

Middlebury Area
Land Trust



Quarterly
Newsletter



Planting Trees during April Vacation camp

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From the nitty gritty curriculum to the overarching experience, [MALT outdoor education programs](#) have grown exceptionally. The credit is due to the hard work, relentless dedication, and creativity of every individual who has contributed to MALT education programs over the years. Almost an engrained habit, our staff and AmeriCorps service members constantly seek to be better educators and grow ourselves. In a way, it is the setting of nature that fosters this mentality of limitless improvement. Although we may end a specific program weary or slightly flustered, **the fulfillment of creating connection and love for nature constantly draws us towards growth.**

Spring Education Programs: A new perspective

By Celeste Venolia, VHC AmeriCorps Member



Learning compass skills in an
afterschool program

I started serving at MALT through VHC AmeriCorps in February, and it has been a fascinating experience to work with the same kids throughout Spring. A new person on a small teaching team can create a bigger ripple effect than I might have initially assumed. I'm a planner by nature, so at the beginning of spring programs, we met to brainstorm topics and create lesson plans for the entire spring semester. This allowed us to rotate who was planning and build themes that tie together multiple weeks of learning. Caleb Basa built us a lesson plan template that emphasized using a learning cycle as a way to understand how to structure our focus [i.e. **engage ->**

prior learning? -> introduce -> build -> apply]. Caleb used this framework to integrate learning about photosynthesis into a sweet day exploring maple sugaring. Jamie Brookside compiled **orienteeing** curriculum to get kids up to speed on the



Vernal Pool exploration with Andrew L'Roe

basics of maps and compasses. As we taught these activities across all MALT's education programs, it was amusing to hear the acronyms kids create to remember the four cardinal directions. It's also rewarding to see them succeed in building mystery shapes with bean bags while following walking instructions with compass bearings. This early planning allowed MALT to organize guest teachers for half day programs; Naomi Cutler brought in MALT board member **Monica Pryzperhart** for some learning about baby animals in Spring and **Craig Zondag** and **Gary Starr** of Otter Creek Audubon taught a kite workshop day. **Andrew L'Roe** facilitated an exploration of a local vernal pool! In the shorter afterschool programs, I was given the task of leading the planning. **CONTINUED on Page 2**

My main outward theme has been to focus each program on learning about one Vermont animal and discussing its **niche** to help the kids understand its place in the ecosystem. An underlying theme that I haven't stated to the kids is that I'm also focusing on the core routines of Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown's *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*. Some examples of core routines from this book are 'Story of the Day' where we use stories to capture attention and reinforce concepts about the animal of the week, 'Sit Spot' where we use sitting by ourselves in nature to practice silent listening and observation, and 'Animal Forms' where we embrace the fun of moving like an animal to better understand it. **Teaching this Spring has shown me the importance of prioritizing play and unstructured exploration in nature while balancing that with a smart plan to make learning fun.**

Treeline Terrains gives MALT a 3D wooden map of the TAM!

Alex Gemme, Nathaniel Klein, and Jacob Freedman are Treeline Terrains. These three entrepreneurs teamed up while at Middlebury college to combine their skills: Jacob spearheads the elevation data preparation work in GIS, Nathaniel specializes in carpentry prepping the sustainable wood blocks for cutting, and Alex brings the files to the



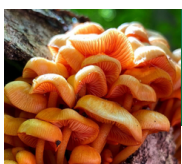
The map of the TAM in progress!

computer numerical control (CNC) router to create the final product. For MALT, They created a 3D, wood carved model of the TAM. Here's what they have to say about their project: "We are excited to create a wooden, tactile model of the TAM in partnership with MALT. Our goal is to create "topography you can touch," meaning that we create beautiful models that we encourage people to touch and feel the places they are on. As a public piece, we hope that this model will be available in all seasons for lovers of the TAM to enjoy. **We want Middlebury residents to feel the topography with their fingertips and build a deeper connection to this wonderful place in which we live.** While we strive to make terrain maps that are visually appealing, we believe the best way to enjoy a place you are in is to feel the landscape with your fingertips. By imaging our representations of space in a new medium, we are breaking away from traditional forms of mapping and creating a design that brings together people of different abilities. From tactile learners to those who are visually impaired, we hope to inspire a new conversation of what mapmaking means and help future generations connect to place. We wanted to partner with the Middlebury Area Land Trust to model the Trail Around Middlebury to create a visual model and teaching tool for MALT educational programs, maintenance groups, and more."

"We know first-hand how challenging it can be to bridge barriers regarding connection to community and connection to place, and our 3D models will help more community members feel and understand the adventures ahead, no matter their age or abilities. MALT has many visitors from the college and the Middlebury community each year, especially on the TAM. We hope our piece can become a public display that helps bring people together. **By representing the landscape in three dimensions, people can feel topography in a way maps or other visual aids cannot convey.** MALT can use this model with their youth groups to learn about terrain, reading maps, understanding water flows, and more!"



Nathaniel Klein, Jacob Freedman, Caleb Basa, John Derrick, and Alex Gemme



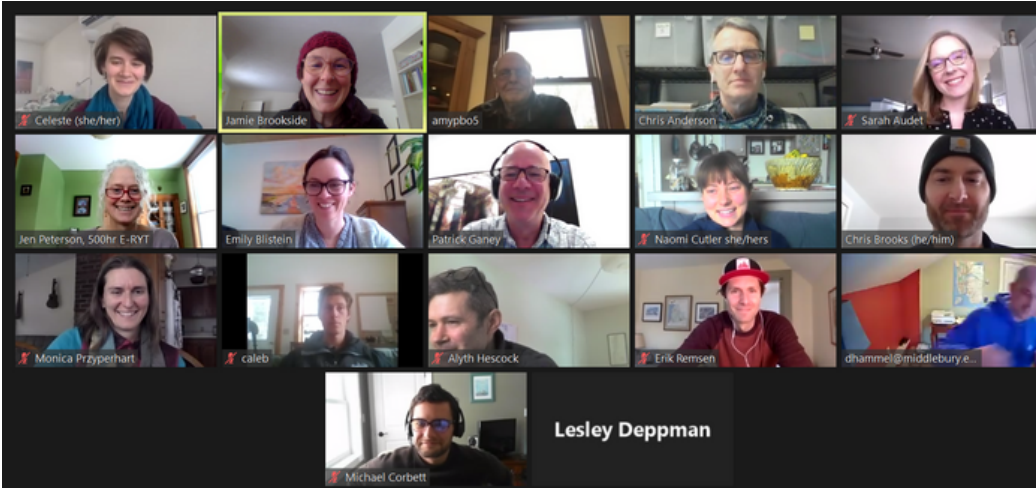
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Blah, Blah, Blah... Wait...Strategic Planning?!

By Jamie Brookside



MALT's Board of Directors, staff, and AmeriCorps members during strategic planning

Over six meetings and three months, the MALT team envisioned and honed our plan for 2022-2025. Right now, **MALT is supported by a full board of 11 members, 4 full-time personnel, over 175 volunteers, 301 members, and an entire community connecting with our local lands.** This past January, we started our process by collecting input with our 2021 Community Survey and with

it, we named our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Then we mapped our values as an organization, articulated goals for each area of our mission, and **determined the best strategies to meet those goals.** Finally, the MALT staff spent over 40 hours articulating who will accomplish the work, how we will measure it, and who we will include each step of the way. Right now, Jamie (MALT's Executive Director) is formatting the final document for publication.

On behalf of all those who make MALT's mission come to life, Jamie can't wait to share the path through our next four years. **She thinks it's a fitting time to share this important work, "This June marks the end of my first four years leading MALT. It's time to share what the next four are going to look like.** This organization's lands, trails, and people are resilient, just like nature. I can't wait to put our resiliency, creativity, and passion to work with a stellar plan. A beautiful recipe for connecting people with the lands we protect."

In addition to a plan for our next four years, MALT has a truly amazing announcement to make. In April, MALT was anonymously gifted a \$100,000 donation to support our work on the Trail Around Middlebury. This donation is the largest gift the organization has ever received (outside of our land conservation projects) and it brought our staff and board to tears of gratitude. The funds will be used to support a summer trail maintenance position in perpetuity. Trail maintenance is an ongoing and core function of MALT and this gift will bring us one step closer to maintaining the trail with sustainable resources. Although the donors want to remain anonymous, it was given in honor of their mothers, and we can all take a moment to pause and give gratitude to them. **Philanthropy is a powerful transfer of energy and MALT cannot wait to put their generosity to work for our mission.**

Announcing TAM Trek 2021: Sept 19!

By Naomi Cutler

Join us for our 18th Annual TAM Trek on **September 19, 2021.** The TAM Trek is a trail race and fun run to raise funds for the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM). MALT started building the TAM in 1989 and its 19 miles now encircles the village of Middlebury, traveling through Cornwall, Weybridge, and New Haven. It links several hundred acres of town land, MALT conserved properties, schools, and other local landmarks. Aid stations are plentiful and well-stocked, views are spectacular, and nothing beats early Fall's trail racing weather! Each year, it costs MALT over \$15,000 to maintain this community gem, your race entry fee directly helps with these costs! Choose between a **19 mile, 10K, or 2-mile Fun Run** race. The races start and finish at Wright Park on Seymour Street Extension in Middlebury, VT. The 19 mile race features 2 suspension bridges, all types of trails, great post-race food, local raffle prizes, and SO much fun!! **This year, MALT will be offering FREE childcare for 10K and fun-run race participants.** Sign up for childcare through [our website](https://www.maltvt.org). Register to run TAM trek at <https://www.maltvt.org/tam-trek>



TAM trek photo courtesy of Benjy Renton

North County Trail Updates! By Jamie Brookside

MALT has partnered with the North Country Trail Association for nearly a decade. The organization seeks to build a hiking path across the northern tier of the US. In 2019, the North Country Trail (NCT) section connecting the Adirondacks of NY to the Green Mountain National Forest was given federal recognition and the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) was sanctioned as a section of the 4,700 mile trail. **MALT is expanding our trail network to reach from Murdock Nature Preserve to East Middlebury and the Oak Ridge Trail in the National Forest.** With funding from the Green Mountain National Forest Service, MALT has secured new trail agreements for the portion connecting East Middlebury to the Oak Ridge trail of the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area. For nearly two years, Jamie Brookside and John Derick have teamed up to meet landowners and secure trail agreements. MALT will secure funding to build much-needed infrastructure on these sections and we hope to complete those projects in Summer 2022. In other North Country Trail news, MALT was awarded a \$1,000 grant to replace the boardwalk connecting the TAM to the Blue Trail in Weybridge. This junction is near the Hamilton Rd parking area. In July, MALT's Programs Coordinator, Caleb Basa, will work with CSAC volunteers to replace the narrow and deteriorating boardwalk.



NCT Boardwalk to be replaced

Board members and staff monitor conserved lands together!

By Caleb Basa

In the past three years, MALT has grown amazingly. Our education programs have blossomed and the TAM is being used like never before. The trail is being stewarded by a team of staff and AmeriCorps service members that is the largest MALT has ever mobilized.

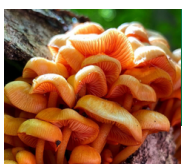
Yet, on a quieter note our conserved land stewardship procedures have also thrived.

In 2020, Caleb designed an adaptive monitoring procedure and reported on all of MALT's owned lands - roughly 500 acres, for the first time in many years. In 2021, the focus was logically shifted to MALT's conserved lands. One particular monitoring event so clearly marked how far we have come as an organization and precipitated the direction our stewardship procedures will go. In late March, the MALT board monitored the Dodge-Katz property, a



MALT Board and staff monitoring the Dodge-Katz easement

a 58-acre parcel in Cornwall. This event coincided with the entire organization drafting a new 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. Through this planning process MALT discussed how to better connect our community with protected lands through our stewardship program. Fast forwarding to seeing the board actually walk the land, take photo points, and examine the easement provided a glimpse of the monitoring program to come. **Slowly, MALT plans to shift our stewardship monitoring system to one based in community science.** One example of how we will use community science is our new invasive species management on our trail easements. **If you are interested in becoming involved with our stewardship program, or learning more about opportunities with MALT, email info@maltvt.org!**



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