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**Date:** January 9, 2026

**Subject:** 2026 Town Report Update

Dear Town Clerks, Selectboard Members and local residents:

Each year the employees of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) depend heavily on support from many municipalities, volunteers, partners, and contractors. The Forest would like to take this time to thank you and your community for the support and interest that you have shown in helping with the management of the approximately 400,000-acre GMNF. The GMNF is truly one of Vermont's treasures and the largest contiguous public land area in the state. Forest staff work hard to achieve quality public land management under a sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of all people -- people in your town as well as all of the visitors who come to Vermont every year. This has been another exciting year for us, and we have worked hard to support new opportunities on the National Forest that benefit the people and communities that we serve. The following is a brief summary of a few things that happened on your National Forest throughout the past year:

On June 13, 2025, Chris Mattrick, Rochester / Middlebury District Ranger signed the Final Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project. The project area is located on the Green Mountain National Forest, Rochester and Middlebury Ranger Districts within Rutland, Windsor, and Addison Counties, Vermont including the towns of Brandon, Chittenden, Goshen, Killington, Mendon, Pittsfield, Pittsford, and Stockbridge. The project proposal includes management activities on National Forest System lands to achieve multiple resource benefits as provided by direction in the 2006 Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Alternative C was selected for implementation after considering the analysis documented in the Telephone Gap project final environmental assessment, public feedback received during project development and analysis, and supporting information found in the project record. It was determined that this alternative will best move the forest landscape toward desired resource conditions within the project area while addressing concerns identified through public involvement. Alternative C includes management activities to provide resource and public benefits. These include improved wildlife habitat, restored soils and wetlands, a sustained network of roads and trails, increased recreation opportunities, and timber harvesting to provide wood products for the local and regional economy while enhancing forest health and diversity.

In 2025 the U.S. Forest Service approved the designation of approximately 72 miles of National Forest System roads and trails on the Manchester Ranger District within the Green Mountain National Forest as part of the Velomont Trail -- a future, state-wide, hut-supported mountain bike and multi-use trail running from Massachusetts to Canada. This work will be accomplished and coordinated with Vermont Huts & Trails (VHT) and the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA). The designated section will include a mix of new trail construction, upgrades to existing routes, and targeted relocations to improve sustainability and user experience. Once complete, it will expand mountain bike access to areas where limited or no opportunities currently exist, increase connectivity between rural towns, and open new points of entry to the outdoors -- designed to be adaptive-friendly wherever possible.



Vermont suffered moderate to severe drought conditions last fall. In response to these conditions, the Green Mountain National Forest issued fire restrictions on the national forest beginning on September 22, 2025. The decision to implement fire restrictions was based on various factors, including the prevalence of unattended fires, unfavorable weather conditions and the availability of firefighting resources. At the time, moisture level of forest trees and other vegetation was deceptively low with autumn leaves falling which added to dry fuels on the forest floor. We are extremely thankful to each and every local, state and federal partner who supported our outreach and response efforts to these abnormal conditions.

Over the past year, we have worked diligently to keep our social media accounts and website up-to-date with substantive content. We encourage members of the public to visit our website ([www.fs.usda.gov/r09/gmfi](http://www.fs.usda.gov/r09/gmfi)) which can be used as an on-line tool for up-to-date information. In addition, we strive to collaborate with towns, schools and other organizations to provide issue-based content for Forest Service presentations. If you know of an event that is happening in your town and would like to invite the Forest Service to participate, please reach out. Again, thank you for your support of your National Forest. Together, we will continue to maintain and improve this valuable resource for generations to come.

Sincerely,

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