

PATCHWORK FARM AND BAKERY
E. HARDWICK, VT 05836

REC'D DEC 05 2006

Dear Trini Brassard and LVRTC,

Dec. 2, 2006

I am writing to comment on the Plan for the Rails-To-Trails along the Lamoille Valley corridor. In our case, we are specifically concerned with the corridor from Hardwick to E. Hardwick.

We have approximately 1200 feet of land that borders the RR. Our house is located approx. 75 feet from the corridor and my husband's bakery only 25 feet. My husband has farmed this land organically for the past thirteen years. We have a small fruit orchard, fruit trees, grapes and blueberries, all organically grown, as well as poultry. Needless to say, we are VERY concerned about the use of pesticides/herbicides on this portion of the tracks as well as the snowmobiles and the lack of enforcement and pollution they will create.

My husband and I have taken care of this portion of the RR for years now. We use our weed whacker to keep the weeds down and my young children and our neighbors children walk regularly on this trail. My children and I also pick copious amounts of wild blackberries on this trail. We ask you to not use pesticides on this portion of the trail. We are willing to help maintain it, as we have in the past, in exchange for not using pesticides on this portion. Pesticides/herbicides are potentially extremely harmful to the environment and to our health. To use them on a trail such as this, with animals and people using it and with its close proximity to homes, is both irresponsible and dangerous. Please do not use pesticides/herbicides in maintaining this trail; please explore all other options.

We also would like to ask that the snowmobiles continue to use the alternate route that they use now... that does not go by our house, given our VERY close proximity to the trail. They have never used this small portion and they have landowners around us that can accommodate them and have for the past 10-15 years. A 1997 MIT study emphasized (and I know Mr. Watson is aware of this study and although he does not agree with its content...It is the most comprehensive study, to date, of this issue) that certain sections of the trail were NOT to be opened to snowmobile use because of noise and other unreasonable impacts on abutting landowners (safety, privacy). We would find it a great hardship to have snowmobiles whizzing by our house at all hours and we have huge safety concerns for our children and pets, especially given the mostly nonexistent

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enforcement of curfews, etc... We have already this year had a 4-wheeler and a dirt- biker on the trail. Thank goodness our children and dog were not on the trail either time!! Whom do we call when these incidents happen and what will it take... hopefully not a life!!!

We ask that you honor our requests and would welcome a visit from anyone interested to see our proximity to the tracks and the hardship the use of pesticides/herbicides and snowmobiles would cause us. We look forward to hearing from you! I have included a letter that I wrote in 2005 to various folks that details more of our concerns and thoughts for the future.

Sincerely,



Anne McPherson Charles Emers

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April 3, 2005

Dear Senator Bartlett,

We have met in many capacities over the years, but it is in your life as a legislator, that I contact you now. I need your help to preserve some of Vermont's finest Natural Resources and help support economic development in this community .

I am referring to your hard work on the Rails to Trails Issue. A group of landowner's along this corridor are proposing that the state look seriously at preserving approximately 10 miles of this corridor for nature and the future of eco-tourism in this community. By making this small corridor of the total 94 miles of rails, (of the over 6000 miles Vast already uses) unavailable to snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles, you support a whole segment of our community that would be lost otherwise. More importantly , you allow myself, my husband and two young daughters our right to the peace and quiet of our land. Let me explain.

Our home lies 75 feet from the old railroad bed. We have lived here for 13 years. We located here because of the natural environment and because we felt a kinship with our neighbors and our community. We bought 3 acres from the 200+/- of our neighbors' land (Vermont Land Trust Land) and began our adventure in organic farming. My husband worked for our neighbor on his organic farm and we felt we could make a go of it. We both feel strongly that raising a family in the most natural environment you can, is a priority. Over the years we have raised turkey's , meat chickens (every year) , egg-laying chickens (every day) and every vegetable that will grow here, as well as two beautiful, smart, nature-loving daughters. Recently we have begun planting fruit tress, berry bushes and grape vines in hopes of developing a small winery in the future and my husband has gone into the organic bread baking business using many of the things we grow (rye, potatoes, garlic, onions) . Baking has given my husband year-round income, while still allowing us to homestead. Needless to say we live close to the land.

We have found this community to be one of many like-minded individuals whom feel that the stewardship of the land is not a right but a necessity. I have been president of the board of our local Coop, Buffalo Mountain and our business has seen ourselves grow from a 1/2 million dollar business to a million dollar business in the last 5 years. Our neighbors organic vegetable farm which has one mile of the corridor on their property alone, has been in existence for 16 years supplying our community and many beyond with fresh organic produce. We have a thriving Farmer's Market (right on the tracks) that was begun

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by a group of farmer's six years ago. Since the tracks have been out of use for ten years now we also have a thriving deer habitat, as well as wild turkeys (the flock is twenty strong right now) songbirds, ruffed Grouse, Merganser and Wood ducks and countless other small animals that would be very adversely affected if snowmobiles came through.

What if we were to look at this stretch of rails as not a loss for snowmobilers, but a gain for our economic development through ecotourism (imagine a walking/biking trail that goes through wild areas as well as by farms; attached to a village on two ends with a bed and breakfast on the trail). While we're dreaming... let's imagine a trail that is just for snowshoers and x-country skiers that helps support Vermont's own health initiatives by supporting activities that help reduce heart disease and obesity in children. Imagine this trail hooking up to trails at Hazen Union High School that the forestry students have helped create or kids being able to ride their bike from town out to the ball field "Hooty Dome " which is also on the trail. I have taught my daughters to appreciate and respect nature as they have learned to snowshoe and x-country ski on these trails. Countless others over the years have also used these trails for the same recreation purposes as well as deer and bird hunters. These trails are a valuable asset as they are.

We can see where much of these rails are excellent for snowmobiles. The stretch from Morrisville to Hardwick is an excellent example... very flat and follows the river and hardly any homes or businesses near the trail .But if the snowmobiles come here, our environmental and economic vision will be lost. If the snowmobiles come, ATVs will follow. VAST cannot adequately police the trails they have now and purposely putting landowners and snowmobilers right next to each other could only lead to more policing issues. Have you ever tried skiing on snowmobile trails? Would you want your 8 year old daughter skiing on the same trail as a snowmobile that can reach speeds of 60 miles an hour ? The State's Statues even states that snowmobiles should not be within 500 feet of homes.. Probably because of the noise and pollution they cause. The trail runs within 15 feet of our bakery (permitted Building...) and our home is about 25 feet from the trail as I stated above. If the trails are opened to motorized traffic within this sensitive area it will RUIN our quality of life as well as that of the nature that exists within it's reach. And it also means that the state is basically saying that I have no rights on my own property ; no right to be free of noise and pollution; no right to privacy; no right to safety for my children, their friends or our animals. I can't believe that is what the State of Vermont wants for it's landowners, especially those landowners that want to take care of the land. A nature trail in this section would address our concerns and those of the countless others who live on this corridor and or appreciate nature.

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Please consider this proposal and help the landowners along this corridor make it a reality. Ten miles (+/-) for nature/conservation is a small portion of the total 94 mile railroad corridor, but it could make a big difference to the lives and the economics of this community. Footsteps in the woods or on trails do not make the same impact that snowmobiles and ATVs make. The snowmobilers already have ways around this area... In other words it would not be a great loss to them, but a BIG sacrifice for us . If you are still unconvinced of the merits of this proposal, I suggest you come out and walk this portion of the trails with us this spring and see for yourself. Public hearings that allow the landowners on this corridor have a voice is another way to help this vision come to reality and is a necessity seeing the extent of the affect this 94 mile railroad corridor will have on humans and wildlife living in its' tracks.

I used to live in North Hyde Park and know you from Gisella's yarn shop. I know the land is an important issue to you. Please help us preserve some of this corridor for foot -power and non-consumption based recreation!!!! A group of us will be meeting with Peter Welch at the State House on Thursday at 4 PM . If you could join us that would be great, but at any rate I hope to hear from you soon. You can contact me evenings at 472-3621 or at my e-mail mcmers@vtlink.net or my address above. Please hear this as a positive idea for the rails to trails and for Vermont in general. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Anne McPherson

Cc: Legislators Robert Dostis, Ginny Lyons, Richard Mazza, Richard Westman, Lucy Leriche,, Jane Kitchell, Conservation Law Foundation, Vermont Natural Resources Council, James Jeffords, Patrick Leahy, Bernard Sanders.