



## **Welcome to the VCDA 2023 Spring Conference!**

Recreation for Economic Vitality: Local and Regional Strategies for Success

Thursday, May 18th, 2023 | 9:30 AM – 4:00 PM | West Windsor Town Hall

Communities around the state are finding ways to expand and share their outdoor and municipal recreation opportunities as a way to boost economic vitality, attract and retain residents, and draw visitors to their towns. Whether it's a network of mountain bike trails, a local ski hill, an indoor/outdoor pool, or a skating rink; recreation resources serve as a key strategy to attract visitors and residents and boost and support a thriving local economy. Through a variety of panels, peer-to-peer discussions, and trail outings, participants in this conference will:

- Hear about municipal and outdoor recreation success stories from around the state
- Address and workshop challenges that communities face when expanding and/or marketing recreation opportunities
- Identify funding sources and technical assistance for local and regional recreation
- Take a biking or walking tour of a local recreation resource and hear about the formation of the Ascutney Outdoor Trails and Outdoor Center

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## Platinum Level



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# AGENDA

- 9:30**            **Welcome**                    **Jenna Koloski, *President*, VCDA**
- 9:40**            **Keynote Panel**            **The Ascutney Outdoors Story**
- 10:30**            **Break**
- 10:40**            **Sponsor Presentations**
- 10:50**            **Panel**                        **Community Recreation Project Success Stories**
- 11:45**            **Bernice Murray Award**
- 12:00**            **Lunch**                        Provided by **Brownsville Butcher & Pantry**
- 12:45**            **Panel**                        **Navigating Common Challenges: Who Can Help?**
- 1:50**            **Break**
- 2:00**            **Breakout Groups/Trail Time**
- 3:20**            **Endnote**                    **Recreation and Economic Vitality: The Numbers with  
Drew Pollak-Bruce, SE Group**
- 3:50**            **Closing Words/Sponsor Presentation**
- 4:00**            **Adjourn**

# Keynote Panel

## The Ascutney Outdoors Story

**Moderator | Jenna Koloski | Community Engagement and Policy Director for the Vermont Council on Rural Development | President of the Vermont Community Development Association | [jenna@vtrural.org](mailto:jenna@vtrural.org)**

**Shelley Seward | Board Chair | Ascutney Outdoors | [sms@shelleyseward.com](mailto:sms@shelleyseward.com)**

Shelley recently retired after owning an independent financial advising practice for over 20 years. Shelley has a special connection to Mt. Ascutney, having lived within one mile of its base her entire life. She and her husband Glenn have been very involved in the West Windsor community and most recently in the resurrection of activities on the mountain. Additionally, they open their private land to hikers, bikers and skiers and encourage all to enjoy what the Mt. Ascutney basin has to offer. Shelley sits on the board of Ascutney Outdoors and is integrally involved with operations, volunteers and community events. She will assume the board chair position on May 1, 2023.

**Erik Schutz | Board of Directors Member | Ascutney Trails Association | [info@ascutneytrails.com](mailto:info@ascutneytrails.com)**

Erik Founded Sport Trails of the Ascutney Basin in 2005 with 4 other residents of Windsor, and West Windsor in 2005. He retired from the Board in 2014 and returned in 2019 to help merge ATA with STAB. Works as a Clinical Lab Scientist at DHMC and live in Norwich Vermont but find myself riding my bike more often than not on the Ascutney Trails. Once a 14-year resident of Brownsville, VT and active volunteer in the town and on the trails, he still travels south to ride with friends. He primarily rides a black Spot Mayhem full suspension mountain bike on the trails but always finds an excuse to be outside in the woods every season. "I'm on the Board of Directors because I'm proud of the trail system we've developed over the years and want to contribute to the vibrant trail community in Vermont."

**Peter Varkonyi | Head Butcher, Executive Chef, Event & Catering Coordinator | Brownsville Butcher & Pantry | [peter.varkonyi@butcherandpantry.com](mailto:peter.varkonyi@butcherandpantry.com)**

Peter Varkonyi serves as head butcher, executive chef, and event & catering coordinator of the Brownsville Butcher & Pantry. He began his culinary career at 16 attending culinary art vocation schooling and continued his education at the New England Culinary Institute graduating with a BA in Hospitality Management. Through his career Peter's journey has led him from the Upper Valley to Napa, California, the Rocky Mountains and back again. His great joy is to support his community and lead in organization fundraiser, entrepreneurial activism and career minded education.

**Ted Seigler | Town of West Windsor | Ascutney Outdoors | [ted@dsmenvironmental.com](mailto:ted@dsmenvironmental.com)**

Ted has been a resident of Brownsville/West Windsor for 35 years. He was an original member of the West Windsor Conservation Commission formed roughly 25 years ago and has served as Chair for roughly 90 percent of that time. Ted has also served on the West Windsor Selectboard three times, acting as Chair for much of that time. Ted is a founding member and President of DSM Environmental Services, which has been serving municipal, regional and State governments in the US for over 30 years, as well as working in 15 countries around the world. Ted is the Town's Ex Officio representative to Ascutney Outdoors.

## Community Recreation Project Success Stories Panel

**Moderator | Julia Connell | Community Development Specialist for the Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development and the Agency of Commerce & Community Development | Vice President of the Vermont Community Development Association | [julia.connell@vermont.gov](mailto:julia.connell@vermont.gov)**

**Chip Sawyer | Director of Planning & Development | City of St Albans | [c.sawyer@stalbansvt.com](mailto:c.sawyer@stalbansvt.com)**

Chip Sawyer is the Director of Planning & Development for the City of St. Albans. There he oversees the City's land use planning and permitting, community development, stormwater planning, property valuation, and special projects. Chip has previously worked as a Program Manager at the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont and as a Senior Planner at Lamoille County Planning Commission. He holds Master's degrees in Public Administration and Natural Resource Planning from the University of Vermont. Chip grew up in the City of St. Albans and lives there with his family today.

**Randy Richardson | Development Director | Upper Valley Trails Alliance | [randy.richardson@uvtrails.org](mailto:randy.richardson@uvtrails.org)**

Randy is the Development Director at the [Upper Valley Trails Alliance](#) where he fuses his love of the outdoors with his experience as an educational administrator and fund raiser. In addition to UVTA fundraising, Randy helps to lead the High School Trail Corps and build and maintain trails all over the Upper Valley. He briefly led the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council, and is currently Chair of the Billings Park Commission in Woodstock, VT. Randy lives and hikes with his family and dogs in Woodstock. Before becoming a full-time trail geek, Randy spent much of his professional life in education, first as a teacher and coach and then as an administrator. He was Head of School at the Derryfield School in Manchester, NH and the Oliverian School in Pike, NH, and also worked as a consultant at the Breakthrough Collaborative, a national program focused on educational equity. He received his BA from Hamilton College and MALS degree from Wesleyan University.

**Drew Pollak-Bruce, CPRP | Senior Recreation Planner | SE Group | [dbruce@segroup.com](mailto:dbruce@segroup.com)**

Drew is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and holds a Master's of Regional Planning from Cornell University and a BA in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has worked as a professional planner, advocate, and journalist often focusing on the confluence of recreation, communities, and economics. He is the President of the Board for the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals—the organization that puts on the National Outdoor Recreation Conference each year—and sits on the Executive Committee of the VT Recreation and Parks Association and the VT Community Development Association.

**Eleanor Griffin | Recreation Committee Chairperson | Town of Bethel | [egriffin2@myfairpoint.net](mailto:egriffin2@myfairpoint.net)**

**Andrew McGregor | RINK | [mcgregora@caledonian-record.com](mailto:mcgregora@caledonian-record.com)**

**Scott Beck | RINK | [scottbeck7@gmail.com](mailto:scottbeck7@gmail.com)**

## Navigating Common Challenges: Who Can Help? Panel

**Moderator | Jessica Savage | Director of Community Collaboration | Vermont Council on Rural Development | [jessica@vtrural.org](mailto:jessica@vtrural.org)**

Jessica joined the VCRD staff in 2021 after 15 years in the public sector mainly in the natural resources and recreation management fields. She has a Bachelor's Degree from Brandeis University in French Language and Literature, a Master's in Public Administration from UVM, and loves spending active time outdoors running, cross-country skiing, camping, hiking and playing with her two young children.

**Jessica Brodie | Executive Director | Vermont Recreation & Parks Association | [jessica@vrpa.org](mailto:jessica@vrpa.org)**

Jessica Brodie is the Executive Director of the Vermont Recreation & Parks Association. Through this role, Jess works with parks & recreation professionals, agencies, and businesses to provide resources, trainings, and events that help support the parks and recreation profession as a whole throughout the state of Vermont. Prior to this role, Jessica served in the municipal parks and recreation sector as a Parks & Recreation department director of two different departments in Massachusetts, and as an assistant director in another over the span of 10+ years. Jessica is a graduate of the NRPA Director's School, received her CPRP certification in 2009, and has a degree from the University of New Hampshire in Recreational Management & Policy. In her spare time, you can find Jess recreating outdoors with her

three kids and husband on hiking and biking trails, skiing, horseback riding, running and other fun outdoor adventures.

**Nick Bennette | Executive Director | Vermont Mountain Bike Association | Co-Chair | Vermont Trails & Greenways Council | [nick@vmba.org](mailto:nick@vmba.org)**

Nick is the Executive Director of the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA) and Co-Chairs of the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council (VTGC). VMBA currently stewards over 1,000 miles of singletrack, multipurpose trail in Vermont, spanning more than 50 trail networks. Over the past decade and through more than 20,000 annual volunteer hours, VMBA deploys best practices to create and maintain world-class sustainable trails, working closely with communities to ensure needs are met and a joint vision for public access recreation is achieved. After earning a PhD in Chemistry, Nick spent 10 years working as an organizational consultant and advisor, first for McKinsey & Company and eventually for Camber Collective, a boutique firm that specializes in supporting non-profits, foundations, and mission-driven organizations. Nick moved with his family from Washington State in 2021 to run VMBA and now lives in Waterbury, spending as much of his time in the woods as he can - ideally on a bike.

**Jason Rasmussen, AICP | Executive Director | Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) | [jrasmussen@marcvt.org](mailto:jrasmussen@marcvt.org)**

Jason has 23 years of experience working as a professional planner in Vermont and New Hampshire. He is responsible for the overall leadership and management of all MARC's activities. He has many years of experience working closely with municipalities with transportation planning, land use planning, recreation planning, community development, and local infrastructure projects. MARC has assisted many of its towns with planning for and implementing strategies for outdoor recreation and economic vitality, including the Town of West Windsor. Jason is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners.

**Jackie Dagger | Program Manager | Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative | [jackie.dagger@vermont.gov](mailto:jackie.dagger@vermont.gov)**

Jackie Dagger joined the State of Vermont in 2021 as the Program Manager for the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC). In her role, Jackie works between staff in the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and public and private participants in the VOREC Steering Committee, to move forward projects that strengthen Vermont's outdoor recreation economy. Projects include the administration of the VOREC Community Grant Program which provides funding to municipalities and non-profits throughout the state to invest in their outdoor recreation assets as a tool for economic development. After finishing her master's degree in Food Systems and Permaculture Design, Jackie worked for 7 years as a public outreach and engagement consultant supporting municipalities in the state of Washington to develop meaningful engagement processes focused on wastewater management, transportation, energy, and environmental conservation. Jackie grew up in Vermont and is excited to be home after 11 years on the west coast. She

loves playing outside and can be found around Vermont enjoying some of her favorite places on skis, by foot or climbing up rocks.

## Keynote



**Drew Pollak-Bruce, CPRP**

**Senior Recreation Planner**

**SE Group**

**[dbruce@segroun.com](mailto:dbruce@segroun.com)**

### **“Recreation and Economic Vitality: The Numbers”**

This session will unpack the local and national conversation around the outdoor recreation economy and help you apply that framework to any community and recreation system in Vermont. Drew will share some of the published “Numbers” around the recreation economy in Vermont, including data from the Federal Bureau of Economic Affairs Data as well as information from the VT Trails and Greenways Council, the Missisquoi and Lamoille Valley Rail Trails, and several other sources. He will also share tricks, tools, and templates the local recreation economy in your town.

Drew is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and holds a Master’s of Regional Planning from Cornell University and a BA in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has worked as a professional planner, advocate, and journalist often focusing on the confluence of recreation, communities, and economics. He is the President of the Board for the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals—the organization that puts on the National Outdoor Recreation Conference each year—and sits on the Executive Committee of the VT Recreation and Parks Association and the VT Community Development Association.



**FEEDBACK SURVEY**  
**VCDA SPRING CONFERENCE 2023**

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**Please circle your response to the questions below**

1. How valuable to you was the **Keynote panel on the Ascutney Outdoors Story**?

Did Not Attend      Not At All Valuable      Somewhat Valuable      Very Valuable

2. How valuable to you was the **Community Recreation Project Success Stories panel**?

Did Not Attend      Not At All Valuable      Somewhat Valuable      Very Valuable

3. How valuable to you was the **Navigating Common Challenges panel**?

Did Not Attend      Not At All Valuable      Somewhat Valuable      Very Valuable

4. Which afternoon activity did you participate in?

Breakout discussion groups      Guided walking tour      Guided biking tour      Did not attend

5. How valuable to you was the afternoon activity you participated in?

Did Not Attend      Not At All Valuable      Somewhat Valuable      Very Valuable

6. How valuable to you was the **Endnote presentation on Recreation and Economic Vitality Data**?

Did Not Attend      Not At All Valuable      Somewhat Valuable      Very Valuable

7. How valuable to you was the overall conference?

Did Not Attend      Not At All Valuable      Somewhat Valuable      Very Valuable

8. Was the **food** satisfactory?    Yes    No

9. Was the **venue** satisfactory?    Yes    No

10. Would you attend another VCDA conference?    Yes    No

What topics would you like to see covered at future conferences?

Please share with us any additional feedback you may have on the back of this form.