PARK ACCESS REPORT 2025



VERMONT PARKS FOREVER



Photo by Park Access partner Windsor County Youth Services

Vermont's 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.

One fund. Two ways to increase access.

PARK ACCESS FUND

Celebrating 10 seasons in 2025

Providing free days in the state parks to nonprofit community partners working to help Vermonters underrepresented in the outdoors experience all the parks have to offer.

PILOT PROGRAM

New in 2025

A first-in-the-nation program offering 100,000+ income-eligible Vermonters free days in the state parks.

44,000+ FREE VISITS

With your support, VPF can continue to expand the impact of our Park Access Fund. Visit our website to learn more.

30,000+

FREE DAYS TO INDIVIDUALS

VPF's Pilot Program granted free days in the parks to income-eligible Vermonters throughout the state.

14,000+

FREE DAYS TO 60 PARTNERS

VPF granted day-use passes through 60 nonprofit community partners for a total of over 14,000 individual day visits.



ADAPTIVE BEACH ACCESS

To date, we've worked to add 6 adaptive beach access wheelchairs and hundreds of feet of accessible walkways to beaches so everyone can enjoy the water.

Find your closest beach access wheelchair on our website.



PILOT PROGRAM

This year, over 100,000 Vermonters receiving services through the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families and the Department of Health's WIC Program were offered free day-use entry to the state parks. Providing free day use is a cost-effective way to enhance the health of Vermont's communities and provide more equitable access. This privately funded pilot program is an expansion of the existing Park Access Fund and is the first of its kind in the nation. It's a Vermont-grown, Vermont-focused, and Vermont-led idea!
Learn more on our website.

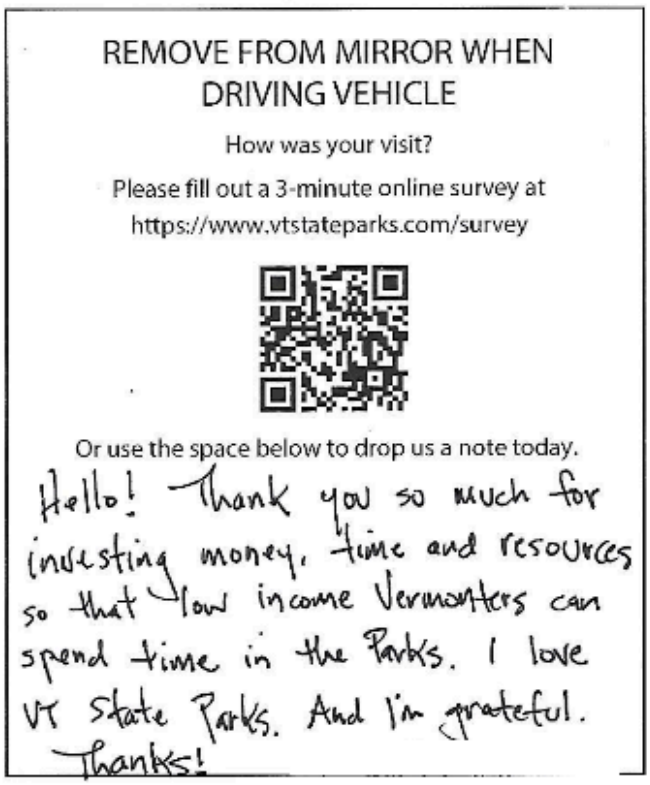


Pilot Program posters were distributed to doctors offices and libraries throughout the state.

PILOT PROGRAM FEEDBACK

Throughout the summer, Pilot Program participants enjoyed the state parks and shared their experiences with Vermont Parks Forever and Vermont State Parks staff.

Real-time feedback received after a visit to a state park funded by the Pilot Program.



REMOVE FROM MIRROR WHEN DRIVING VEHICLE

How was your visit?

Please fill out a 3-minute online survey at https://www.vtstateparks.com/survey

Or use the space below to drop us a note today.

Hello! Thank you so much for investing money, time and resources so that low income Vermonters can spend time in the Parks. I love VT State Parks. And I'm grateful. Thanks!

"This program allowed us to visit many parks and ones we had not previously been to. It allowed me to access beautiful scenery and get my children outside in fresh air on a weekly basis. I am so grateful for this program!"

"I have 5 children, and I homeschool. Having free access to the parks was a highlight of our summer. Thank you so much for the opportunity."

"[The Pilot Program] was such a wonderful benefit this summer! As our children get older, it becomes more costly to do activities with them. Being able to enjoy the state parks and be outdoors and active at no charge was a blessing."

PILOT PROGRAM PARK VISITATION



Most Visited State Parks by Pilot Program Participants

1. Branbury State Park
2. Lake Shaftsbury State Park
3. Crystal Lake State Park
4. Sand Bar State Park
5. Camp Plymouth State Park

39

PARKS VISITED

Of the 40 state parks offering day-use, 39 state parks recorded 30,000+ visits by Pilot Program participants from May - October

2025 PARK ACCESS COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro
Boys & Girls Club of Rutland County
Celebrate Recovery
Champlain Community Services (CCS)
Clara Martin Center
Clarina Howard Nichols Center
Come Alive Outside
Rutland Mental Health Services
Counseling Service of Addison County, Inc.
Elevate Youth Services
Families First
Health Care & Rehabilitation Services
Howard Center
Kindle Farm School
Lamoille County Mental Health Services
Lamoille Family Center
Laraway Youth & Family Services
Lund
Mary Johnson Children's Center
MENTOR Vermont
Milton Family Community Center
The Collaborative
NCSS Academy of Learning
NFI Vermont - Cornerstone School
Northeast Disabled Athletic Association
Northeast Family Institute - Turning Points
Northeast Kingdom Learning Services
River Valley Therapeutic Residence
Riverflow Commmunity
Rutland County Parent Child Center
Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary
South Hero Land Trust
Spectrum Youth & Family Services
Springfield Area Parent Child Center
Sunrise Family Resource Center
The DREAM Program, Inc
The Family Place
The Janet S Munt Family Room
The Johnson Health Center
Turning Point of Franklin County
Upper Valley Services
UVM Extension Outdoor Family Weekend
Vermont Achievement Center, Sheldon Academy
Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports
Vermont Center for Independent Living
Vermont Defender General's Office
Vermont Department of Health
Vermont Kin As Parents
Vermont Trails and Greenway Council
Vermont Works for Women
Washington County Mental Health
Windsor County Mentors
Windsor County Youth Services
Wings Community Programs
Working Bridges, United Way of Northwest VT and Green Mountain United Way

The positive stories are many and we've highlighted a few on the following pages.

FAMILIES FIRST

Families First supports approximately one hundred youth and adults living with developmental disabilities in Southern Vermont. Families First strives to promote independent living, enhance self-esteem, and cultivate community membership. Thanks to support from the Park Access Fund, many program participants visited a Vermont state park for the first time. Participants hiked, enjoyed nature, and built confidence exploring a space that had previously been out of reach due to funding limitations.



"I've lived here for years and never walked those trails before. It felt amazing to finally go!"

- Families First Participant

"Being able to use the state park passes made such a difference. We were able to bring people who usually can't afford to go, and they loved it."

- Families First
Direct Support Provider

THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF RUTLAND COUNTY

The Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County provides safe places to learn and play, positive role models, and educational programming. With the help of VPF, they served more than 300 youth this summer. Many participants experienced their first swim in a natural lake, hiked a trail for the first time, and got to experience roasting marshmallows in a park! Park visits were powerful opportunities for children to build confidence, connect with nature, and strengthen friendships outside the classroom.



"I'd never been to a lake before this year. Now I want to go hiking with my family!"

- 8-Year-Old Club Member

"Thanks to Vermont Parks Forever, our kids spent their summer and fall swimming, hiking, and laughing together in some of the most beautiful places in our state. For many of them, it was their first real outdoor adventure, and it won't be their last."

- Malik Hines, Director of Operations

MARY JOHNSON CHILDREN'S CENTER

Mary Johnson Children's Center nurtures children and families of all backgrounds to strengthen belonging and well-being. Thanks to the support of Vermont Parks Forever, 90 students in the School Age Program had the opportunity to spend time in nature—away from the school setting—enjoying a beautiful summer day by the lake. They relaxed, played, and simply experienced the joy of being kids.



"It was so great seeing our students back at the lake. Our younger students spent hours building and playing in the sand. Our older students swam, played yard games, and read books in the shade of the trees. It is truly always a pleasure to attend."

- Staff Member

"I liked playing and swimming with my friends at Lake Dunmore. The water was warmer than the air!"

- Student

NORTHEAST KINGDOM LEARNING SERVICES

Northeast Kingdom Learning Services strives to inspire and empower learners by providing adult education, literacy services, and K-12 tutorials in Orleans, Essex, and Caledonia Counties. Thanks to support from VPF, their summer plans included a field trip to Boulder Beach State Park, where students chose between swimming, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and walking. In the afternoon, they were given an introduction to forest bathing and wrote about their experiences. Students ventured on to explore the free Groton Nature Center, which re-opened in June 2023 through a partnership with VPF, Vermont State Parks, and ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain.



"It was a great success! Laura Lee [the park interpreter] was full of information and engaging...They definitely had fun. In addition to learning about the park and enjoying the sun, everyone got a bit closer. I'd call it a very successful field trip."

- Liam O'Connor
NEKLS Plan Manager

NORTHEAST DISABLED ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

NDAA 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. Celebrating seven years of partnership with Vermont Parks Forever in 2025, 130 adaptive athletes, including 42 new participants, completed 468 kayak launches. Each paddler was empowered by kayaking independently (with adaptations as needed), and accompanied by a volunteer, friends, family member or caregiver. Paddlers enjoyed Waterbury Center State Park and Sand Bar State Park throughout the 2025 season.



"These past few weeks of learning to paddle with my new diagnosis of Parkinson's disease have most definitely been a highlight of my summer, and it gives me hope that I will be able to continue enjoying the outdoors and nature, even as my condition progresses. Thank you."

- Program Participant

Vermont Parks Forever increased access to the park system in 2025 for our Vermont neighbors thanks to these generous donors:

Alma Gibbs Donchian Foundation

Anonymous Donor
of the Vermont Community Foundation

BlueCross BlueShield of Vermont

Cashdan/Stein Great Grandmother Fund
of the Vermont Community Foundation

Chroma Technology

Common Deer

Couch Family Foundation

EastRise Credit Union

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of the Vermont Community Foundation

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The Alchemist

The Charles P. Ferro Foundation

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Ursa Major Natural Skincare

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Vermont Electric Cooperative

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THANK YOU, DONORS!

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