

PRESS RELEASE

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Protect Vermont's Hiking and Biking Trails During Mud Season

Montpelier, VT – Despite the late arrival of winter to Vermont, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) wants to remind the public that mud season is here and many trails around the state are closed.

During mud season, which can run until Memorial Day in upper elevations, hiking and biking trails are extremely wet and muddy due to the combined effects of snow melt, thawing ground, and seasonal rain. We ask the public to avoid muddy, soft trails to protect sensitive vegetation and ensure trails are in good shape for the upcoming hiking and biking season.

"We encourage the public to get outside this spring, but to avoid closed and muddy trails," said Becca Washburn, FPR's Director of Lands Administration and Recreation. "Enjoy the spring sunshine on open trails, like paved and gravel bike paths, and save the summit destinations for summer."

"We're grateful to the Vermont hiking community and all the steps they take to be good stewards of our trails and fragile mountain environments. During mud season, we remind all hikers to do their part in protecting Vermont's natural landscapes and rare alpine vegetation by avoiding high elevation muddy trails and exploring low-elevation durable surface alternatives," said Keegan Tierney, Director of Field Programs for the Green Mountain Club.

"Mountain bike trails are extremely susceptible to damage during mud season," said Nick Bennette, Executive Director at the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA). "If your tires leave a noticeable rut in the trail, turn around and find a durable surface to ride elsewhere. If you encounter a puddle, ride on the dry area of the trail or straight through if there is none. Mountain bikers can show our commitment to being a community of responsible trail users by using these simple guidelines and some common sense to protect our trails."

In addition, FPR asks the public to follow these guidelines:

- **Check trail status.** Official closures and trail conditions vary widely throughout the state. Check resources like [Trailfinder.info](https://www.trailfinder.info), [Green Mountain Club Visitor Center](https://www.greengmountainclub.com) (802-244-7037), and [VMBA Trail Conditions](https://www.vmba.org) to find out what trails are closed or open near you. Spring weather is variable; even if a trail is marked as open, please proceed with caution. If you encounter mud, turn around and go back another day.
- **Seek durable surfaces.** There are plenty of ways you can get outside. Seek out durable surfaces to hike or bike on, like gravel roads, paved roads, rail trails, and bike paths, as these are more resilient to mud season. Use resources like [Trailfinder.info](https://www.trailfinder.info) or the [Green Mountain Club's website](https://www.greengmountainclub.com) to discover new, open trails in your neighborhood. Try new fun spring activities like paddling, gravel biking, birdwatching, fishing, or turkey hunting.

- **Avoid hiking in the alpine zone to protect rare and fragile vegetation.** It takes careful stewardship to protect these environments so they can continue to thrive. Foot traffic through the mud causes soil compaction and erosion, which makes it harder for these plants to take root and survive in their environments.
- **Respect trail signage:** Local VMBA chapters often post signs regarding closures. Please respect these signs, and even if a trail appears to be open, if you arrive and discover muddy conditions or notice your bike tires are leaving ruts more than ½-inch deep, turn around and ride elsewhere. Trail conditions can change rapidly during mud season, so please don't use the lack of a closure – either physical or online – to justify poor judgment.
- **Check weather reports:** Weather conditions will differ at higher elevations. It may be sunny and warm in town but windy, slippery, snowy, or cold on the mountain. Check weather reports for your destination and always be prepared with extra layers, traction, and a contingency plan, including turning around or seeking an alternative place to hike.
- **Turn around in muddy conditions:** If you encounter conditions you are not prepared for, please turn around. It keeps you and the trails safe.

The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and partners thank trail users for helping maintain Vermont's trails.

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Read the [press release online](#).

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