



HEART OF THE TRAIL CAMPAIGN 

Building a Sustainable, Community-Driven Future for the CTA



OUR VISION

An investment in the CTA community to ensure our world-class backcountry trails and terrain are protected for future generations, and are accessible to all Vermonters amidst a changing world.

Together We Can:

- *Implement trail improvements and high elevation backcountry zones to make backcountry skiing more climate resilient.*
- *Fully protect the "Heart of the Trail" from Blueberry Hill to von Trapp Family Lodge to ensure permanent access to some of Vermont's most treasured mountain landscapes, while bolstering trail protection statewide.*
- *Expand access to skiing and foster the next generation of backcountry skiers in Vermont by investing in the sustainability of our youth and community programs and opening a welcome center at a new CTA office along the Heart of the Trail.*



“The Catamount Trail was created in 1984 by three young skiers who weren’t afraid to tackle the unknown. Today, we face a different set of challenges, and this campaign gives us a unique opportunity to expand access, protect the trail, and inspire the next generation of backcountry skiers. Please join me by pledging your support. If not now, when?”

- Jay Stearns, Board Chair, Catamount Trail Association



A CLIMATE-RESILIENT TRAIL

Trail access is the basis of the CTA community and all of our work. Ensuring backcountry access in a changing climate means:

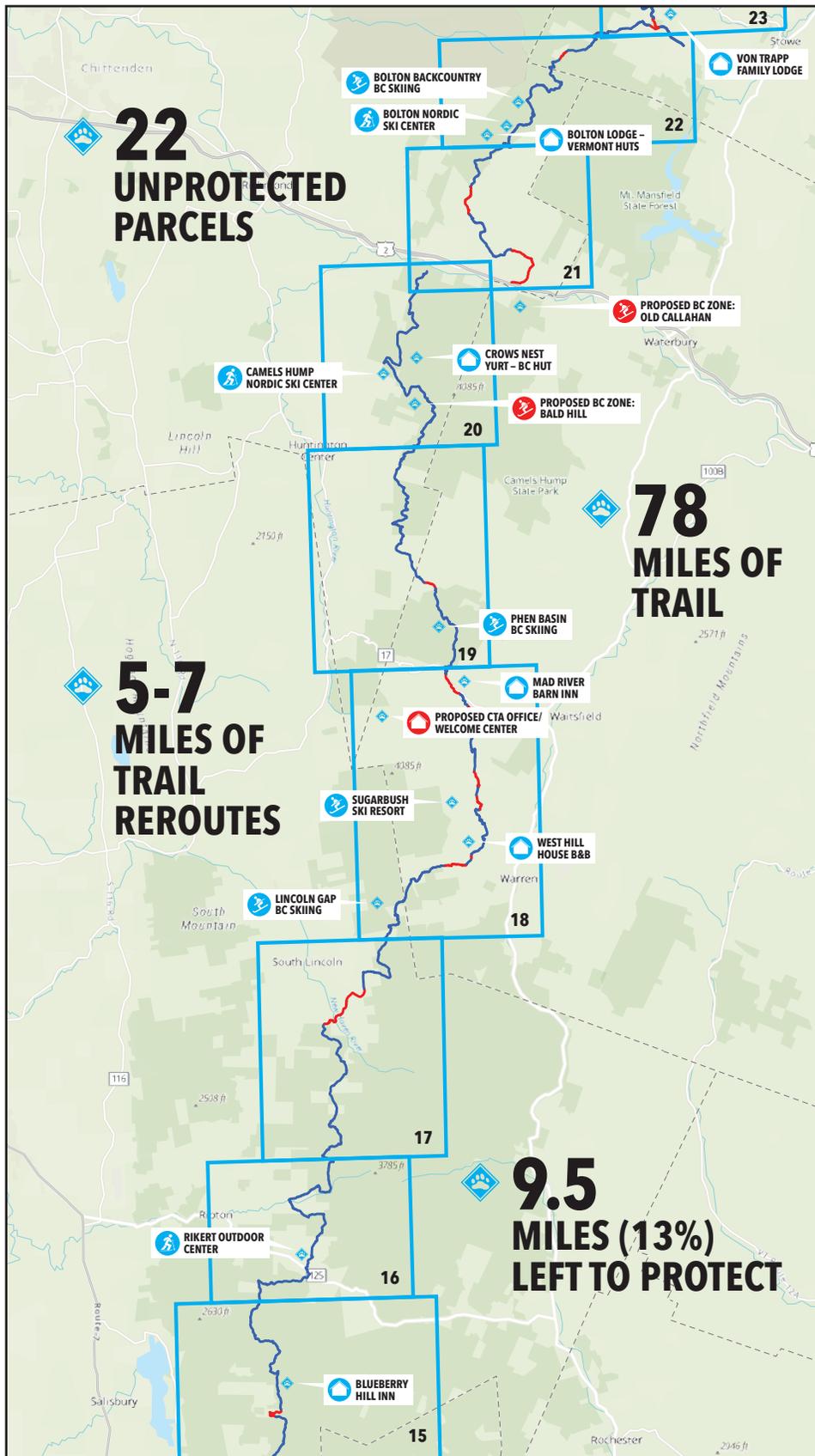
- **Trail hardening** to make the trail skiable in 3-6" of snow, extending the ski season, and making the trail more climate resilient. This work can pay immediate dividends for skiers while supporting expanded year-round use of the trail where appropriate.
- **Establishing high elevation backcountry zones**, giving skiers access to areas with the best snowpack, and creating opportunities for backcountry skiing even in poor snow years. These projects expand climate-resilient skiing opportunities while meeting the needs of a growing majority of backcountry skiers and riders.
- **Reroutes** can play a critical role in both trail protection and climate resilience efforts. Through strategic reroutes, the CTA can move the trail off of unprotected parcels and onto public land, or private land whose owners are supportive of trail protection. Reroutes can also move the trail to higher elevation and to areas that hold better snow, which lengthens the ski season and insulates the trail against bad winters.



The recent reroutes on **Camels Hump (Section 19)** and in **Fayston (Section 18)** are examples of large projects that accomplished both trail protection and climate resiliency goals, while improving the overall ski experience on the trail.

PROTECTED NOW AND FOREVER

Trail protection ensures future generations will be able to experience the magic of Vermont's winter landscape.



We have a unique opportunity to permanently protect the Heart of the Trail from Blueberry Hill Inn to the von Trapp Family Lodge and bolster trail protection efforts statewide.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- ➔ **13-16 new easements covering 8-10 miles of trail.** At least half of these will likely need to be purchased.
- ➔ **2 Major Reroutes:**
 - **Section 17:** Explore reroute onto larger parcels or current public land.
 - **Section 18:** Trust for Public Land acquisition of Rice Parcel opens up reroute possibilities. Scouting in progress.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

-  **Connects:** Blueberry Hill, Rikert Outdoor Center, Camels Hump Nordic, Bolton Valley, and von Trapp Family Lodge Nordic Ski Centers.
-  **Includes:** Many of the Highest-use Catamount Trailheads.
-  **Includes:** Inn-to-Inn Ski Tour Opportunities and Several Huts Operated by Vermont Huts & Trails.
-  **Provides Extensive Access to Backcountry Skiing Opportunities:** Lincoln Gap, Hemlock Hill/Phén Basin, Bald Hill, Bolton Valley, Cotton Brook, Nebraska Valley.



LEGEND	
	Protected Catamount Trail
	Unprotected Catamount Trail
	State Land
	Federal Land



ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE



It is time to invest in our community, expand access to skiing, and foster the next generation of backcountry skiers in Vermont by:

- Securing the future of our youth and community programs, which help over **2,500 youth and community members learn to ski for free every winter** across Vermont.
- Developing **new bridge programs** to help Ski Cubs and Youth Programs graduates become lifelong skiers.
- Developing new programming to engage the next generation of skiers in **trail stewardship and maintenance**.
- Establishing a **Welcome Center** to host programming, share maps and information on backcountry skiing statewide, and house the CTA office.
- Developing new digital tools to compliment the welcome center, meeting the needs of current and prospective members and **solidifying the CTA as the go-to resource for backcountry skiing in Vermont**.

INVESTING IN CTA STAFF



Our small but highly effective staff will make the goals of this campaign a reality.

- Responding to the loss of the AmeriCorps program by funding a new full-time position at the CTA will allow us to preserve current youth programming, easement monitoring, and outreach work. In addition to being critical to the long-term sustainability of youth and community programs, this new position will also lead the development of new youth and trail stewardship programming.
- CTA staff are **building the long-term relationships** with partners, landowners, schools, and communities that will make our trail resiliency, conservation, and access goals possible.
- CTA staff will complete conservation projects, reroutes, and new backcountry zones with the support of partners and CTA volunteers, who contribute over 3,000 hours annually to the organization.

CAMPAIGN FAQ'S

Why are you running this campaign?

We believe deeply in the power of the trail and Vermont's backcountry to connect people to place, support healthy lifestyles, and build community. In this period of change and uncertainty, the importance of the trail, backcountry zones, and programming has only grown. Last winter we experienced record participation across CTA events and programs, along with high traffic at CTA trailheads across the state.

With this demand comes challenges, which have been compounded by the sudden cancelling of the AmeriCorps program nationally. AmeriCorps members have played a critical role in CTA youth programs, conservation work, and outreach, and the loss of that position would significantly impact our ability to steward trails and expand access to skiing.

The Heart of the Trail campaign will address critical short-term needs for the CTA, like the loss of AmeriCorps, while giving the CTA the tools, resources, and staff capacity to ensure the long-term success of the organization. Meeting our campaign goals will enable the CTA to accomplish critical conservation work, meet youth and community program goals, establish new backcountry zones, and ensure the future of backcountry skiing Vermont.

How are you addressing climate change? How do reroutes, trail improvements, and backcountry zones play a role in that effort?

The Catamount Trail and the CTA's backcountry zones are entirely dependent on natural snow, and in many ways the organization is on the leading edge of dealing with climate change impacts. Though winters in Vermont are projected to get shorter, the 2025 season was a reminder that we still have great skiing, and the magic of the state's winter landscape is as compelling as ever.

By improving drainage on the Catamount Trail and adding bridges in strategic locations, we can significantly improve the climate resiliency of the trail by making it skiable in six inches of snow or less, while reducing the impact of midwinter thaws.

Reroutes can help move the trail to higher elevation and areas that hold better snow, which also lengthens the ski season and insulates the trail against bad winters.

Backcountry zones can play a similar role as reroutes. Because they are maintained, backcountry zones can be skied with less snow than a typical, unmanaged, backcountry glade. When thoughtfully located and designed in high-elevation areas that hold snow well, they can help give skiers more opportunities to get out on the landscape, even in periods of poor snowfall.

Taken together, these efforts can help ensure that there will be high-quality backcountry opportunities in Vermont for decades to come.

How will you fund the staffing positions in the campaign long-term?

The CTA has a long track record of leveraging programmatic success to support staffing through membership, donations, and sponsorships. We believe this process is critical to ensuring we are responsive to our community and are meeting their needs. We will be working to use the successes enabled by the Heart of the Trail campaign to sustainably expand CTA membership and fundraising campaigns to support staff.

How do you plan to work with the US Forest Service in the current environment?

Though Forest Service capacity has been reduced, and some project development costs may be shifted to the CTA for reroutes, we are confident in our ability to build on our 40-year partnership with the Green Mountain National Forest to complete our campaign goals.



BREAKING TRAIL SINCE 1984



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**CATAMOUNT
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