

## **RAILROAD RIGHTS-OF-WAY (DISCONTINUED RAILROADS)**

### **Philosophy:**

Discontinued railroads have left many roadbeds throughout Vermont, several segments of which are on state lands. These roadbeds and rights-of-way provide an excellent multi-use trail resource, often of considerable uninterrupted length. Snowmobiles, mountain bikers, cross-country skiers, runners, hikers, horseback riders, and others use them regularly. They have potential for becoming a backbone of recreational “greenways” in the state.

However, the beds are occasionally used by off-road vehicles, causing some conflicts with other recreationists and presenting safety issues. In some instances they are used by local residents as driveways, to gain access to their properties. Such uses need to be controlled so that other users and the resource are not adversely impacted, harmed, or excluded.

### **Policy:**

Discontinued railroad bed rights-of-way shall be considered multi-use recreation trails for public use (see Attachment 1). Motorized vehicles are therefore prohibited, with the exception of:

- 1) Snowmobiles.
- 2) Registered motor vehicles utilizing portions to gain access to private property, under existing legal agreements with the Department, original railroad company or legal successor, or the Vermont Agency of Transportation.
- 3) State vehicles, or private vehicles under contract to the state, performing maintenance or other state-related work on the right-of-way.
- 4) Vehicles used for medical or other emergencies.

No new crossings or private uses of these trails shall be allowed.

In accordance with recommendations of the Vermont Recreation Plan, discontinued railroad beds on private land shall be priority trail acquisitions by the Department, especially when they are of considerable length and/or connect with other trails on public lands, making a regional trail corridor.

### **Procedure for Implementation:**

Forest and park managers at the appropriate level shall ensure compliance with this policy, although enforcement, if necessary, shall be referred to the appropriate legal authority.

Forestry District Managers and Parks Regional Managers should identify important railroad bed segments on private lands and work with the landowners, Division of Recreation, and Division of Lands Administration on possible acquisition.

*Conrad M. Motyka, Acting Commissioner*

Effective Date: May 15, 1991

Attachments (1)

**RAILROAD RIGHTS-OF-WAY (DISCONTINUED RAILROADS)**

**Attachment 1**

**MULTI-USE RAILROAD BED TRAILS ON STATE LANDS**

Central Vermont Railroad Trail (Lake Carmi State Park)

Delaware & Hudson Railroad Trail (Castleton to West Rupert)

Montpelier-Wells River Railroad Trail (Groton State Forest)

Rutland Railroad Trail (portions owned by Department in towns of Grand Isle, North Hero, South Hero, and Alburg)

West River Railroad Trail (Jamaica State Park)