A Message From Our Executive Director,
Carl Robinson

Serving as Middlebury Area Land Trust Director is proving to be very rewarding and enjoyable. I was given the opportunity to be part of an organization that truly gives back to the community; to improve recreation areas and promote public access; to enhance educational, cultural and historical opportunities; and to protect and conserve open spaces, wetlands, and working farms. The quality of life in our community is better because of the Middlebury Area Land Trust, and I am excited to be able to contribute and carry on the efforts of those directors who came before me.

At MALT, we pride ourselves on the focused, but multifaceted, nature of our work. As an organization our mission is to provide and support the community’s needs in outdoor education, recreation and conservation. Our education programs help people get in touch with the land around them, including kids through our summer camps and all ages through our guided hikes. In these programs, our goal is to strengthen the connection between our community and the out-of-doors and to highlight the importance of land conservation for our collective well-being. The Trail Around Middlebury provides recreational and educational opportunities and draws visitors to the area from neighboring towns and further afield. We work with individual landowners and partner with the Vermont Land Trust on creative ways to conserve land for future generations. Our multifaceted mission enables us to complete projects like the Prunier trail project, which has a unique balance of recreational and environmental elements, and to partner with the National Park Service and others to extend the North Country National Scenic Trail into Vermont. Otter View Park provides an example of our ability to balance conservation goals with our mission of providing public access, including for those in our community with diverse abilities.

We are working hard to establish greater awareness of MALT’s core mission and to develop stronger relationships with residents, the towns, the business community, and other nonprofit organizations. We are encouraged by the tremendous support we receive in the form of active memberships, contributions, and volunteer time. Achieving our goals depend on this support, for which we are grateful.

Although I have just begun as Director of MALT, I have a deep love for what the organization has provided me and my family over the years. When we first moved here from Flagstaff, AZ, an outdoor recreation mecca, we knew little about VT or the Middlebury area and what it had to offer.
The first trail we explored was the Trail Around Middlebury. As the kids have grown from infants to now grade schoolers, there is rarely a week, or even a day, that goes by without one of us enjoying some part of the TAM – whether a mountain bike ride, a slow hike identifying ferns, or a walk across the footbridge to the grocery store. To be outdoors refreshes and rejuvenates me and to see others using the trail in the same way makes my day even better.

Thank you all for being a community who continues to care and support our work.

**Summer Camp, by Mo Bissonnette**

MALT Summer camp was an amazing success this year. All four weeks of camp filled up before posters even went up, but that’s not what made it successful. What made it successful was the wonderfully awesome kids that jumped into Nature right away. All of them were so excited about what they saw and excited for more.

The summer was full of Capture the Flag, animal tracking, wild edible plant walks, fire making and a ton of down right adventure and exploration. We were finding new places, like the two caves we found this year, big enough to fit a Nature Mentor and three kids. And it was deep enough that we used our grappling hook and rope to safely climb out.

We found a whole host of birds and creatures, like the Painted Turtle we found down by the river or the beautiful Scarlet Tanager who came from the tree tops to visit us up close while we were playing a Bird Language game. I guess it wanted to play too.

As Nature Mentors it would be hard to find a better way to spend our summer than playing and learning out here on the MALT land. Coming in December we will be posting dates for next summer’s camps. And if you want to learn more about Fall/Winter
Celebrating with Local Motion at MALT’s Annual Meeting

This year’s speaker at MALT’s annual meeting highlighted “Making the Case for Trails and Active Lifestyles.” Chapin Spencer, Executive Director of Local Motion gave a “Top 10” talk on the process of how his non-profit began; it’s trials and successes. He explained the importance of community, partnerships, buy-in, and celebration. Chapin’s talk gave great insight into not only the workings of Local Motion but into ways non-profits can succeed. His passion for what he does clearly shows. We hope attendees at the meeting came away with increased knowledge of the work non-profits do and were invigorated in their support for causes and organizations that are important to them.

In addition to our featured speaker the annual meeting was one way in which we also celebrated our achievements over the past year as well looked ahead at future plans and projects. This year’s meeting was held at the Weybridge Congregational Church on November 7th. A welcome and report by board President, Story Jenks, provided detail on MALT’s finances, introduced two new board members Jono Chapin and Jason Saltman, and described the process of conserving land in the Beaver Brook Watershed. Carl Robinson, Executive Director also gave a welcome and introduced himself, his background and future plans with MALT, including trail work and educational programs. John Derick gave a report on the new trail spur to Snake Mountain and the work done on the TAM in the past year. To conclude our celebration MALT formally thanked volunteers, John Derick, David Hallam, and Katherine Branch with gifts from Danforth Pewterers. Their support is priceless!

As part of any celebration connecting with old friends and making new ones is always important. We were pleased to host 25 MALT members and other attendees at the meeting. A variety of refreshments and welcoming atmosphere made it even more enjoyable. We thank Chapin Spencer for his lively and insightful talk and the MALT board and community members for their support. We look forward to celebrating our partnerships, communities and projects for years to come.

Summer Camp, continued...

and Spring Nature programing you can check it out by searching for Numina Wilderness School on the Web. Be sure to check out the Nature after school programs like Naturenauts, Nature Explorers, and the Tracking Club, or Katie McEachen’s pre-school age nature program Wren’s Nest, in Monkton. You can check that out at Willowell.org.

Well, it was a wonderful summer and we can’t wait until the next one.
New Executive Director,

Carl Robinson joined the MALT team September 2012 as the Executive Director. Originally from Arizona, Carl earned his B.S. in Parks and Recreation Management at Northern Arizona University. He then worked for the Coconino County Parks and Recreation Department and Flagstaff Biking Organization as an Outreach Coordinator. Most recently Carl ran his own bicycle repair shop, Chain Reaction Bike Repair, a part time at home business.

Carl and his family have called Middlebury home for 7 years. A long time outdoor enthusiast, Carl enjoys exploring the area hiking, biking and paddling with his family. He is excited to be working on the many MALT projects that help make Middlebury and the surrounding communities so great!

And New Board Members

MALT is excited to have three new board members, Kathleen Ramsay, Jono Chapin and Jason Saltman.

Kathleen, Town Manager of Middlebury, replaced long time board member Bill Finger. She will continue to provide the great support we received from Bill, and a much needed partnership with the Town of Middlebury board. Jono Chapin was a board member with MALT, 2001 - 2008. After a break he has rejoined the board invigorated to work on TAM and other MALT projects. Jason Saltman recently moved to the area from southern Vermont. After participating in the past TAM trek he expressed interest in becoming part of the MALT team. He will provide some great experience having been involved in a number of boards in the past including the Hogback Mountain Conservation Association and Wilmington Trails Committee.

From our new board member, Jason Saltman

My wife and I were looking for a place to live that had an abundance of outdoor recreational, cultural, and local food opportunities. Our stops in Middlebury during trips from Southern Vermont convinced us that this was a place we really wanted to live and we jumped at the chance once we both found jobs in the area. Before we moved from southern Vermont, I was on the board of the Hogback Mountain Conservation Association, the Deerfield River Watershed Association, the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum, and the Wilmington Trails Committee. Most of my volunteer roles among those organizations were trail planning, maintenance and creation, GIS mapping, and some grant writing. Currently I work as an adjunct instructor at the Community College of Vermont where I teach a variety of environmental science, biology, and allied health science courses. My (circuitous) educational and professional background is in optometry, biology, environmental science, and GIS.
Hamblin Farm Conservation Project, by Carl Robinson

Hamblin Farm located off Route 125, in Cornwall, is part of the Beaver Brook watershed. An area that MALT has been working on for many years with Amy Sheldon of Landslide, Inc. and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT). MALT plans to purchase the 99-acre parcel by the year’s end and VLT will hold the perpetual conservation easement, which will prevent any further development on the property and will preserve its natural state.

The Beaver Brook watershed comprises 1/3 of the town of Cornwall, and includes a great diversity of land uses and natural resource communities. Roughly 43% of the watershed is in a natural condition, and the natural communities represented are in similar proportions to the way they were before settlement.

Protected from development this land will, over time, develop into a mature and functional clayplain forest, an increasingly rare feature in the landscape near Middlebury.

At the top of the ledges is a small strip of red cedar woodland, a rare community in Vermont.

The conservation of Hamblin Farm is a critical part of the watershed as it has been identified as an important wildlife corridor and represents a significant home to rare plant and forest communities. Liz Thompson, Director of Conservation Science at VLT explains that, “the most notable feature is the spectacular limestone cliffs, known as the Ledges. The cliff is striking in its contrast to the surrounding agricultural land as it rises to a height of 50-60 feet. The cliff and talus are of statewide significance as three of the plant species that occur there are considered uncommon and vulnerable.”

We are encouraged by the support we have received for this project and are excited to add Hamblin Farm to the 946 acres that have already been preserved in the Beaver Brook watershed.
This summer has been a busy and fruitful one on the TAM for myself and our college intern Emma Loizeaux, plus a number of volunteers. Every year we put wood preservative on the decks of our bridges. This year, volunteer Adam Joselson worked on the boat house bridge and Emma handled the Arnold bridges.

On various Fridays starting in April, MUHS students from the Alternative Education program helped put gravel and trails in Wright Park, Means Woods, the '97 Trail and Creek Road. That work has continued into this fall.

We also replaced some wood on aging boardwalks on the Jackson and '97 Trails.

Parsnip has become a problem on a number of trails. Some of it can be mowed with the tractor but a number of places require hand work every few weeks!! Brush grows fast in the spring and early summer and requires monthly walks through trails to control. Grass on our open field trails needs cutting every 2-3 weeks. We are fortunate that Kirk Fisk helps with this.

We also took breaks from TAM maintenance different days to work on planning and creating the new trail to Prunier Road.

TAM Trek Overview

This year the ninth event to support and celebrate the Trail Around Middlebury was held on Sunday, September 23rd, at the Marbleworks green. The weather held up for us again, and about 125 participants and volunteers came out to see the TAM. A few were bikers, but the rest were equally divided between hikers and runners. There were a few through runners that accomplished the whole route in times ranging from about 2 and a half hours to 5 hours. The Middlebury College Cross-Country Teams participated as part of their normal practice. They usually run their own route, though, making it up as they go along. They probably know every root and stone of the TAM by now!

There were several teams formed for the Trek; Phelps Engineering, American Flatbread, and the Middlebury Muffintops. The Cub Scouts Pack 536 participated as well, hiking about 4.5 miles. Go, boys!

For sale at the MALT office! MALT organic cotton T-shirts and stickers. T-shirts come in two styles: T3 or TAM, and are $17 each. The stickers have the TAM logo on them (above), look great on your car and are $1 each. Stop by sometime and see! Various other merchandise is available through our website, or at www.cafepress.com/malt.
This summer, as part of my internship with MALT, I, together with John Derick and the rest of the MALT team, embarked on the most significant extension of the MALT trail system since the TAM was built. The new Trail to Prunier Road extends from the northeast portion of the TAM, just south of its intersection with Hamilton Road, west about 3.5 miles across rolling farmland through Weybridge to Prunier Road, with sweeping views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks along the way. From the end of the trail, it is a short road walk to the Snake Mountain trailhead, should you wish to continue your journey.

Work on the Trail to Prunier Road began last summer as MALT entered into a dialog with the North Country Trail Association. The North Country Trail is a new National Scenic Trail running from North Dakota to Crown Point, New York; the Association hopes to extend it into Vermont, linking it through Addison County to the Long Trail. To demonstrate MALT’s commitment to helping create that extension and to a lasting relationship with the North Country Trail Association, we began to build a trail that will be an essential portion of that link.

The early part of the summer saw many long days of slogging around sodden farm fields with a GPS, searching for a direct route and higher ground. The route planning process was made easier by our many interactions with the supportive landowners whose lands the trail now crosses; Peter James of Monument Farms in particular shared with us a vision for the trail from its infancy, and his knowledge of the landscape has been invaluable. We routed and re-routed and re-re-routed the trail. Each time we mowed a path across the fields, we discovered a new low spot that would be impassable after a rain. And throughout this process, I made maps. I have a folder littered with the things: “Trail Proposal Draft 6/22/12,” “Trail Proposal Draft 7/11/12,” “Trail Proposal Draft 7/24/12”… Each one is folded and crumpled from being tugged out of and shoved into my backpack too many times; they are scrawled all over with notes about where we would need a boardwalk, where fences impeded our progress, where property lines lie. In some ways I like these rough maps better than the finished product—they convey the dynamism I so associate with the trail, having been involved in its creation.

Late in the summer we marked the route, tying up the fluttering blue flagging you see along the trail today and driving stakes into the ground to which we could attach directional signs. We built a boardwalk over the swale right at the beginning of the trail, where it forks off from the TAM, which, with the help of the Middlebury Union High School Diversified Education student group, we were able to extend to cover more of the wet area. Finally in October, we inaugurated the trail with a well-attended, if somewhat soggy, hike event.

Next time you’re looking for a new place to take a hike, please check out the Trail to Prunier Road, and direct any feedback to info@maltvt.org. See you on the trail!

This new trail has a printable map here as a pdf. www.maltvt.org/link_map.pdf
In collaboration with:

Marsh, Meadow, and Grassland Wildlife Walks
Join us as we survey birds and other wildlife of Otter View Park and the Hurd Grassland. All walks start at Otter View Park in Middlebury on Pulp Mill Bridge Rd and Weybridge St. Shorter and longer routes possible. OVP is universally accessible. Walks run from 8am to 10am.

-Thursday, December 13
Leader: Barb Otsuka

-Saturday, January 12
Leader: Craig Zondag

-Thursday, February 14
Leader: Ron Payne

-Saturday, March 9
Leader: Warren King

TAM Trek Team Muffintops, posing on the Belden Dam bridge