



THE CATAMOUNT TRAIL: A LANDOWNER'S GUIDE

What is the Catamount Trail?

The Catamount Trail is a 300-mile cross-country ski trail that runs the length of Vermont. Starting in Readsboro, on the Massachusetts border, it winds its way through the heart of the Green Mountains to Jay, on the Canadian border. Along the way it connects many of Vermont's finest cross-country ski centers and numerous country inns and lodges.

What is the Catamount Trail Association?

The Catamount Trail Association (CTA) is a member-supported, non-profit organization dedicated to developing, maintaining, and protecting the Catamount Trail, and furthering cross-country skiing in the state. The Association is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and employs a full-time Executive Director and three part-time staff. The organization was founded by three energetic Vermont outdoor enthusiasts who researched and skied the original trail route in 1984. Today the Association has more than 2000 members of whom about 65 percent live in Vermont and 35 percent reside out-of-state.

Who uses the Trail and how often?

The Trail is open to the public. It is used by skiers and snowshoers of all ages who reside within and outside of

Vermont. The Trail is used from December through April, or as long as there is enough snow for skiing. People ski the Trail most often on weekends and holidays and less often during the week. Day trips are most popular although some people do multiple day inn-to-inn trips involving overnight lodging. Still others ski the entire trail from Massachusetts to Canada staying at local inns along the way.

What kind of land does the Trail cross?

The Trail goes through many different landscapes including forests, mountains, villages, and farm fields. The Trail takes advantage of existing trails and old logging roads wherever possible and shares some snowmobile trails. It also uses groomed trails of a dozen cross-country ski touring centers.

Who maintains the Trail?

Local volunteers maintain the Catamount Trail. The CTA has a key volunteer, or “Trail Chief,” in charge of maintenance along each of the thirty-one sections of the Trail. The Trail Chiefs recruit other CTA members and volunteer groups to help them maintain their sections each year. Maintenance is usually done in the fall before hunting season and consists of replacing missing blazes, removing fallen branches, and cutting back brush along the Trail.

Does the Catamount Trail Association own the land the Trail is on?

No. The Catamount Trail Association does not own any land. Sixty percent of the Trail crosses land that is privately owned and forty percent of the Trail crosses land owned by towns, the State of Vermont, or the US Forest Service. Now that the Trail is complete, the CTA has begun a trail protection program to obtain permanent trail access through a variety of means.

What kind of agreements does the Catamount Trail Association have with landowners?

There are several different types of landowner agreements. The Catamount Trail Association has cooperative agreements with the State of Vermont and the US Forest Service to use publicly owned lands. Agreements with municipalities and large corporate landowners usually take the form of a license.

Currently, most agreements with individual landowners are written permission forms. In this document the landowner and the CTA agree on where the trail will be located and on any other considerations or management needs, such as gates or fences that need to be opened for the winter and closed in the spring.

In addition, the CTA holds 27 miles of permanent easements for trail access that have been

granted by private landowners. A major effort to secure the Trail by converting informal and written agreements into permanent trail access easements is underway.

What about liability?

CTA maintains a one million dollar general liability policy that protects the CTA and cooperating landowners in the case of a claim by a trail user. This policy also provides for legal defense of CTA and landowners paid for by the insurer. The CTA has never had an insurance claim.

Vermont has adopted strong laws that protect private landowners who open their lands to public recreation from being liable in the event that someone gets hurt while recreating on private land. In addition, because the Catamount Trail is a part of the Vermont Trails System, there is even greater protection for landowners along the Catamount Trail. To be liable for a person's injury on the Catamount Trail, a landowner would need to intentionally inflict harm.

For more information on liability and public recreation on private lands, call the CTA and ask for the "Public Recreation on Private Lands" booklet.

If I allow the Trail to cross my land, do I give up any of my property rights?

No. Unless a permanent Trail Easement is granted, the landowner gives up no ownership rights by simply granting permission for the Trail. The landowner may withdraw permission at any time.

Will the Trail affect my privacy?

No. We encourage you to be involved in planning the layout of the Trail and to let us know when changes are needed to accommodate your changing land uses. We plan the Trail so that people won't ski by your house or farm building. We are conscientious about maintaining adequate signage, and have found that most skiers naturally stay on the trail as long as they are pointed in the right direction by clear signs.

Who deals with problems on the Trail?

We do. It is inevitable that a mid-winter storm may cause a tree to blow down, or that a trail marker will come loose from its nail. A CTA Trail Chief, who usually lives nearby, fixes these problems. If you learn of a problem on the Trail, you can help us by notifying the CTA office or your local Trail Chief.

Is the Trail open during the non-snow season?

No. It is a winter-use only trail. However, because the Trail uses so many other trails, such as bike paths and Forest Service Roads, some parts may be used in the summer if they are part of another, summer-use trail system.

Is the Catamount Trail a "wilderness" trail?

Parts of the Trail go through undeveloped, backcountry areas. Other parts go through the centers of villages and right by busy resorts. Still other parts go through farm fields, recently logged areas, and by active sawmills. The Trail is quite eclectic - just like Vermont. We

like to think that skiing the trail provides a window on the Vermont landscape - working and wild.

Is the Trail complete?

Yes. As of 2008, the 300-mile Trail is complete. At various locations along the Trail, CTA staff and volunteers are actively scouting reroutes to reduce the length of Trail shared with snowmobiles.

How is the CTA Funded?

The CTA is funded primarily through member dues, donations, and special events. The remaining income is from the sale of our guidebook and other CTA products, cost share grants from the State of Vermont and the US Forest Service, and grants from foundations.

How do people find out more about the trail?

CTA's web site: www.catamounttrail.org is one of the best sources of information about the Trail and the organization. On the website you will find trail maps, trail descriptions, news, our events calendar, archived newsletters, volunteer opportunities and links to dozens of inns, touring centers, and related sites.

The CTA also publishes the *Catamount Trail Guidebook*, which provides detailed maps and trip descriptions for each section of the Trail. The Guidebook and various brochures are available at ski centers, inns and retail shops, and directly from the CTA office. The Catamount Trail is frequently featured in magazine and newspaper articles.