A 21st Century Way to Attract Trail Users: Online Trail Finder

Upper Valley Trails Alliance
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The Upper Valley Trails Alliance is the primary coordinator of Trail Finder (trailfinder.info). UVTA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has been advocating for the maintenance, use, and development of trails since 1999.
The Center for Community GIS (CCGIS) is a small L3C company that supports the mapping and geographic information needs of public interest groups, both large and small.

CCGIS has developed and collaborated on trail finder websites across the country, including in ME, VT/NH, western NY, IL/IA and SC.
What geography/population/recreation does Trail Finder cover?

- **Geography:** Trail Finder (TF) focuses on NH and VT.
  - Sister site in Maine – mainetrailfinder.com
  - Other CCGIS-developed sites covering NC, SC, IN, IA, NY

- **Primary population:** visitors to and residents of NH and VT.

- **Secondary population:** trail managers who are looking for ways to share information about their trails (not only where those trails are, but what to expect before users get there).
Why Trail Finder?

- Common problem: When looking for a place to recreate close to home or when visiting a new area and not knowing what trail resources are available.

- It is challenging to know what content to trust on the Internet when so much is posted by those with partial understanding or without permission.

- Not all landowners and trail managers have the resources or ability to promote and market their trails (and organizations).
Welcome to Trail Finder

Explore Vermont and New Hampshire

Trail Finder is a tool to help people get out, get active, and explore our beautiful area. This free resource is brought to you by:

Arken State Forest
Mendon (VT)

Charles E. Rand Memorial Forest
North Hampton (NH), Rye (NH)

Grand Isle State Park
Grand Isle (VT)

Lower Slade Brook Trail
Hanover (NH)

Mount Monadnock Hiking Trails
Dublin (NH), Jaffrey (NH)

Texas Falls
Hancock (VT)

West River Trail: Lower Section
Brattleboro (VT), Dummerston (VT)

Can't find your trail? Let us know!
What catalyzed our action?

- Broad-based interest in promoting trails, especially non-motorized (motorized coming on board slowly).

- Partial, outdated, limited, hard to find, sometimes conflicting information about trails.

- User expectations for fast, easy access to information via the Internet.
How has TF Helped?

- Articulated the need.
- Built collaborative partnerships.
- Engaged trail managers.
- Implemented web-based solution.
- Promotions/outreach.
GET OUT. GET ACTIVE. EXPLORE...

Trail Finder is a free online trails portal that allows users to search and display information and maps for over 400 trail networks across Vermont and New Hampshire.

DISCOVER TRAILS
Finding opportunities to get out and get active just got a whole lot easier!

Whether you are looking for a weekend hike, an afternoon stroll, a new trail to run, a great place for a family bicycle ride, or want to try a new adventure like paddling a water trail, use Trail Finder to search a growing collection of four-season trails in the Twin States.

Each detailed Trail Finder posting features:
- An interactive map showing the trail system and important points of interest like natural attractions and parks.
- Trailhead directions.
- A description of the trail.
- Contact information to connect directly with trail managers.
- Photographs and comments.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION MANAGE TRAILS?
If you work or volunteer for an organization that maintains its own trails in Vermont or New Hampshire and would like to discuss adding those trails to Trail Finder, we would love to hear from you! Contact the Upper Valley Trails Alliance for more information.

Trail Finder is a collaborative effort between organizations committed to promoting active recreation in Vermont and New Hampshire.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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Anatomy of a Trail Posting

Features of a Trail Page

A. Trail Overview: Provides a concise description of the trail’s key features along with a thumbnail photograph. These appear on Trail Finder’s search page.

B. Quick Facts: Presents basic “statistics” about the trail, some of which can be queried from the search page.

C. Download Data: Enables users to download map data in both KML and GPX formats.

D. Current Weather: Provides a look at the current weather conditions in the vicinity of the trail, provided by Weather Underground.

E. Nearby Geocaches: Links to geocaching.com where registered users can browse for geocache sites on an interactive map keyed to the same location as the trail.

F. Leave No Trace Principle: Shows rotating suggestions on how to minimize impacts on the environment and other users.

G. Connect on Facebook: Facebook widget showing Upper Valley Trails Alliance followers.

H. Interactive Base Map: Depicts the trail and key points of interest directly on an interactive Google Map. Users can move around the map, toggle map backgrounds, zoom in or out for more or less detail.

I. Legend: Provides a key to the map’s point symbols and trail lines. Users can toggle points on/off the map and highlight trail lines.

K. View Connector Trails: Views other trails connected to the trail of interest, such as Winooski River Walk or View Trail Posting.
What has happened as a result?

- People are learning about opportunities to be active outdoors.
- Trail managers have a new voice.
- Trail stakeholder groups have access to a new resource and don’t have to reinvent the wheel when wanting to promote trails to their constituencies.
- Comprehensive GIS data being generated and used in other planning arenas.
Trail Finder Promotion

Find local trails across New Hampshire & Vermont
Explore new places
Connect with nature
Promote your trails & conservation work
Testimonial from a Trail Finder user:

“I found your website yesterday (2/17/2019) when searching for information on the Slate History Trail in Bomoseen. What a find! My husband and I had a nice winter hike on a beautiful snowy day, and Learned of some nice history close to our home. Today I searched your site and found several other trails around Poultney (VT) that we did not know about. I’ve lived here for 30+ years and only knew of a few of those trails. Here is a donation to keep the site going.”

-Anne, Trail Finder User
What did it take to do this?

- The right team (think partnerships).
- Partners must be capable of understanding how trails + technology + audience + working with volunteers all intersect.
- A robust RFP process for developing the website.
What are our toughest challenges?

- Rich, robust content development can take time...the start to finish process for posting a trail system to TF is time consuming.

- Trail Finder is one of many things that we do (and that our trail managers do).

- Fundraising– From site development and maintenance funding to funds to support future trail postings to communicating with Trail Managers.
How can these system evolve?

- Events Calendar
- Trailside Services
- Tracking Trails
- Badge Earning
- Blog/Trail Stories
Get Out.
Get Active.
Explore...
For more information, please contact:

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