

Long Trail

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Long Trail NEWS

WINTER 2024, Volume 84, No. 4

The **Long Trail News** is published by the Green Mountain Club, a non-profit organization founded in 1910.

THE MISSION OF THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB is to make the Vermont mountains play a larger part in the life of the people by protecting and maintaining the Long Trail System and fostering, through education, the stewardship of Vermont's hiking trails and mountains.

We are committed to ensuring the GMC and Long Trail System are places that are inviting, safe, and open, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

The Green Mountain Club and Long Trail System are located on land which is the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples including the Western Abenaki. This land has served as a site of meeting and exchange among Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. We recognize and respect them as the traditional stewards of these lands and waters, whose presence continues to enrich our community. We strive to respect and protect the lands within our use.

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AS THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB PUT THE WRAPS ON THE 2024 FIELD SEASON, we were able to move some big, long-term projects into the completed column.

At the end of October Middlebury College granted the club a trail right of way that permanently protects 1.5 miles of the Long Trail across the Middlebury Snow Bowl in Hancock. This project trims the unprotected length of the Long Trail to just 4.5 miles! This project was decades in the making, and is a great example of how GMC's patient approach to trail protection achieves the best results in the long term.



Mike DeBonis

Construction of the new Rothberg-Birdwhistell Visitor Center finished at the end of November. It replaces the old and dilapidated Herrick Office Building with a hiker visitor center, an education space, staff offices, a historical archive, and a base for field programs. The new building is ADA accessible and energy efficient, and it improves our ability to engage hikers and other visitors. Please stop by and visit.

We maintain more than 500 miles of hiking trails and 70 overnight sites, and managing backcountry human waste is a big part of the job. At the end of October, GMC reached a major milestone by replacing the last pit privy on the Long Trail System with a new efficient, sanitary, and environmentally sustainable composting toilet. Now all 73 privies on the system are composting models. It's taken many years, endless planning, hard work, and extraordinary support from members, volunteers, donors, hikers, and management partners to achieve this goal.

And finally, after 80 weeks of work in the past three years, the Green Mountain Club and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation completed a top-to-bottom rehabilitation of the historic Burrows Trail on Camel's Hump. This project was the first of its kind in Vermont, and it will be a model for turning other historic hiking trails into more durable, user friendly and environmentally sustainable trails.

Remarkably, these achievements took place in another summer with devastating rainstorms and floods impacting Vermont communities and the Long Trail System. One of the things that has impressed me most in my ten years as Executive Director has been the ability of the Long Trail community to come together and support the trail during times of adversity.

In fact, none of these projects would have been possible without the support of GMC's members and supporters. Your financial support, especially, helps the club meet our annual operating budget and make the investments necessary to keep the trail free, open, and of the highest quality. If you are able, please consider making a year-end financial gift to support the trail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mike DeBonis'.

Mike DeBonis
Executive Director

FRONT COVER: Rolston Rest privy, one of more than 20 new, accessible, environmentally friendly privies built in the last 10 years. Story, page 10.

Winter Hiking Bucket List

Beat the winter blues by getting outside or trying something new this winter.

Below, GMC's winter bucket list serves as a starting point.

- Strap on snowshoes and explore the trails or your backyard
- Attend a First Day Hike on New Year's Day with Vermont State Parks
- Enjoy hot chocolate from your favorite summit or viewpoint
- Consider a sunrise or full moon hike to see the mountains in a new way (bring plenty of warm clothes and headlamps)
 - January 13—Wolf Moon
 - February 12—Snow Moon
 - March 14—Worm Moon
 - April 12—Pink Moon
- Check out GMC's new Rothberg-Birdwhistell Visitor Center in Waterbury Center (see page 14)
Attend a Winter Speaker Series event, weekly on Thursday evenings in January and February.
Visit greenmountainclub.org/events for the calendar
- Hike a trail you love in summer but have never done in winter and see what feels different
- Join a birdwatching or wildlife outing
North Branch Nature Center hosts monthly birding walks
- Read a book or watch an outdoor-inspired movie. Try:
 - Humorous Classic: *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson
 - Buzzy Human Nature Connection: *The Serviceberry*, a new release from Robin Wall Kimmerer
- Hike to check out one of GMC's recently completed projects, like Bromley Tower, the new bridge on the Forest City Trail, or the newest moldering privy at Wintturi Shelter on the AT.
- Get involved! Contact volunteer@greenmountainclub.org for current opportunities, or see what your local conservation organization offers

Rebuilding BURROWS, BUILDING THE FUTURE

BY CHLOE MILLER

THIS FALL THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB FINISHED THE BIGGEST TRAIL PROJECT in our modern history: the top-to-bottom restoration of the Burrows Trail up the west flank of Camel's Hump.

Planning began in 2018 in partnership with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR). Most of the funding was secured in 2020 and 2021, including two large sums from the state, and broke ground in May, 2022. Three years and 80 weeks of crew work later, the trail showcases the talent and vision of GMC's field program and our partners.

The project broke sharply with tradition, in which funding has come for a few weeks of work at a time. Virtually every foot of the 2.1-mile trail was analyzed, and then restored in one go.

A Prime Candidate

Built more than a century ago, the trail follows portions of an old farm road down low, but quickly becomes the shortest and steepest way to the summit. It's one of the most popular trails in Vermont, close to Burlington and reaching the state's only undeveloped 4,000-foot peak. It attracts 16,000 to 20,000 hikers yearly, many on their first 4,000-footer.

Recommendations to limit driving during the Covid pandemic drew thousands eager for the safety of the outdoors to the Burrows trailhead. Seeking distance from other people, and unaware of the damage they could do, many strayed onto the edges of the footpath.

The Burrows Trail suffered severe erosion even before then, from boots and from water running down the trail, which went mostly straight up the mountain. Drainage structures failed as the trail widened around them. Those factors and its proximity to nearby perennial streams made it one of the trails most susceptible to catastrophic damage from intense rainstorms.



Justin Towers, Burrows Trail Project Coordinator, trained crews and matched projects to their skill sets.

Unprecedented State Investment

Thus Burrows was a perfect candidate for a total rehab. Still, it took strong leadership from state government. State leaders had taken notice as the surging outdoor recreation boom of the pandemic in early 2020 showed the importance of preserving the trails we have.

Few people consider foot trails in terms of infrastructure, though they function like roads and require similar expertise, planning and skill to build and maintain. In some ways they are even more demanding, because trail crews use primarily natural material to preserve a backcountry aesthetic, and usually use only hand tools.

The project cost nearly \$700,000, with \$250,000 from FPR through a one-time allocation of general funds designated for outdoor recreation enhancements; and \$210,000 from FPR's Enhancement of Recreation Stewardship and Access (ERSA) Grant.

With two-thirds of the project's estimated cost secured, GMC determined to raise the rest from foundations and individuals before and during the project. Several major donations in the summer of 2024 enabled us to finish on time and on budget.

The Power of Partnership

The project relied on strong partnerships with the state and conservation organizations. The club cooperated with the Vermont State Trail Crew, the Northwoods Stewardship Center Youth Conservation Corps Crew, the National Civilian Community Corps, and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps crews as well as our Long Trail Patrol. Project Coordinator Justin Towers evaluated each crew's skills and aptitudes to match them with sites and tasks.

An Idea is Born

Keegan Tierney, Director of Field Programs at GMC, and Kathryn Wrigley, Outdoor Recreation Specialist at FPR, were the brains behind the project. Inspired by a similar undertaking on the historic Crawford Path in the White Mountain National Forest, they first discussed a complete rebuild in 2018.

Kathryn began her trails career leading a Montana trail crew, learning and teaching trail maintenance techniques, and later worked her way up in GMC field programs before landing her current role at the state. As the project idea took shape, Kathryn spent eight days on the Burrows Trail, logging GPS coordinates for more than 300 individual worksites. She took detailed photos and notes on how to repair or rework the impacted area.

"Starting from the bottom, the first part was mostly suffering from widening, and there was less rock work," she recalls. "The middle part had some widening and needed some rock work, and the last third was essentially a continuous mile of stone staircases and other rockwork."

Breaking Ground

GMC hired a full-time project coordinator, Justin Towers, who had worked on GMC trail crews before. More recently a leader with the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, he was the person for the job. He worked with Keegan and Kathryn on plans, and trained crews in advanced trail building techniques and the required standards of repair and reconstruction.

Crews started at the top of the trail in 2022, just below the hut clearing, and worked downhill. By correcting drainage at the top, they diverted a lot of water from the trail below. This approach, plus high-quality work, helped the Burrows Trail survive historic floods in 2023 and 2024.

Hike the Burrows Trail with us!

Here are examples of work from four sites.

LOWER RELOCATION

Relocation was seldom possible on the Burrows Trail, because of preexisting forest research plots on both sides. Ideally a sustainably built trail has average grades of less than 10 percent, but that wasn't an option on here. So crews relied heavily on stone waterbars, check steps, turnpikes and staircases.

However, there were two small relocations, one starting just 0.1 mile from the trailhead. If you're very familiar with the trail as it rises, you may notice it now veers left and follows a gentle

PHOTO BY ANNA GARDNER



BEFORE: The top third of the Burrows Trail had been "gullied" and eroded down to bedrock or glacial till.

PHOTO BY LILY LAREGINA



LOWER RELOCATION: Crews spread mineral soil on the newly cut relocation.

grade along the hillside before returning to the legacy route. To accommodate heavy use, the relocation is about three feet wide, somewhat wider than typical remote parts of the Long Trail.

It was fortunate relocation was an option, because repairing the original route would have been prohibitive. It was incredibly widened and eroded, and there was no feasible way to divert water. Crews closed the old route and added check dams to limit erosion and encourage revegetation.



PHOTO BY ALICIA DICICCO

PREFABRICATED WOODEN STAIRCASES: This wooden staircase, part of the lower relocation, helps hikers navigate a steep turn in the trail.

PREFABRICATED WOODEN STAIRCASES

Many among the throngs of hikers on Burrows are relatively new to hiking, so the team decided to install occasional front-country-style features, like this 14-step wooden staircase. It eliminates unduly steep grades at a sharp turn, and is a clear indicator to hikers which path they should follow.

Wood can also serve where stone staircases are hard to build, like the lower third of the Burrows, where the surrounding land has very little stone.

We also installed short wooden staircases on a few rock faces, to define the travelway and reduce difficulty for less skilled hikers. The trail has three wooden staircases in all.

STONE STAIRCASES

The upper mile of the Burrows Trail is nearly uninterrupted stone work, including staircases and check steps. In the sub-alpine environment the trail was largely



PHOTO BY CHLOE MILLER

STONE STAIRCASES: This staircase, built by the NorthWoods Stewardship Center trail crew, has even-sized steps and is contained by gargoyle rocks on the outside to keep hikers on the staircase.

eroded to bedrock or glacial stones and gravel, and hikers walked 12 to 18 inches below the original ground level. Durable stone staircases were the solution here, permitting lower grades on stretches between staircases to slow water and reduce further erosion. Crews installed about 200 stone steps the first season.

Crews quarried stone from the surroundings, out of sight when possible, using steel cable highline systems to “fly” stone to worksites. The highlines protected fragile mosses and other vulnerable plants.

Stone steps must be no more than six or eight inches high to induce hikers to use them. In some places crews drilled into ledge to form short steps in order to eliminate awkwardly high lunges.

When rainwater rushing down a trail reaches a staircase, it is slowed by the repeated 90-degree changes in direction as it flows over the steps. Every stone staircase has a waterbar or drain at the



PHOTO BY GRACE LAW

WATER DIVERSION STRUCTURES: Traditional waterbars work well on the Burrows Trail, but require careful maintenance.

bottom to divert and disperse water onto the surrounding hillside.

WATER DIVERSION STRUCTURES

Today sustainable trail design calls for gentle slopes, using switchbacks, grade reversals, dips, and tread hardening to divert water. But on a traditional fall-line trail like Burrows, old fashioned waterbars are still the best way to divert water from the trail.

“We have a lot of old infrastructure in Vermont, including our trails,” Kathryn explained. “On a historic trail like this, waterbars continue to be an effective strategy due to the trail’s steepness and the volume of water.”

Planners noted and marked 150 waterbars or armored drains on the Burrows Trail, and nearly all needed repair or rebuilding. Usually the trail had widened around waterbars, so they no longer worked.

What's Next?

The work on Burrows must be maintained to preserve our investment. How well the new trail succeeds will inform GMC as we plan future trail projects.

Like roads, trails can't be attended to just once in 20 years. GMC's volunteer trail adopters enter here, because clearing drains at least annually is essential. GMC will continue to invest in volunteer training and evaluate adopter ranges on waterbar-heavy trails like Burrows to ensure the volume of work is appropriate for the volunteer labor at hand.

GMC is starting a Sustainable Trails Assessment, using GIS to catalog the condition of our trails and prioritize investments in rehabilitation. We will collect data on grades, cross slope, and other trail features; and on wetlands, soil hydraulics, floodplains, and other environmental conditions. We will rank sections of trail from least to most sustainable, evaluate the feasibility of different rehab approaches, and prioritize investments to determine the next major rehabilitation.

The first \$100,000 of the assessment's estimated budget has been covered by a grant from the Waterwheel Foundation, but GMC must commit a matching \$25,000 for the initial assessment and strategic planning phases.

It's thanks to all of you, our extraordinary network of members and supporters, that it was possible for the Green Mountain Club to undertake the Burrows Trail reconstruction. So thank you very much! If you would like to support the Sustainable Trails Assessment and future trail rehabilitation projects, please consider making a gift today. 🍷

FIELD NOTES

SEASON RECAP

BY KEEGAN TIERNEY, DIRECTOR OF FIELD PROGRAMS

TRAIL CREWS, CARETAKERS, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS finished important trail and structure projects and started others in a field season marked by early rain, summer drought, another historic flood, and one of the most glorious autumns in recent memory.

One trail crew worked on the **North Country Trail**, a National Scenic Trail recently extended into Vermont, installing stonework on the **Sucker Brook Trail**, now part of the NCT. They also built 0.3 miles of new trail in East Middlebury, eliminating a dangerous walk on Route 125. The crew worked the rest of its season on the **Burrows Trail** on **Camel's Hump**, completing the demanding three-year restoration project.

The southern crew spent the season at two sites on the **LT/AT**: the **Lye Brook Wilderness** between **Stratton Pond** and **Rootville Road** in Manchester; and south of **Risky Ranch Road** in Stamford. This was the first of three years of investment planned between Risky Ranch Road and Massachusetts, including relocating the trail where it spans the border from private to public land. Much of this project was stone work on the tread, and several small realignments to drier ground.

Our experienced backcountry carpenters built a new wood truss bridge on the **Forest City Trail** on **Camel's Hump**, and a parallel laminated deck bridge on the **LT/AT** at **Rootville Road**. Both bridges replaced unsafe ones, and were designed to stand up to today's high levels of use and weather impacts.

They also completed three new **moldering privies**: at **Lost Pond Shelter**, **Wintturi Shelter**, and **Minerva Hinchey Shelter**. This achieved our long standing goal of eliminating pit privies on the Long Trail System!

In addition to receiving a new privy, **Minerva Hinchey Shelter** was moved onto the federally owned LT/AT corridor. GMC coordinated the move from private land this fall by a contractor with support from the **U.S. Forest Service**. A new entry porch, ramp and stairs will be installed in the spring. *Navigation note*: The shelter is now west of the trail, clearly visible from the trail through open hardwoods. New signs will be installed.

The **Bromley Tower Construction** project wrapped up this fall, with a steel structure replacing a decayed wooden tower demolished in 2012. The **Manchester Section** spearheaded fundraising for planning and construction. Regional flooding in 2023 delayed construction a year.

The caretaker program conducted an excellent season of backcountry stewardship and public education. Early data shows increased visitation from 2023. Caretakers composted **27 batches of human waste**. It was an excellent year for composting, thanks to diligent caretakers, unusually dry weather, and of course, hikers like you consistently adding bark mulch when using privies. Caretakers also helped install dozens of new **moldering sump systems** for campsite grey water. 🍷

The Long Trail Through Your Lens

2024 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS & NOTABLE ENTRIES



GRAND PRIZE

"Embracing the Rain on Her First Thru-Hike," by Jocelyn Smith



TRAIL FEATURES

"Snowy Sunrise," by Sue Thomas



FLORA AND FAUNA

"Long Trail Loon," by Gus Onken



HIKERS

"Mountain Princess," by Caitlin Nordgren



LANDSCAPES AND VIEWS

"Morning Gold," by Christopher Evers

HIKERS' CHOICE

"Littlest Hiker," by Meaghan Martin



"Smuggler's Notch," by Asa Worthley



"Julia Admiring the View on Camel's Hump," by Tara Schatz



"Alien Sunrise," by Joe Iadanza



"Lady's Slippers," by Susan Lipkin



"Yellow Butterflies," by Leo He



"Journey's End," by Julia Arduini



"Sterling Pond," by Kathy Town



"Mansfield Hikers," by Marilou Duchesne

Scan the QR code to
view more images from
this year's photo contest.



TRAIL TALK

Pit Privies, No More



EVER WONDERED WHY SOME PRIVIES HAVE SIGNS SAYING, "DON'T PEE!" and some encourage you to do so? Why you're asked to throw something in the can after doing your business? Using the toilet on the trail may not be your favorite topic. But we all do it, and a lot of science, planning, time, money and energy goes into managing human waste in the backcountry properly. Next time you have time to ponder in a privy, consider the elements that got the privy there and what will happen to your waste after you hike on.

Just a few weeks ago GMC reached an important milestone in backcountry waste management: We removed the ***last remaining pit privy on the trail***, a goal more than twenty years in the making.

GMC manages about 70 privies that, as of 2024, use some form of composting to treat waste so it can be spread safely in the forest. They fall into the following categories.

(No More!) Pit Privies

These were the standard backcountry toilet for decades. They're just what they sound like: dig a hole in the ground, build a rough throne and some walls around it, and human waste goes directly into the ground. When a pit privy filled, trail crews or volunteers simply covered it and dug a new pit some distance away.

Yes, it was as gross as it sounds. During the backpacking boom of the 1970s, pits were filling up faster than crews could dig new ones. And in many high-elevation sites, there isn't a lot of suitable space to dig deep enough holes, so sites were running out of room.

Not to mention, pit privies are pretty unpleasant for humans as well as bad for the environment. Waste (urine, feces, and

illicit garbage) seeped directly into the ground, spreading pathogens and possibly contaminating water sources. Next to no decomposition takes place in the usual anaerobic (oxygen-deprived) condition of waste in a hole.

Batch Bin Composting Privies

These were the first composting privies on the scene, invented in the 1970s by the U.S. Forest Service and first installed on the Long Trail in 1977. Each privy site has a steel or plastic collecting receptacle beneath the toilet seat, plastic storage bins for removed waste, a large plastic tub for composting, and a wooden drying rack.

Hikers are asked not to urinate in these privies, because it creates unpleasant odors and hampers composting by excluding air from the waste. Users also are asked to drop a handful of the provided hardwood bark mulch into the toilet after each use.

The batch-bin system requires a caretaker to empty the collector under the seat into storage bins. When the bins are full, the caretaker transfers the waste to the large tub and mixes it with more bark mulch. The mulch absorbs excess water, reduces odors, and provides carbon for composting at high temperatures.

After six to eight weeks, with periodic turning by the caretaker to insure all the waste gets hot, the compost is moved to the drying rack, where it cures for up to a year. During that year, aerobic predatory microbes eliminate virtually all remaining pathogens. The finished compost can be used to help absorb water in future composting runs, or can be added to the forest floor.

—Pete Antos-Ketcham and Dick Andrews

“Removing the final pit privy from the Long Trail System is not the end of waste management, because it's an ongoing process. But it's a major milestone and is emblematic of the conservation ethic that has been a cornerstone of the Green Mountain Club from the beginning.”

—PETE ANTOS-KETCHAM,
GMC STAFF 1993-2015,
and instigator and lead author of the
Backcountry Sanitation Manual.

Moldering Privies

The hot composting process described above was designed for high-use sites. Such privies were and are expensive to install and maintain. GMC volunteer Dick Andrews invented the comparatively lower-maintenance moldering privy in the late 1990s, now used at about three fourths of GMC-managed sites.

Here, waste accumulates in a screened, ventilated chamber below the toilet seat. Users are asked to add a handful of wood shavings after each use. These prevent the pile from compacting into an airtight mass. They also supply carbon, necessary because human waste has too little carbon to compost properly.

Unlike the batch bin composter, urine is useful in the moldering process to prevent the pile from drying out.

When the chamber is full, which may take years if use is low, the small privy shelter is moved to another chamber, usually next to the first. The full chamber is topped by a layer of shavings, screened, and partially covered to let rain moisten but not drown it. When the second chamber fills, compost in the first one is ready to spread or bury.

In newer accessible designs, a larger shelter covers two chambers, with the toilet stool moved from chamber to chamber within the shelter. These chambers aren't exposed to rain, but a caretaker can add a little water occasionally if needed.

—Dick Andrews

The Great Privy Construction Boom

Now that you know what's going on underneath the surface, how did we get here?

The shift away from pit privies was always a matter of both high use and environmental sustainability. Not only is composting cleaner, safer and better for the environment, it's a less labor-intensive process than covering up full pit sites and digging new pits multiple times a year.

The backcountry moldering privy concept began as an experiment, inspired by the Swedish front-country Clivus Multrum composting toilet. The first one was installed at Little Rock Pond in 1997, but GMC and other partners waited several years to evaluate it and build buy-in among wastewater regulators, land management agencies, and other trail organizations before going all in on conversions.

To disseminate knowledge of the wider topic of backcountry waste management, GMC and ATC staff members co-authored the first *Backcountry Sanitation Manual* in 2004, a 100-plus-page document providing details on the issues, the science, and numerous case studies of a range of backcountry toilet designs.

GMC was pleased with the success of the moldering process and the momentum to convert all privies on the system began. But conversion can cost more than \$10,000, factoring in structure size, wilderness area regulations, increasing field staff wages and the recent skyrocketing cost of lumber. The club worked steadily to phase out pit privies, working closely with the U.S. Forest Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. Private donors also made significant contributions to the effort.





Lost Pond Privy Conversion

Seventeen pits remained on the Long Trail in 2018, including 14 on federally managed land (where they are required to meet accessibility standards). Six of them were also in wilderness areas, which meant no mechanized equipment could be used onsite to move materials or build structures.

GMC field staff became skilled prefabricators of privy kits in the off season, and recruited volunteers to carry heavy pressure-treated lumber to remote sites when possible. Construction crews got faster at assembling them, too. Those skills and federal funding from the Recovery Act and Great American Outdoors Act enabled the final construction push of the last five years.

Once materials were on hand, a team of three to four competent backcountry carpenters or trail crew can assemble a beautiful wooden privy structure with a ramp, a door that latches, and sometimes even a window in one week.

What's In It for Me, the Hiker?

Everything, of course! While you may use a GMC privy only a few times a year, hundreds of thousands of trail users take bio breaks every year. That waste adds up! You wouldn't want it scattered around.

How you use the privy plays a big role in how well composting goes. You've likely noticed the signs on most outhouse doors asking you to pee or not to pee (that is the question!) in the privy. You're also asked to help the composting by tossing a handful of wood shavings or bark mulch in after you, depending on the type of composter.

“I'm very pleased [that GMC has replaced the final pit privy]. During the big backpacking boom of the 70s, there was talk that the increase in users – and their waste – might require us to implement permit systems. I didn't want that, so that was a big motivator in figuring out the backcountry moldering toilet. It keeps the wilderness cleaner, and it's safer for hikers and volunteers who maintain them.”

—DICK ANDREWS, GMC VOLUNTEER,
and inventor of backcountry moldering privy.

Backcountry waste management is a partnership between the user and the trail manager (that's us at GMC). Its success depends on you. We hope this look into the effort that went into installing more than 70 composting privies on the Long Trail System helps you understand the importance of this seemingly mundane arena of hiking infrastructure management. The legions of volunteers and caretakers who oversee composting, and your fellow trail users, thank you for doing your part to follow privy guidelines and improve backcountry sanitation and health for us all. 🌲

Why are Some Privies so Large?

TWENTY-THREE OF GMC-MANAGED PRIVIES meet accessible design standards, in compliance with federal land regulations. That means they must have a wheelchair-accessible ramp, and a doorway and interior large enough for wheelchairs. When the regulation was introduced in the early 2000s, some trial and error was needed to develop a design to accommodate more trail users, without compromising the composting process. The first accessible moldering toilet was installed by GMC at Happy Hill Shelter on the Vermont Appalachian Trail in 2012. Most of the new privies built in the last decade follow these standards, and provide a spacious, comfortable experience for trail users.





Middlebury College Grants Trail Right of Way to GMC

1.5 MILES OF LONG TRAIL PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

BY MOLLIE FLANIGAN

IN OCTOBER MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE DONATED A TRAIL RIGHT OF WAY to the Green Mountain Club that permanently protects 1.5 miles of the Long Trail, the longest remaining section of the Long Trail on private land.

The donation reduced the total amount of unprotected Long Trail treadway to just 4.5 miles—only 2 percent of the trail. The club has sought permanent protection for the trail and adjacent land since 1986, and Middlebury's donation was the longest Long Trail acquisition since 2005. Only 14 properties GMC has protected had 1.5 miles or more on a single parcel.

"Middlebury College's century-long partnership with the Green Mountain Club is a shared commitment to preserving land for the public good," said Middlebury College President Laurie L. Patton. "We're pleased to help ensure that access to the storied Long Trail—and its enjoyment by our entire community—will continue into the future."

The Long Trail has crossed what is now the Middlebury Snow Bowl, an alpine ski area in Hancock open to the public and owned and operated by Middlebury College, since the trail was built in the 1910s. Joseph Battell

gave the land to Middlebury College in 1916. The route of the trail past Lake Pleiad and up Worth Mountain was first depicted in the 1920 *Long Trail Guide*. The college cut the first ski trails there in 1934, making the Snow Bowl one of Vermont's oldest ski areas.

The right of way details GMC's responsibility to maintain the treadway, including parameters for handling trail relocations, significant upgrades, and third-party uses. In most sections along the Long Trail System GMC seeks to protect a full 1,000 feet for the trail corridor. On the Snow Bowl, however, where the trail cuts directly across the downhill ski area, we agreed to a ten-foot-wide corridor, in balance with the multiple other uses of the property.

With legal protection, this section of Long Trail now qualifies for funding by public and private dollars for trail maintenance and upgrade work and will ensure the trail remains open for generations to come.

Middlebury College and Snow Bowl employees have long supported the Long Trail's existence on the ski area. For example, this summer a Snow Bowl staff member recommended a small reroute of the trail away from the upper chairlift station, which

improved the trail layout and allows hikers to avoid resort operations.

The Snow Bowl flagged the potential reroute and, with approval from our Field Programs team, cut the corridor and did initial tread work. Bread Loaf Section volunteers are hardening the route and installing drainage structures. The kiosk will be relocated to show hikers the new route.

This agreement is GMC's latest implementation of our recently adopted strategic conservation plan, described in last fall's *Long Trail News*. The plan designated the Snow Bowl a Tier 1 parcel, the highest priority in the plan, because it hosts the LT itself.

Completing such projects requires the long-term commitment, relationship building, and patient persistence that has been GMC's hallmark for Long Trail protection since 1986. Each property and owner is unique, and timing and circumstances must be right for a successful project. GMC is tremendously grateful to Middlebury College for hosting the Long Trail for more than a century, and for cementing its commitment to the trail with legal protection. 🐾



Headquarters Construction Project Nears Completion

ROTHBERG-BIRDWHISTELL VISITOR CENTER TO OPEN TO PUBLIC IN 2025

THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB INVITES YOU to enjoy the scent of fresh lumber, feeling of open space, and beautiful views of the Green Mountains at our new Rothberg-Birdwhistell Visitor Center. Part of the GMC headquarters complex in Waterbury Center, it will be open to help hikers, adventurers and visitors to explore the foot trails of Vermont.

Headquarters History

The club bought and moved into the old May Farm in Waterbury Center in 1992. We paid off the mortgage thanks to a major gift and challenge grant in 1996, solidifying our financial footing and providing room to grow. The Herrick Office Building, the South Barn, and the North Barn on Route 100 housed staff offices and operations, a visitor center and retail space, and inventory and equipment storage.

By 1999, poor ventilation, heating, and cooling in the Herrick Office Building forced

renovations addressing the most pressing deficiencies. But in 2003 the South Barn burned down, complicating renovation plans.

After analyzing the needs of visiting hikers and a growing staff, the club completed a \$1.5 million building project in 2009 to replace the South Barn and house the visitor center, retail space, staff offices, and a meeting hall. Replacement of the Herrick Office Building was planned too, but financial pressure put the project off.

Herrick's structural deterioration worsened, and staff members were moved out for their safety. In 2019 GMC launched the Long Trail Legacy Campaign to raise money for the endowment and other investments for future stability, including a safe and welcoming headquarters for our staff and visitors.

We saw a need for a space where hikers, tourists, members, and groups could really

connect with the Green Mountains and the natural environment around them. A place where they could spend time poring over maps or flipping through historic ephemera. A place where folks could gather and unite around the shared passions for the trail and stewarding the treasured natural spaces of Vermont. A place where GMC's talented field staff could plan new trail projects in safe, effective office space. The new Rothberg-Birdwhistell Visitor Center was born, made possible by a generous gift from David Rothberg and Nan Birdwhistell.

Facilities and Features

Marvin B. Gameroff Hiker Center:

Knowledgeable staff can answer questions, provide personalized hiking and trail recommendations, and share information about the club's trail protection programs in person or by phone or email. There is space for you to sit down, spread out, and plan hikes using GMC's library and other resources.

New Displays: New exhibits will engage visitors with the Green Mountain Club's past, present, and future as we address climate change and further protection of the Long Trail.

Scan the code at right to see a slideshow of Visitor Center construction progress or visit greenmountainclub.org/new-visitor-center



◀ Construction nears completion in November 2024.

Enhanced Retail Area: Guidebooks, maps and GMC gear are available, in addition to merchandise made by local artisans reflecting their love of the Long Trail and the Green Mountains.

Club Room: A comfortable sitting room with sweeping views of Camel's Hump, Bolton Mountain, and Mount Mansfield invites visitors to relax, plan their next adventures, or explore GMC's history through displays of artifacts.

Climate-Controlled Archive Storage: Scheduled visits here accommodate research or informal exploration of the hiking and trail building of the past in GMC's robust collection of archives. Desk space will be available.

Events and Programs

The visitor center will offer programs and workshops to build hikers' skills. We plan to test new programming possibilities this winter and spring, so stay tuned. This winter, the club's 32nd season of the James P. Taylor Outdoor Adventure Speaker Series will host informative and inspiring presenters. We will offer introductory courses such as Hiking 101 and Winter Hiking 101 throughout the year, and Map and Compass courses, Wilderness First Aid, and seasonal foraging classes.

In late spring the visitor services manager will begin regular guided hikes on the Short Trail and other trails in Vermont. We also plan to partner with youth and adult affinity groups to increase access to and participation in hiking.

The meeting hall and club room will be available for rental, perfect for trainings, meetings, and private events. More information on rentals will be forthcoming.

Extending the Visitor Experience

2024 was the tenth year of Green Mountain Club volunteers serving hikers at Barnes Camp Visitor Center in Smugglers' Notch. Situated right on the Long Trail, Barnes Camp has had many iterations housing skiers, hikers, and caretakers before a renovation and reopening in 2014. Being so close to the trail, visitor experiences here really focus on immediate hiking plans and preparation, and orientation to the Mount Mansfield and Smugglers' Notch area. Barnes Camp volunteers staff the facility three days per week and served more than 7,000 visitors this season.

Folks from all over the world often return after their hikes to thank volunteers for their help, often with the comment, "That was just the hike we were looking for!"



New interior of the Visitor Center.

GMC also staffs the Mount Mansfield Visitor Center at the top of the Stowe Toll Road in season. Caretakers answer hiking questions, stressing the importance and fragility of the alpine zone at one of the busiest hiking destinations in Vermont. Theirs is a crucial role in GMC's stewardship and education missions. Last season Mansfield caretakers encountered 27,296 visitors.

The Next 10 Years

Since reopening in 2009, the Marvin B. Gameroff Hiker Center has served more than 50,000 visitors in person, and thousands more by phone and email. The Barnes Camp Visitor Center has seen more than 60,000 visitors in its 10 years, and the Mansfield Visitor Center has seen nearly 400,000 visitors in the last 15 years.

Over the past two years, we've invested more in efforts to improve visitor services. We've hired a visitor services manager with expertise in interpretive programming, and assessed community needs to develop better programming for all hikers. Robust digital education resources supplement our three staffed centers to achieve our strategic goal of providing trail resource education and information while cultivating the next generation of hikers and GMC members.

We look forward to welcoming you at the Rothberg-Birdwhistell Visitor Center!

— EMILY MOSHER, VISITOR SERVICES MANAGER



Come See Us!

Stop by to see the new Visitor Center for yourself. From January 15 – February 15, spend \$20 and receive a free GMC logo camping mug when you mention the *Long Trail News*.

First 75 customers, in-person visits only.





GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB
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There are many ways to donate to the Green Mountain Club, and gifts of any size and method make our work possible.

These two methods provide tax benefits and may be of interest to you as you consider year-end giving to GMC and beyond:

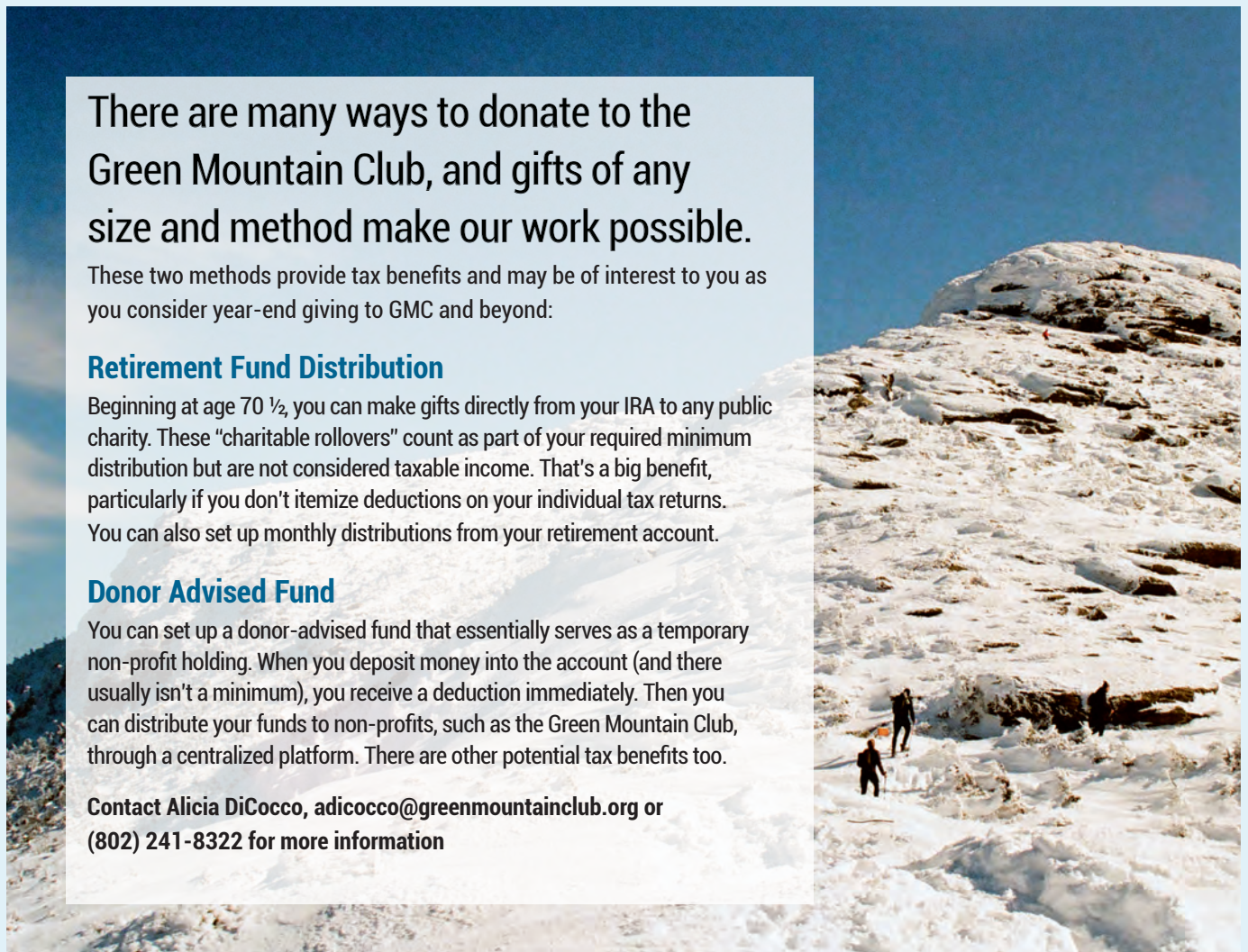
Retirement Fund Distribution

Beginning at age 70 ½, you can make gifts directly from your IRA to any public charity. These "charitable rollovers" count as part of your required minimum distribution but are not considered taxable income. That's a big benefit, particularly if you don't itemize deductions on your individual tax returns. You can also set up monthly distributions from your retirement account.

Donor Advised Fund

You can set up a donor-advised fund that essentially serves as a temporary non-profit holding. When you deposit money into the account (and there usually isn't a minimum), you receive a deduction immediately. Then you can distribute your funds to non-profits, such as the Green Mountain Club, through a centralized platform. There are other potential tax benefits too.

Contact Alicia DiCocco, adicocco@greenmountainclub.org or (802) 241-8322 for more information



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