

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
POLICY POSITION
FUNDING OF PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION

As Vermont's land values continue to rise under the pressures of growth and development, our open spaces and access to natural resources become scarcer and more limited. It has become increasingly difficult and increasingly important for the state, municipalities, community groups and non-profits to acquire land or access to land and water resources for use by the public for outdoor recreation.

Because Vermont residents are finding themselves increasingly denied access to outdoor recreational opportunities on private land, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board was given, by the Legislature, the mission of funding "activities which will encourage or assist ... the protection of areas suited for outdoor public recreational activity." In carrying out this mission, the Board has adopted the following policy to guide it.

- I. The VHCB shall use the following documents, adopted by the Agency of Natural Resources as primary sources of information:

The Vermont Recreation Plan will be used as the primary source of information identifying broad based needs for public outdoor recreation.

The Agency of Natural Resources Land Acquisition Plan will be the primary source of information for state land acquisitions.

Other related studies by the Agency of Natural Resources.

Community Recreation plans will be the primary source of information for community land acquisition projects.

- II. Land which the Trust Fund helps to preserve under the category of public outdoor recreation must have a specific public outdoor recreational use or be suited for a specific public outdoor recreational activity.
- III. The Board is willing to fund a variety of preservation methods including, but not limited to, acquisition fee simple, easements, transfers of development rights, and land swaps, as long as the result is the perpetual conservation and protection of lands for public outdoor recreation. However, as is the case with all VHCTF supported projects, there must be non-profit, municipal or state agency involvement in the public outdoor recreation projects, and the applicant for funds must be a non-profit organization, municipality or state agency.
- IV. Cost may be a limiting factor in the protection of areas suited for outdoor public recreational activity.

V. Funding priority will be given to:

- A. Projects which involve land acquisition as opposed to development of recreational facilities unless such development is associated with an affordable housing project.
- B. Projects which provide access to water for swimming, boating and fishing.
- C. Projects which enhance the Greenways concept, including river corridors, trail corridors, ridge lines and other connecting links.
- D. Land acquisition in the more urban areas of the state and in areas of the state with limited public land per population.
- E. Protection of special resources, for example special vistas or other specific natural features, that have a current recreational use and which are, in the opinion of the VHCB, unique or special in some way.
- F. Additions to existing recreational areas where such additions protect the existing area.
- G. Projects which serve multi-town or regional needs, and/or a variety of recreational interests.
- H. Projects which are linked with affordable housing projects within the same municipality.
- I. Projects which leverage other financial resources.

VI. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board will make two types of funding available for public outdoor recreation projects:

- A. Loans to enable the project to leverage other funds or to purchase and hold the land or easement until other financing arrangements can be made;
- B. Grants in cases where local efforts to obtain other sources of funding have been exhausted.