The Magic Circle of Zen, Adventure, Discovery, and Secret Places: What We Love about the Trail Around Middlebury
by Katherine Branch

Simply described, the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) is a 16-mile footpath that encircles the town of Middlebury, linking several hundred acres of town land, conserved properties, schools, and other landmarks. But ask local walkers, hikers, bikers, and skiers about the TAM, and a more personal and heartfelt picture emerges. Josh Hummel, a photographer, videographer and avid runner, says that for him a typical trail run on the TAM “involves feelings of adventure, zen, and responsibility”. For author Julia Alvarez, the TAM is “like a magic circle drawn around us” whose very name of “TAM” makes her think of a “guardian spirit”. High school math teacher, Perry Lessing, says that he enjoys visiting a secret “little plot where the Beldens are buried, just off the trail between the Morgan Horse Farm Road and the dam. Sometimes it is hard to spot; but with the sun just right, the headstones light up.”

As these community members attest, the TAM is much more than just a trail. The Trail links us to nature and to each other, to those who came before us, and those who will follow us in future generations. In the yesterdays of 1793, David Belding came in and settled at what was then known as Belding’s Falls, on Otter Creek—this is the same Belden family whose small plot lies just off the trail. Today, young children delight in trying to spot an otter on the Wright Park trail sections that adjoin Otter Creek. Bird watchers rise early to be on the trail in time to glimpse common and rare species. Those looking for spectacular views spy the Adirondacks, the Green Mountains, Camel’s Hump and Snake Mountain from the TAM. Gardeners stroll through the Middlebury College organic garden to pick up tips on how to layout their own gardens. Wildlife lovers spot fox, otter, deer, red-tailed hawk, beaver, and more species by treading quietly. Towering oaks and hickories in Jeffrey Murdock Nature Preserve remind us of our own place within nature. For those looking for a challenge, the Chipman Hill section boasts a 360-foot elevation gain. And for longer distance hikers, a new trail, the Prunier Road Trail Spur, leads from the TAM Jackson trail segment west to Prunier Road, then to Snake Mountain.

As Julia Alvarez points out, the TAM is a “wonderful green defense of protected land around us, reminding us that we are a community within the larger community of a green state in a small, fragile dazzling planet.” At almost a quarter-century old, the Trail Around Middlebury symbolizes the link between our local community and the natural world. As a community we have come together to preserve, maintain and expand this trail. This is a task that requires well over $10,000 per year to maintain, plus many hours of unpaid volunteer effort.

This year, please consider making a special donation to MALT earmarked for the TAM, becoming a TAM trail keeper, participating in the TAM Trek fundraiser in late September or joining a TAM maintenance party for a day. With the 25th anniversary of the TAM approaching, MALT would like to hear what you love about the TAM, including your thoughts about how to keep this treasure accessible for us today and for future generations.
Grants Received

MALT is happy to announce that our 2013 Project Funding Request and Tools Grant to the North Country Trail Alliance and National Park Service was approved! The focus of the grant will be the construction of three boardwalks. The Jackson Trail, off Weybridge Street, is a notoriously wet area and with the increased use, the old boardwalk is not keeping feet dry. The Johnson Trail, between Hamilton and Morgan Horse Farm road is also in need of a new boardwalk. Finally, a new boardwalk will be constructed on the Prunier Trail near Weybridge Street. All boardwalks will be raised over the wet areas, protecting both the land and user. The tools received from the grant have already been put to good use by many of our volunteers. Thanks, NCTA and NPS!

Hamblin Farm

MALT is proud to announce the conservation of Hamblin Farm. 101 acres in Cornwall. We closed on the property this past January, MALT as owner of the land and the Vermont Land Trust as the easement holder, which will ensure that the land will be preserved in its natural state in perpetuity. Hamblin Farm is part of the Beaver Brook Watershed, located off Route 125 in Cornwall. This area now has 497.5 acres conserved by both MALT and VLT. We received tremendous support from the community, Thank You!

TAM Map 3rd Edition

MALT is almost ready to publish the 3rd Edition of the Trail Around Middlebury Map. In this edition, you will find some great improvements including mileage, non-TAM trails, and more. The layout and work was completed by our 2012 Summer Intern, Emma Loizeaux. The maps will still be free, however to help pay for a higher quality map we are looking for Map Sponsors. To find out how your business can become a sponsor, contact the office.

Our boardwalk planks are engraved by Don Mason of Vermont Laser Products. This is a great way to show your support of this in-town gem. You may choose to honor a family member, or even quote poetry! 25 character limit per plank. Engraved planks are $250.
**Middlebury College Students Helping MALT**

by Jillian Green and Sarah Macy

The Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) and Middlebury College have had a long collaborative relationship, bridging academic studies and environmental initiatives of the College and the great resources MALT offers. As a part of the Middlebury community, our spring social psychology class, led by Professor Jennifer Sellers, sought to increase awareness of the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) and expand the student membership in MALT. In order to achieve our goals, we split up into five groups focused on branding, increasing membership, increasing revenue, event organizing and communications.

The branding group worked on creating a new brand for the TAM that college students could better identify with. The membership and increasing revenue groups hosted events at the College where they employed successful social psychology techniques to provide information in ways that would increase interest in student membership. Events included tabling outside of dining halls and representing the TAM in different college-sponsored events. The fourth group aimed to increase the numbers of student volunteers to help maintain the trail. Green Up Day, May 4th was one of the events the group elicited for volunteers.

Finally, the communications group interfaced among the groups to share relevant information with the college community, including via Facebook, Twitter (@middTAM), and Instagram.

The goal of our class was to apply the theoretical social psychology we learned in the classroom, to capture the attention, interest, and involvement of students. We hope that through our efforts Middlebury College students will become more invested in helping to preserve parts of the Middlebury community, such as the TAM.

**MALT’s 2013 Summer Intern**

We welcome Melake Getabecha, our new Middlebury College summer intern. This internship position is shared by MALT and the Middlebury College Geography Department, so our intern can alternate work at the college computer lab, and also spend time outside physically maintaining the TAM.

Melake is a Senior Feb student (graduating in February 2014) majoring in Environmental Studies and Architecture. He has competed on the cross-country and track team during his time at Middlebury. He was born and raised in Denver with his siblings, but his parents were both born in Ethiopia and moved over to the US for college. He has traveled to Ethiopia to meet his family and learn about the culture.

Melake is a passionate environmentalist and is looking forward to spending the summer in Middlebury doing awesome work. If you see him out on the trail, say hello!

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**MALT merchandise is available through www.cafepress.com/malt.**
**TAM News**

- Maintaining the TAM takes planning, cooperation and countless hours of hard work by our Trails Coordinator and volunteers. With more users than ever the trails literally take a beating. Graveling sections of the TAM has been a relatively new task that we have undertaken. We have begun graveling for a variety of reasons like reducing impact on our most heavily used trails. The gravel also defines the path and helps prevent wet spots, which we have plenty of. When muddy areas develop, visitors walk around them to avoid muddy/wet shoes this causes the unintended problem of widening the path and destroying native plants. Graveling also creates a better hiking experience that minimizes the effect of high usage on the trails.

- We are fortunate to have a few MUHS students from the workplace readiness program working hard on a variety of projects this Spring. They graveled the ‘97 Trail and behind the college garden, built 32 feet of boardwalk, repaired boardwalk in Johnson Woods, and walked the whole trail clearing brush and trees by hand. The students learn functional job skills through community volunteer placements.

- About 10 people came out on June 1st to reroute part of the Chipman Hill trail for National Trails Day. Even though it was hot and humid, a large section of brush was cleared and graveled over, resulting in almost 100 feet of new trail. Thanks to everyone who came!

- Please keep your dog on leash on the trail and in the parks! Thank you very much.

**MALT Summer Camp 2013**

MALT is hosting the popular nature camp again, thanks to our counselors Mo Bissonette and Katie McEachen. See http://maltsummercamp.blogspot.com/ for more information. Currently the camps are full.

**TAM Volunteers Make It Happen!**

The Middlebury Area Land Trust invites you to join our dedicated team of volunteers. Volunteers play a vital role as ambassadors for the Land Trust. Through our Hike and Outing Series, they make our monthly hikes informative, memorable and fun. They help us construct and maintain trails, remove invasive species, ensure that our events come off without a hitch, and help in critical office work. The skills and enthusiasm of our volunteers are vital to our success. We could not do our work without you! For more information on volunteer opportunities visit us at www.maltvt.org.

**Trail Keepers**

Since 1996, MALT has built successful partnerships with the community in the construction and maintenance of the TAM. This year we are actively seeking out individuals or groups who want to be involved in maintaining the TAM as a Trail Keeper. The roles and responsibilities of the trail keepers are to be the eyes and ears of the trail and to periodically survey the trail to determine short term and long term maintenance needs. So far, four dedicated groups have agreed to become a Trail Keeper for a section of the TAM or Park.

- Aurora School – Means Woods
- Middlebury Congregational Church – Battell Woods
- Middlebury College Mtn Club – O’Neil and ’97 Trail
- Otter Creek Audubon Society – Otter View Park

There are many more sections that need your help!

**TAM Trek**

Sunday, September 22

MALT’s Tenth Annual Trail Around Middlebury Hike-Run-Bike-A-Thon, to benefit trail maintenance and improvement activities. Hike a little or a lot, every step makes a difference! Event headquarters at the Middlebury College football tailgate/parking field above along Route 30. For event registration materials go to MALT’s website: www.maltvt.org.

MALT works hard to make every donation count, focusing our efforts directly on natural resources. Your support is testament to our work. We encourage you to explore the sixteen miles of the TAM, or Otter View Park, and enjoy the view of Otter Creek and the wildlife there. It’s because of you that these resources are available for generations to come.
MALT Volunteers 2012

In addition to our donors, MALT relies upon an equally generous set of volunteers to help with tasks ranging from filing, bulk mailings, and monitoring lands to tending Otter View Park, and trail work on the TAM. We thank the following individuals for their dedication to our work.

David Hallam, for office work
Katherine Branch, for office work and hike representation
John Derick, for trail work
Carol Ramsayer, for coordinating Quest Walks
Nola Kevra, for leading hikes
Gale Hurd, for hosting Wildlife Walks
Chapin Spencer, LocalMotion Executive Director, for speaking at our Annual Meeting
TAM TREK VOLUNTEERS, Barb Osterhaudt, John and Mary Pratt, Krissa Bolton, Emma Loizeau
BOARD MEMBERS, for their time and effort.

MALT Gifts In-Kind

John Derick
Monument Farms
Kirk Fisk
Neuse, Duprey & Putnam Legal Services

MALT is grateful for the following foundations and partners for their generous support

Addison County Chamber of Commerce
Addison County Regional Planning Commission
Addison County Transit Resources
Battell Park Trust
Hannaford Career Center
Land Trust Alliance
Middlebury College
National Park Service
The Nature Conservancy
North Country Trail Association
Orton Family Foundation
Otter Creek Audubon Society
RSVP of Addison County
Town of Middlebury
United Way of Addison County
Vermont Community Foundation
Vermont Dept of Environmental Conservation
Vermont State Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
Vermont Housing & Conservation Coalition
Vermont Land Trust

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| **Total Liabilities and Equity** | **$1,192,025** |
Donors, October 1, 2011 -- September 30, 2012

Donations from our end of year Annual Appeal and Membership Programs go to support MALT’s programs, such as maintenance of our trails and parks, our hike series, events and educational materials, as well as land conservation programs. We are grateful to the following individuals for their generosity. If your name has been inadvertently omitted or misrepresented on any of the lists, please contact us at info@maltvt.org.

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Ray and Mary Doyle
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Twin State Volkssport Association
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Philip Picotte
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Otter Creek Yoga
Phelps Engineering Inc.
R.K. Miles
Stoneleaf Teahouse LLC
The Bike Center
The Lodge at Otter Creek

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L ET'S GO BIRDING!
Saturday, June 15 at 9:00 am
Led by Carol Ramsayer, Otter Creek Audubon Society Member. Join us as we explore this guided scavenger hunt about birds in Wright Park. Quests are place-based educational programs using treasure hunts to celebrate community, natural history, cultural sites, stories and special places. Begin at Wright Park lot north of Pulp Mill Bridge on Seymour St. Ext.

M arsh, 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 7am-9am in the summer months. Thursday, June 13  Saturday, July 13  Thursday, August 8  Saturday, Sept 14

I want to help preserve the natural beauty of the Middlebury area and maintenance of the Trail Around Middlebury!

I would like to contribute at the following membership level:

- Benefactor $2,500
- Friend $100
- Supporter $1,000
- Contributor $50
- Sustaining $500
- Other $______

Please provide the following information and mail with your check to MALT, POBox 804, Middlebury, VT 05753.

Name:______________________________
Address: ____________________________
City/State/Zip: _______________________
Phone: ______________________________
Email: ______________________________

If you would like to remain anonymous, check here. □