



PARK ACCESS REPORT 2023

Vermont Parks Forever believes that the state parks are for everyone. Since 2016, VPF has provided free park passes each year to thousands of Vermonters, including foster families, youth programs, those with developmental disabilities, BIPOC communities, new Americans, mental health clients, and those with limited mobility, who otherwise would not have the chance to experience all Vermont's state parks have to offer.

VERMONT PARKS FOREVER

Proudly Serving Every County

Vermont Parks Forever (VPF) has granted passes to organizations working in every county in the state. With your support, VPF can continue to expand the impact of our Park Access Fund. [Visit our website](#) to learn more.

1,000%

FUNDING INCREASE

Thanks to our generous donors, VPF increased park access funding by 1,000% since 2016 to help even more Vermonters.

10,000

DAYS IN THE PARK IN 2023

VPF granted day-use passes to community partners for a total of over 10,000 individual day visits.

Adaptive Beach Access

The Vermont Parks Forever Park Access Fund is getting people into the state parks, and the new Beach Access Initiative will get more people into the water! Adaptive Beach Access through the Park Access Fund is a new initiative from Vermont Parks Forever in early funding with plans to buy and install new beach access wheelchairs in Vermont's state parks. When a beach access wheelchair is available for visitors, the benefits are clear: more people are able to experience the mental and physical health improvements gained by spending time in nature. Thank you to the Northeast Kingdom Fund at the Vermont Community Foundation for funding a beach access wheelchair at Brighton State Park in 2024!

2023 Park Access Grantees

Beckley Day School at Washington County
Mental Health Services

Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Vergennes

Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County

Central Vermont Families
and Friends United

Champlain Community Services

Clara Martin Center

Clarina Howard Nichols Center

Come Alive Outside

EDD Adaptive Sports

Experience Literacy

Howard Center

Lamoille County Mental Health

Laraway Backpack Program

Laraway Youth and Family Services

Mentor Vermont

Northeast Disabled Athletic Association

North Branch Nature Center

Northwest Counseling and Support
Services, Inc:
Adult Services

Parent Child Center
School Based Autism Program

Outdoor Gear Exchange Clinics

Outdoor Asian Vermont

Outdoor Family Weekend
(University of Vermont)

Powered Magazine

Reach Up

Recovery Vermont

Sara Holbrook Community Center

Spectrum Youth and Family Services

The Janet S. Munt Family Room

The Rainbow Bridge Community Center

Turning Point Recovery Center of
Bennington

Turning Point Recovery Center of
Springfield

Unlikely Riders

United Way Working Bridges Program

Vermont Achievement Center - Sheldon
Academy

Vermont Department for Children and
Families

Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports

VT Releaf Collective

VT Social Adventure Group

Washington County Mental Health
Services

WIC (Women, Infants and Children)

While the positive stories are many, we've highlighted a few on the following pages.

VERMONT FAMILY NETWORK

Vermont Family Network works to empower and support all Vermont children, youth, and families, especially those with disabilities or special health needs by providing parent training and tools to help parents become advocates for their children. With support from Vermont Parks Forever, 86 families visited Vermont State Parks, including: Silver Lake State Park, Sand Bar State Park, Mt. Philo State Park, and Elmore State Park. Families swam, hiked, picnicked, kayaked, and enjoyed playing in the sand - making memories and spending time together outdoors without financial strain.



“Visiting the park as a family, enjoying a BBQ lunch together, playing on the beach, and kayaking with the loons are memories that will last a lifetime.”

- Vermont Family Network
Program Participant

“Going to the state park brought us immense joy as we played in the sand, jumped in the water, and picnicked on the beach!”

- Vermont Family Network
Program Participant

RECOVERY VERMONT

Recovery Vermont provides Vermonters with services and support they need to achieve and maintain mental health and recovery from substance use disorders. Their network of 13 recovery centers received support from Vermont Parks Forever to create a campaign of awareness about the benefits of spending time in nature. Free entrance to Vermont's state parks supported people in recovery and their families.



“The best part of taking our family to a state park was seeing how engaged and occupied the little ones were.”

- Recovery Vermont Program Participant

“I’m thankful for our state parks because I feel free there”

- Recovery Vermont Program Participant

NORTHEAST DISABLED ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

NDAА is a Vermont-based, non-profit charitable organization whose mission is to provide recreational and competitive athletic opportunities for people with physical disabilities, and to support disabled athletes in their pursuit of excellence. With support from Vermont Parks Forever in 2023, 138 adaptive athletes launched kayaks with an additional 139 family, friends, and caregivers. Kayakers enjoyed paddling at Sandbar State Park, Waterbury Center State Park, and Green River Reservoir State Park. Vermont Parks Forever and NDAА have been working together since 2019.



"There have been very few positive moments since my stroke and this made all the difference for me! I can't wait to come back next year."

- JS, NDAА Program Participant

"I haven't seen my sister so happy in years. She had a smile on her face the entire time we were paddling."

- CB, NDAА Program Participant

MENTOR VERMONT

MENTOR Vermont aims to close the mentoring gap and drive equity through quality mentoring relationships so every young person in Vermont has the supportive mentoring relationships they need to grow and thrive. With support from Vermont Parks Forever, 600 youth and volunteer mentors were granted free access to a Vermont state park. The Park Access Fund enabled many mentor pairs to visit a state park for the first time while building lasting memories together outdoors.



“My mentee and I went to Branbury State Park last week. She picked this park because it is so ‘green and peaceful’. She just turned 10 years old and she said the best part of visiting a state park with her mentor is that it gives her some quiet time... The best part of visiting a state park with my mentee was to see her relax and enjoy herself.”

- Mentor

SPRINGFIELD AREA PARENT CHILD CENTER

SAPCC serves over 6,000 people every year in southern Windsor and northern Windham counties by building bridges of support for children, families, and caregivers through a broad range of wraparound services including childcare, community playgroups, mental health support, and financial assistance. With park entry covered by Vermont Parks Forever, 108 children primarily ages 0-6 and their families found peace in nature by visiting state parks including: Camp Plymouth State Park, Mount Ascutney State Park, and Lowell Lake State Park. Staff reported that providing free park entry strengthened their working relationships with community members.



“Knowing that I could go to Mount Ascutney State Park for free was the motivator for me to do something for my family’s mental health and wellness. I loaded everyone in the car with some snacks and water, and we drove up the mountain, which was beautiful in and of itself. Once we reached the top of the mountain, we climbed the watchtower! It is a reminder of how blessed we are to live in such a beautiful state where nature is always at our fingertips to keep us grounded.”

- *SAPCC Program Participant*

WIC (WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN)

The Vermont WIC program is a Supplemental Food and Nutrition Education Program for families that serves approximately 11,000 people throughout Vermont. In 2023, Vermont Parks Forever granted over 1,300 free days in the park to WIC participants and their families. Passes were distributed in WIC offices and through community events. The Middlebury WIC office reported the highest event participation in the office’s history with over 100 people attending to claim park passes and receive information about WIC support. Many families reported visiting a Vermont state park for the first time, and WIC staff strengthened their relationships with clients and their community.



**Draw a picture of your day
in the park together**



“Today we visited Branbury State Park. My favorite part of the day was playing in the sand with my shovel and scooping up water from the lake with my cup.”

- WIC Program Participant

“ I love state parks because they offer a clean healthy environment to enjoy family fun!”

- WIC Program Participant

**Vermont Parks Forever increased access to the park system in 2023
for our Vermont neighbors thanks to these generous donors:**

BlueCross BlueShield of Vermont

Vermont Electric Cooperative

Cashdan/Stein Great Grandmother Fund
of Vermont of Vermont Community
Foundation

Vermont Mutual Insurance

Vermont-NEA

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NorthCountry Federal Credit Union

Vermont Transco LLC - VELCO

SCHIP

Washington Electric Cooperative
Community Fund

The Alchemist

The Charles P. Ferro Foundation

The Northeast Kingdom Fund of
Vermont Community Foundation

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YOU,
DONORS!**

Vermont's state parks are
for everyone and together
we can promote a more
equitable outdoor
experience.

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