

Another Mad River Path Project: **(Re)Designing Trails for Habitat, Water Quality, and Multiple Use Recreation** (October 2017)

Background:

Fayston's 72-acre Chase Brook Town Forest is a natural gem – a popular place for walking, biking, and cross-country skiing. Managed by the Fayston Natural Resources Committee (FNRC), and permanently conserved by a Vermont Land Trust easement, the Forest is across German Flats Road from the Fayston Elementary School, whose teachers and students also use the Forest for nature study and outdoor experience. Forest and bridge access is available at the McCullough Barn, a multi-use facility supporting educational and recreational use of the Town Forest.

Now accessible by two bridges only about 1000 feet apart, an existing winter trail alongside Mill Brook should be used only for cross-country skiing, because activity on snow cover poses little threat of erosion and habitat damage. Year-round walking and biking on the brookside ski trail connecting the two bridges isn't permitted – not great for habitat and water quality, according to state and private ecologists and habitat managers.

The Challenge:

Today's challenge – Can trail users and organizations work with the FNRC and the Town of Fayston to:

- reduce habitat and water quality impacts on Mill Brook...
- remove the second bridge across Mill Brook, focusing use on the new bridge built in 2016...
- provide a variety of four-season recreation opportunities, and...
- consolidate the trail network so it is more efficient, less costly, and available to everyone year-round?



(Above) The new bridge across Mill Brook, built in 2016 with special attention to protecting the brook and providing access for many types of use in the Town Forest...



(Above) The existing brookside cross-country skiing trail is too close to Mill Brook for four-season walking/biking use that affects habitat and water quality, especially in spring and summer...

The Mad River Path: Get Into the Valley's Great Outdoors!
Recreation. Health. Connections.

Solutions:

Can we build a better trail network that alleviates pressure on the brookside corridor and reduces overall trail footage? How can we best use the new, more habitat-sensitive bridge collaboratively constructed in 2016?

The Mad River Riders have designed a trail that could climb uphill from the new, more habitat-sensitive upper bridge, and then sidehill along the upper contours to connect to existing trails higher up the slope. This would concentrate walking and biking uphill from the sensitive corridor beside Mill Brook.

The Riders' suggested redesign now under consideration would protect habitat and water quality by reducing brookside uses, switchbacks (4), trail footage (approx. 2500'), and steep trails. It could also eliminate the cost of replacing and maintaining the lower bridge and trails... and provide for multiple recreation uses not now legally allowed in the brookside easement (hiking and biking) or provided for on the new bridge.

Next steps will include consideration by the FNRC (with public outreach), the Vermont Land Trust and Catamount Trail Association (easement owners), state environmental agencies, and the Fayston Town Select-board. The new bridge will then be remodeled to provide ramps at both ends (instead of stairs) supporting multiple uses including biking, skiing, and snowshoeing.

Re-designing Trails:

- **Reduced impact on habitat and water quality,**
- **lower construction and maintenance costs, and**
- **plenty of year-round, all-season opportunity to use and enjoy this exceptionally pleasant natural setting – now and for future generations.**



(Above) The Vermont Land Trust helped create a permanent, publicly accessible conservation legacy in Fayston's Chase Brook Town Forest...

Our members provide our power to create, maintain, conserve – and enjoy.

To join the Mad River Path Association, please visit www.madriverpath.com

Or send \$50 (or more!) for a household membership to
Mad River Path Association
PO Box 683
Waitsfield, VT 05673
Phone: (802) 496-7284
Email: path@madriver.com

**Many thanks to our trail partners:
Fayston Natural Resources Committee
Vermont Land Trust
Catamount Trail Association
Mad River Riders**



The Mad River Path: Get Into the Valley's Great Outdoors!
Recreation. Health. Connections.

The Mad River Path: Get Into the Valley's Great Outdoors!
Recreation. Health. Connections.