

## Letters of Support for the Ottauquechee River Trail Project

Attached are letters of support for the Ottauquechee River Trail Universal Accessibility Project. These letters were prepared earlier in 2022 when ORT was attempting to earn a grant from Bernie Sanders for the same objective.

1. Alison Clarkson, Vermont State Senator, Windsor County
2. Charlie Kimbell, Vermont State Representative, Windsor-5
3. David Simmons, President of Woodstock Foundation  
(Woodstock Inn and Billings Farm)
4. Jonathon Spector, Chairman of Woodstock's Economic  
Development Commission
5. Dail Frates, Executive Director at Zack's Place
6. Charlie Rattigan, Executive Director at Vermont Institute of  
Natural Science
7. Randy Richardson, Development Director at Upper Valley  
Trails Alliance



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
SENATE CHAMBER

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS  
1 Church Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Burlington, Vermont 05401

21 April 2022

Dear Senator Sanders –

It gives me great pleasure to write in support of the Ottauquechee River Trail's (ORT) grant request of \$100,000. Woodstock's outdoor and recreational life has been greatly enhanced by the recent creation of this beautiful trail along the river.

As the former chair of Woodstock's Park's Commission, the Billings Park Commission, I've appreciated the volunteer work that went into the creation of this special addition to our extensive trail system. And, once completed, we've all been impressed by the number of people using the ORT every day, all year long. Over 500 hikers a week are taking advantage of this trail which is accessed from the heart of Woodstock. Our trail system, complemented by our National Park, make Woodstock a hiker's destination and add enormous economic development value to the Upper Valley.

However, our hope is to make the first half mile of this trail wheelchair accessible. And, it is to this end that we seek funding – to help finance the trail construction work needed to build a ramp up onto the ORT and to harden the first half mile. Woodstock hosts one of Vermont's best after school programs for our disabled community, Zack's Place, and this would be an enormous asset for them, as well as those Vermonters and visitors who are either permanently or temporarily disabled.

Thank you for your consideration. When you are next in Woodstock, we'd love to host you for a hike.

As always,

Alison Clarkson  
Vermont State Senator  
Windsor County District

115 STATE STREET  
MONTPELIER, VT 05633-5201

PHONE: (802) 828-2228  
FAX: (802) 828-2424



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Senator Bernard Sanders  
1 Church Street  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Burlington, VT 04501

To the Honorable Bernard Sanders,

I write to you in support of the \$120,000 funding request to make the Woodstock Ottauquechee River Trail handicap accessible.

This is an issue of equity in many ways. Handicap access to scenic points along Vermont's waterways is limited, and that is true in Woodstock as well.

The Ottauquechee River Trail is a citizen-led effort to improve recreational access to the river for all residents and visitors. It had been contemplated for more than 20 years before a motivated group of volunteers worked with the landowners and abutters to get permission to establish the trail. Now we have an opportunity to extend its impact.

Thank you for your consideration of this modest request.

Sincerely,

Charlie Kimbell  
State Representative, Windsor-5  
19 River Street  
Woodstock, VT 05091  
[ckimbell@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:ckimbell@leg.state.vt.us)

THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION, INC.

*Founded by Mary French & Laurance Spelman Rockefeller*

April 18, 2022

Senator Bernie Sanders  
1 Church Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Sanders,

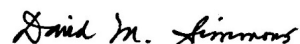
As President of the Woodstock Foundation and Executive Director of Billings Farm & Museum, I am delighted to write in support of a grant request from Woodstock's Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT).

The trail courses along the Ottauquechee River for more than a mile and continues around the bounds of nearby hayfields, offering trail goers the enjoyment of multiple natural habitats right on the edge of the Village of Woodstock. While there are several extensive trail systems within and around the town, the ORT stands out for its ease of navigation on relatively flat terrain and is now enjoyed by some 500 people each week.

The ORT has not been available to everyone, however. Uneven, hilly terrain at the trailhead and beyond precludes handicap accessibility. Through hardening of the trail and creation of a ramp at the trailhead, funds from the ORT grant will redress this issue, making the first half mile of the trail handicap accessible – a win for this wonderful, new asset to our community.

I have been a proponent and supporter of the Ottauquechee River Trail since its genesis, and I am pleased to see the trail join the area's rich outdoor recreational offerings in providing enjoyment to residents and visitors alike. I am excited at the prospect of expanding trail access to those with physical limitations, and I hope that a favorable review of the ORT grant request will make it so.

Sincerely,



David M. Simmons  
President, Woodstock Foundation

JONATHAN SPECTOR

April 18, 2022

Senator Bernie Sanders  
1 Church St.  
3rd Floor  
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Sanders

I'm writing as Chair of the Economic Development Commission in Woodstock, Vermont in support of a grant request from the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) to make the trail handicap accessible.

The ORT has been a huge success since its opening 18 months ago on Labor Day 2020. We're averaging 500 people using the trail each week. Along with the East End Park, ORT provides the foundation for economic growth in Woodstock's East End. Most importantly, ORT provides a "flat" walking trail located near the center of town that also provides users with more than a 1.0 mile access to the Ottauquechee River.

Our grant request (\$120,000 total budget with a \$100,00 grant request) focuses on making the first 0.5 miles of the trail handicap accessible. The grant will fund the hardening of the trail that is needed along with the creation of a ramp at the trailhead. With this accomplished, everyone will be able to more easily enjoy this community asset.

I hope you will seriously consider this grant request. Some of the economic development challenges we face in Woodstock (housing shortages, for example) will take years to resolve. It would be nice to be able to complement our efforts in other areas with a project that will immediately provide a boost to our local economy, for both residents and visitors to enjoy.

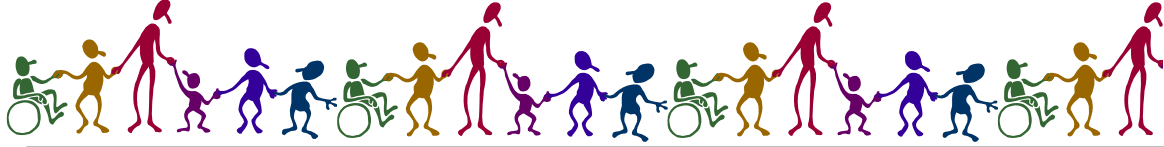
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Spector". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jonathan Spector

# Zack's Place

A Non-Profit Community Enrichment Center



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## Mission

Everyone needs friends. Our mission is to provide a relaxed setting where people with special needs are free to explore art, music, dance, and exercise while developing lifelong bonds of friendship.

Our hands-on approach engages participants with the material, their instructors, and one another. Service-learning and volunteer projects connect them with the public at large and instill a sense of citizenship.

Our members are a vital and talented group with a tremendous amount to give. Through programs at Zack's Place, they contribute to and benefit from the community.

Senator Bernie Sanders  
1 Church Street, 3rd Floor  
Burlington, VT 05401

April 21, 2022

Dear Senator Sanders,

I am writing you in support of the grant request to improve the Ottauquechee River Trail, first half mile, to make it handicap accessible and available to all citizens' young, old, and handicap.

I am the Executive Director of Zack's Place, an enrichment center for people with special needs and we are located in Woodstock, VT. We serve people from all over Vermont and New Hampshire. Our participants are out and about in the community and always looking for accessible trails. Many of our participants are in wheel chairs. In the spring and fall we often travel to the Rail Trails located in Lebanon NH to go for walks. To have a handicap trail at our finger tips would be amazing.

I would also like to mention when traveling I am always in awe of communities that have dedicated their time and money to create trails and bike paths that offer healthy ways to commute and exercise. An example of this are the rail trails in Slovenia and Italy where you can see regularly entire families riding bikes together or out for walk and people commuting on their bikes. This is also a trend that is happening in the United States and as we go into the future I hope we can keep Vermont forward thinking by connecting our communities with cycling and walking trails that work for all.

Thank you for considering this grant request.

Best regards,

Dail E Frates  
Executive Director

73 Central Street • PO Box 634 • Woodstock, VT 05091 • [Info@ZacksPlaceVT.org](mailto:Info@ZacksPlaceVT.org)  
802-457-5868 • [www.ZacksPlaceVT.org](http://www.ZacksPlaceVT.org)



## Vermont Institute of Natural Science

6565 Woodstock Road | P.O. Box 1281 | Quechee, VT 05059 | ph 802.359.5000 | fax 802.359.5001 | [www.vinsweb.org](http://www.vinsweb.org)

April 18, 2022

The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
U.S. Senate  
332 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

I write on behalf of the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) in support of their proposal to build an ADA accessible trail as part of their important outdoor experience offering for members of Upper Valley community. I strongly support the funding of this project with congressionally directed funds. The proposed ADA trail and access ramp to the river's edge will enable people with limited mobility and parents with strollers the ability to get outside in nature in this unique and special setting.

As Executive Director of the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, I know first-hand how appreciative folks are when they are given the opportunity to get out into nature because of the ADA access we provide. It is often the first opportunity they've had to do so.

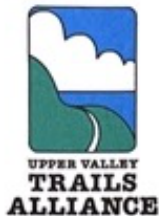
This additional facility with ADA access to nature and the thoughtful plan of the ORT will allow all community members to enjoy this important community resource. In the 18+ months that the trail has been open, thousands of people have enjoyed this special river walk. Opening it up to all people brings even greater benefits to our community.

I encourage you to support this important effort.

Kind regards,

Charles F. Rattigan  
Executive Director.

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**UPPER VALLEY  
TRAILS  
ALLIANCE**

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## Upper Valley Trails Alliance – People, Paths, Possibilities

P.O. Box 1215, Norwich, VT 05055 Phone: 802.649.9075 www.uvtrails.org

April 19, 2022

Senator Bernie Sanders  
1 Church St.  
3rd Floor  
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Sanders,

I am writing as a Woodstock resident and administrator at the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, based Norwich, VT.

I have also had the good fortune to be a part of an inspiring and high impact community effort to create the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT). We did so in the midst of the pandemic and with a small infusion of local funds and lots of volunteer labor, and it has quickly become an invaluable resource for thousands of residents and visitors.

Local trails like the ORT not only offer nearby access to nature and outdoor recreation, they are critical for community health and wellbeing. Recent research not only tells us that access to nature and regular exercise is a key to mental and physical health (\*1,2), it also indicates that proximity is one of the keys to regular trail use and exercise (\*4.5). The ORT, as a safe and more accessible trail, is a critical resource that needs improvement.

With this in mind, please support our plans to make the first portion of the ORT fully wheel chair accessible (ABA standards). The ORT, as a riverside trail, is already flatter and more accessible to less able hikers, from families with toddlers to the elderly or those recovering from injuries. The benefits of this additional accessibility will reach far beyond Woodstock by providing a wonderful free and fully accessible public resource in one of the most beautiful and important tourist towns in Vermont.

While the financial request is large by our standards, it is a relatively small investment in important and sustainable infrastructure that will benefit generations of residents and visitors. Thank you for considering this project that will expand access and improve the physical, mental and economic health of the wider Upper Valley community and all of Vermont.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support for trails, outdoor recreation and Vermont. With your help, we will continue to make the ORT an pathway to better health and a stronger Vermont.

Sincerely,

Randy Richardson  
Development Director

- Notes/references

1. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature>
2. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>
3. <http://www.clintonhealth.org/pdf/%20files/poweroftrails.pdf>
4. <https://www.vnews.com/On-the-Trails-column-31473445>