantly, ORT provides a "flat" walking trail located near the center of town that also provides users with more than a 1.0 mile access to the Ottauquechee River.

Our grant request (\$120,000 total budget with a \$100,00 grant request) focuses on making the first 0.5 miles of the trail handicap accessible. The grant will fund the hardening of the trail that is needed along with the creation of a ramp at the trailhead. With this accomplished, everyone will be able to more easily enjoy this community asset.

I hope you will seriously consider this grant request. Some of the economic development challenges we face in Woodstock (housing shortages, for example) will take years to resolve. It would be nice to be able to complement our efforts in other areas with a project that will immediately provide a boost to our local economy, for both residents and visitors to enjoy.

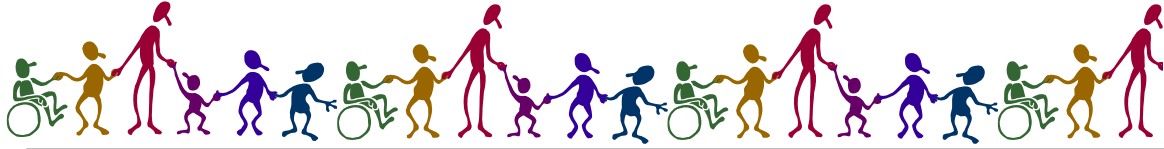
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Spector". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" being more prominent than the last name "Spector".

Jonathan Spector

Zack's Place

A Non-Profit Community Enrichment Center



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Mission

Everyone needs friends. Our mission is to provide a relaxed setting where people with special needs are free to explore art, music, dance, and exercise while developing lifelong bonds of friendship.

Our hands-on approach engages participants with the material, their instructors, and one another. Service-learning and volunteer projects connect them with the public at large and instill a sense of citizenship.

Our members are a vital and talented group with a tremendous amount to give. Through programs at Zack's Place, they contribute to and benefit from the community.

Senator Bernie Sanders
1 Church Street, 3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401

April 21, 2022

Dear Senator Sanders,

I am writing you in support of the grant request to improve the Ottauquechee River Trail, first half mile, to make it handicap accessible and available to all citizens' young, old, and handicap.

I am the Executive Director of Zack's Place, an enrichment center for people with special needs and we are located in Woodstock, VT. We serve people from all over Vermont and New Hampshire. Our participants are out and about in the community and always looking for accessible trails. Many of our participants are in wheel chairs. In the spring and fall we often travel to the Rail Trails located in Lebanon NH to go for walks. To have a handicap trail at our finger tips would be amazing.

I would also like to mention when traveling I am always in awe of communities that have dedicated their time and money to create trails and bike paths that offer healthy ways to commute and exercise. An example of this are the rail trails in Slovenia and Italy where you can see regularly entire families riding bikes together or out for walk and people commuting on their bikes. This is also a trend that is happening in the United States and as we go into the future I hope we can keep Vermont forward thinking by connecting our communities with cycling and walking trails that work for all.

Thank you for considering this grant request.

Best regards,

Dail E Frates
Executive Director

73 Central Street • PO Box 634 • Woodstock, VT 05091 • Info@ZacksPlaceVT.org
802-457-5868 • www.ZacksPlaceVT.org



Vermont Institute of Natural Science

6565 Woodstock Road | P.O. Box 1281 | Quechee, VT 05059 | ph 802.359.5000 | fax 802.359.5001 | www.vinsweb.org

April 18, 2022

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senate
332 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

I write on behalf of the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) in support of their proposal to build an ADA accessible trail as part of their important outdoor experience offering for members of Upper Valley community. I strongly support the funding of this project with congressionally directed funds. The proposed ADA trail and access ramp to the river's edge will enable people with limited mobility and parents with strollers the ability to get outside in nature in this unique and special setting.

As Executive Director of the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, I know first-hand how appreciative folks are when they are given the opportunity to get out into nature because of the ADA access we provide. It is often the first opportunity they've had to do so.

This additional facility with ADA access to nature and the thoughtful plan of the ORT will allow all community members to enjoy this important community resource. In the 18+ months that the trail has been open, thousands of people have enjoyed this special river walk. Opening it up to all people brings even greater benefits to our community.

I encourage you to support this important effort.

Kind regards,

Charles F. Rattigan
Executive Director.



UVTA Staff
Russell Hirschler
Executive Director

Sean Ogle
Trail Programs Director

Randy Richardson
Development Director

Katie Eddington
Program Manager

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Natalie Starr
DSM Environmental Services

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*Revers Fellows
Tuck School of Business
at Dartmouth*

Advisors
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Kiki Keating
Dick Mackay
Lelia Mellen
John Morton
Kevin Peterson
Craig Sanborn
Peter Stein

Upper Valley Trails Alliance – People, Paths, Possibilities

P.O. Box 1215, Norwich, VT 05055 Phone: 802.649.9075 www.uvtrails.org

April 19, 2022

Senator Bernie Sanders
1 Church St.
3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Sanders,

I am writing as a Woodstock resident and administrator at the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, based Norwich, VT.

I have also had the good fortune to be a part of an inspiring and high impact community effort to create the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT). We did so in the midst of the pandemic and with a small infusion of local funds and lots of volunteer labor, and it has quickly become an invaluable resource for thousands of residents and visitors.

Local trails like the ORT not only offer nearby access to nature and outdoor recreation, they are critical for community health and wellbeing. Recent research not only tells us that access to nature and regular exercise is a key to mental and physical health (*1,2), it also indicates that proximity is one of the keys to regular trail use and exercise (*4.5). The ORT, as a safe and more accessible trail, is a critical resource that needs improvement.

With this in mind, please support our plans to make the first portion of the ORT fully wheel chair accessible (ABA standards). The ORT, as a riverside trail, is already flatter and more accessible to less able hikers, from families with toddlers to the elderly or those recovering from injuries. The benefits of this additional accessibility will reach far beyond Woodstock by providing a wonderful free and fully accessible public resource in one of the most beautiful and important tourist towns in Vermont.

While the financial request is large by our standards, it is a relatively small investment in important and sustainable infrastructure that will benefit generations of residents and visitors. Thank you for considering this project that will expand access and improve the physical, mental and economic health of the wider Upper Valley community and all of Vermont.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support for trails, outdoor recreation and Vermont. With your help, we will continue to make the ORT an pathway to better health and a stronger Vermont.

Sincerely,

Randy Richardson
Development Director

• Notes/references

1. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature>
2. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>
3. <http://www.clintonhealth.org/pdf%20files/poweroftrails.pdf>
4. <https://www.vnews.com/On-the-Trails-column-31473445>

Ottauquechee River Trail

EDC Grant Request Attachment #1

Please click on the link below to access information about ORT Detailed Project Description and Budget

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ddzi1x3tj6sm3ww/EDC-2%20Detailed%20Project%20Description.pdf?dl=0>