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## **Nonprofits Working Together to Create Statewide Trail Network**

*Local organizations look to expand their reach by fostering connectivity.*

**Rochester, VT - July 18, 2017** - The Rochester/Randolph Area Sports Trail Alliance (RASTA) and Green Mountain Trails (GMT) are partnering up on an initiative to connect their respective networks. The project, which recently won the support of a grant from Vermont Huts Association, is part of a statewide movement to offer greater year-round trail connectivity.

RASTA, a chapter of the Catamount Trail and Vermont Mountain Bike Associations, has led the movement to create sustainable backcountry skiing zones in Green Mountain National Forest, and their upcoming collaboration project with Green Mountain Trails in Pittsfield will begin to foster a new path toward a statewide multi-use trail built with mountain biking in mind.

“We wanted to incentivize organizations to collaborate and develop a plan to connect their networks - not just for mountain biking, but also to enhance the existing trail infrastructure and provide more opportunities for year-round enjoyment,” says Vermont Huts executive director RJ Thompson. “Our trail collaboration grant isn’t a huge sum of money, but RASTA and GMT have additional funding in place, and they’ve shown they can make a little bit go a long way with the support of their local volunteers.”

Angus McCusker, RASTA president, is looking forward to breaking ground on the project. “Historically, mountain bike trail networks in Vermont often look and feel more like spaghetti bowls of trails that twist and loop around in fairly limited areas,” McCusker said. “We’re excited to be part of an effort to break that mold and work towards linking our local communities with an inter-chapter connector from Killington to Stowe. The end result will align nicely with VT Huts’ vision of a year-round hut to hut experience.”

Vermont Huts has been working closely with various trail chapters and land managers to draft a conceptual map of a statewide hut network to serve winter and summer trail users.

The \$1,500 collaboration grant will be awarded as part of a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new trail - also spearheaded by RASTA - at Green Mountain National Forest’s Rochester district office on Wednesday, July 19 at 5 PM.

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