2017 is finally here and with it comes some changes regarding your 2017 Trail Access Decal (TAD). We will no longer be using the white plastic plates that you have previously been instructed to place your TAD on. We are moving towards a new system, more in line with New Hampshire’s process. This change is being made to cut costs once VASA is ready to implement online sales for memberships and TAD’s and also to give law enforcement a clear way to validate riders as current members. VASA would like to thank it’s members in advance for compliance with the new rules!
2017 Legislative Session Begins
Vermont’s 73rd Legislative Session is just about to begin. New leadership in the House and Senate are starting to take shape, but committees members are not yet named. Governor-Elect Phil Scott begins his tenure with an Inaugural Address which will be an important speech to explain his agenda priorities and how he plans to work with the General Assembly with a rather large Democratic majority. Danny Hale, Frank Stanley and I are currently working with Fish and Wildlife Officials on strategies to enhance our partnership to improve membership services in areas of safety training, outreach and enforcement. This will be an important foundation piece for the VASA Compliance Program.

Management Plans for State Lands
The Victory Management Unit (VMU) is approximately 24,000 acres across three parcels: Victory Basin WMA, Victory State Forest, and Darling State Park. There is good connector to trail language as requested by VASA in this plan. There was a public meeting in November attended by approximately 20 folks mostly interested in hiking, skiing and snowshoe trails. Other than myself, no one expressed interest in motorized trail use including the potential for establishing an ATV trail. After the meeting, I sent a request to Commissioner Porter to extend the comment period to accommodate those of us that, during the fall, spend a great deal of our spare time hunting. It was granted and an additional public meeting is also scheduled. The risk to request additional time could result in low turnout by those that have asked for it. It is important that there be a good showing of VASA members to express interest in their plan and ask how we can work with them should an opportunity for a trail presents itself.

Public meeting - Victory Management Unit: Tuesday, January 10, 2017 from 6:30-8:30p.m. at Lyndon State College (Burke Mtn. Room), 1001 College Road, Lyndonville, VT.

Comments on plan: Please send comments to Doug Morin (doug.morin@vermont.gov), 1229 Portland Street, St Johnsbury, VT 05819 Deadline for comments is February 1, 2017.

The Agency of Natural Resources started the process of updating the management plan for the Aitken State Forest. Purchased in 1912, the 918-acre state forest is in the town of Mendon. This State Forest connects to the newly created Jim Jeffords State Forest which connects to the Coolidge State Forest so there is now a very large 25,000-acre block of forested public land in Rutland County. An open house took place December 13 at the Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation District office in Rutland. This is their scoping period and are seeking comments, issues and concerns so to address these topics as they write the plan. The plan is expected in early 2018. It was good to see David Noel from The West Rutland ATV Sportsman’s Club actively participating in the process. There may be an excellent opportunity to partner with the FPR planning team to learn about potential opportunities and share your willingness to seek compatible recreational uses.

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (Conte Refuge) Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan
The long-awaited Conte Refuge Final Long Range Management Plan covering traditional land uses on the 41-square mile federal portion of the former Champion Lands in the Northeast corner of Vermont has finally been released. It appears that the Final Plan is just that: final. Steve McLeod and Danny, on behalf of VASA, provided a VASA Written Public Comment in November, 2015 and Steve spoke in behalf of VASA at several Public Hearings during the consideration of the Final Plan. The Conte Plan Public Input process lasted eight years and VASA was active at every opportunity throughout the process. Besides VASA’s effort, Vermont Traditions Coalition, the Champion Lands Leaseholders & Traditional Interests Association, and other VTC member organizations put on an all-out effort during this entire period pushing to protect traditional uses on the Refuge including ATVing. Unfortunately, the Final Conte Plan does not allow ATVing on existing Conte Refuge lands. The Plan’s “Finding of Appropriateness determined that ATVs were: “not an appropriate use of refuge lands” It appears there is little opportunity to open that door in the near future. To compound this unfortunate situation, the Refuge plan calls to increase its holdings throughout the Connecticut River watershed to almost 200,000 acres. The plan does state that it will not have interest in purchasing Class IV roads with a designated ATV Trail so those trails will not be extinguished. In addition, should they pursue acquisition of a property containing an ATV trail at some future date, the disposition of the trail could be a point of negotiation between the seller and Service. Because the Silvio Conte Refuge boundary includes four states it is important to establish relations with ATV organizations in these neighboring states to work together in addressing this issue. Danny and I have begun reaching out to New Hampshire to begin that conversation.

Ed Larson, Lobbyist
Montpelier, Vermont
802-224-9177
edlarson117@gmail.com
CONTACT US

Bennington County:
BTC: Bennington Trail Cruisers
Mike Smith: 518-279-3385

Caledonia County:
CATT: Caledonia All Terrain Travelers:
Doug Runne: 802-472-5522

NEKW: Northeast Kingdom Wheelers
Craig Vance: 802-684-2283

BTB: Barnet Trail Blazers
Steve Mosher: 802-633-2266

Essex County:
TOW: Top of the World ATV Club
Steve Bean: 508-410-9704

TCATV: Tri County ATV Club
Pete Walbridge: 802-249-9730

Franklin County:
NWVW: North West Vermont Wheelers
Justin Rocque: 802-752-0583

Lamoille County:
GMATV: Green Mountain ATV Club
Gary Nolan: 802-888-7948

Orange County:
WATV: Westshire ATV Club
Doug Stone: 802-785-2140

TVW: Tri-Village Wheelers
Melodee Caruso: 802-439-6012

Orleans County:
BLRR: Borderline Ridge Riders
Cory Spaulding: 802-323-3672

Rutland County:
WRASC: West Rutland ATV Sportsman’s Club
David Noel: 802-681-5785

Washington County:
CVATV: Central Vermont ATV Club
Roland Bedard: 802-461-6671

LNAC: Lost Nation ATV Club
Andy Cruickshank: 802-839-0677

Windham County:
SVTR: Southern Vermont Trail Riders
Lloyd Church: 802-874-4073

Windsor County:
CVQR: Central VT Quad Runners
Chuck Lyman: 802-234-5640

RATS: Reading All Terrain Sportsmen
Dennis Allen: 802-484-9751

VASA Executive Board and Staff:

President: Craig Vance (NEKW, Danville)
Vice President: Adam Lane (LNAC, Roxbury)
Secretary: Doug Wheeler (BTC, Bennington)
Treasurer: Gary Nolan (GMATV, Morrisville)
Board Member at Large: Justin Rocque (NVWW, St. Albans)

Executive Director: Danny Hale:
director@vtvasa.org
Operations Director: Dani Luce:
dcady@vtvasa.org
Office Manager: Emily Hale
office@vtvasa.org
Trails Coordinator: Jesse Bassett
trails@vtvasa.org

Law and Public Policy Consultants:
Frank Stanley: frankstlney@wildblue.net
Ed Larson: larsonthree@comcast.net

ALWAYS RIDE WITH:

RESPECT

Understand that you are riding on volunteer maintained trails, located on privately owned land on a powerful machine.

VASA trails are a privilege, not a right.

RIDE SAFE:
Wear proper safety gear and ride within your means.

RIDE LEGALLY:
Make sure your registration, VASA membership and TAD are valid.

RIDE SMART:
Destructive riding leads to lost trails. If given the chance to thank a landowner or volunteer PLEASE DO!

Have a question?
ASK US!

Please visit our website and facebook page! We also encourage you to participate with your local club via social media.

WWW.VTVASA.ORG

Or, Search for VT ATV SPORTSMAN’S ASSOCIATION on facebook!

Other ways to contact us:

VISIT OUR OFFICE or MAIL US A LETTER
14 Don Camp Drive, Barre, VT 05641

CALL US:
802-477-5075 (office) 802-477-5076 (fax)

EMAIL US:
office@vtvasa.org

ON THE TRAILS:
Members often come across our trail maintenance crew while out riding, if you do, please stop and say hi! We love seeing our members on the trails.

LOOKING FOR YOUR 2017 MEMBERSHIP AND TRAIL ACCESS DECAL?
VASA has points of sale located throughout the state. All ATV dealers, along with a variety of other businesses sell VASA. You can also get your membership through your local club or the VASA office located in South Barre. Online sales will be coming soon, but this year you will need to join VASA and purchase your TAD in person. Please call or email the VASA office if you would like assistance finding the most convenient point of sale to your location.

Have a question?
ASK US!
A New Use for “Current Use”

By Tim Tierney

A new study puts a value on outdoor recreation in Vermont. It may also help make a case for tax breaks for landowners who host trails.

Two big things happened recently that could impact outdoor recreation. On December 8, 2016, President Obama signed into law the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act, which will allow the U.S. Department of Commerce to appraise outdoor recreation’s overall impact to the gross domestic product (GDP). This act legitimizes the outdoor recreation economy. The official statistics will boost the protection, management and importance of public lands across the country.

Vermont, long an outdoor playground for residents and visitors, is home to a myriad of recreational outlets, ranging from small, community-based trail systems to statewide systems. The Long Trail alone has been an accessible retreat for 105 years.

But only a few studies have been conducted to demonstrate the economic impact of certain industries or recreation activities. Snowmobiling in particular has shown its importance to the state’s economy through these impact studies.

On November 29, four organizations (The Green Mountain Club, Catamount Trail Association, Vermont ATV Sportsman’s Association and Kingdom Trail Association) announced the results of an economic impact study done via a matching grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the coordination of the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council.

The study was the first for most of these not-for-profit entities which maintain, manage and operate to provide recreational access. The overall economic impact brought by out-of-state visitors for Vermont’s economy totaled over $30 million.

This controlled study, done with out-of-state participants, brought to light accurate figures of spending habits, length of stay and services used. It has sparked interest in gathering more information and will be used as a springboard for a more comprehensive study with all trail-based activities. This, in turn, can give us a more authentic picture of the true statewide impact. The subsequent investigation will also include a detailed account of intrastate spending, second home ownership, and industry retail sales.

Already, the picture painted by our current study reveals that outdoor recreation is a solid leg of Vermont’s economy through job creation and destination development and is a revenue producer.

The hope is that this data will also be a catalyst for a change in perception. If a forest trail way that’s built and maintained with good management practices generates dollars at a local, regional and state level, then one can say that this trail system is a viable forest or agricultural product, grown and nurtured by Vermonters, for Vermonters.

Trails are woven into the fabric of the working landscape and the economic and health benefits just keep growing. The unique aspect is that many of these venues depend on the generosity of private landowners as well as on access to public land.

Vermont has long known the value of its forest and farm land and first passed the use value appraisal program (Current Use) in 1978. Now, about a third of Vermont’s total land area is enrolled in Current Use. The purpose of the law was to allow the valuation and taxation of farm and forest land based on it remaining in agricultural or forest use—instead taxing it based on its value in the market place.

However, there is no current way to offer tax incentives to landowners in Vermont who host trails. Neighboring states Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine have Current Use programs that include recreation.

Massachusetts’ Current Use programs were created to give preferential tax treatment to those landowners who maintain their property as open space for the purposes of “timber production, agriculture or recreation.” Taxes for this program are calculated using 25 percent of the current assessed value.

In New Hampshire, Current Use discounts may accrue if a landowner is willing to file a recreational easement permitting the public to come upon the land unimpeded for non-motorized recreation.

Maine has several criteria for Current Use determination, including one for open space whereby a tract must be preserved or restricted in use to provide a public benefit. Benefits recognized include public recreation, scenic resources, game management and wildlife habitat.

At present, Vermont has a statute protecting the landowner’s liability from public use on his or her property. Recently, the state also made it more enticing to donate a permanent conservation easement. For many Vermont landowners it’s a tradition to share their land. For others, it’s a way to help the community and grow their local economy.

Yet change of ownership, increased taxes and land use change always threaten this relationship. Easements are expensive and not always open or practical for trail placement.

Hopefully, these studies will encourage discussion and consideration of ways to encourage increased stewardship and growth of managed outdoor recreational trails.

A certain first step would be to create a simple means to offer a tax incentive for those who provide this public benefit and economic driver. It will be a small investment with a huge return.

Tim Tierney is the executive director of the Kingdom Trails, a non-profit that maintains and promotes a network of more than 100 miles of trails on public and private land in the Northeast Kingdom.
Economic Impact

Vermont Trails and Greenway Member Organizations

The following organizations participated in this impact study: Catamount Trail Association, Green Mountain Club (manages the Long Trail), Kingdom Trails Association, and Vermont All Terrain Sportsman Association (VASA).

Annual Trail Use by Organization

- Green Mountain Club - 49%
- VASA Trail - 26%
- Kingdom Trails - 23%
- Catamount Trail - 2%

Annual Economic Impacts in Vermont

- 365 Jobs Supported
- $9 Million in Earnings
- $22.4 Million in Sales

$30.8 Million
Total Annual Economic Activity Supported by Trail Use

Annual New Spending Impacts

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overnight Lodging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gifts</td>
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</table>

$1 Million
$3 Million
$5 Million

$15 million
in new sales

Annually, over

occur in Vermont as a result of trail visitors spending on travel expenses such as food, lodging, and equipment.

Sales Tax, Property Tax, and State Tax Revenues

$2 Million
Tax Revenues

Vermont receives over $2 million in tax revenues annually, as a result of trail users.

410,000 Annual Trail Users

Visitors come to Vermont trails from all over the US and the globe, including Sweden, Germany, Brazil, Australia, China, and Canada.

Each icon represents nearly 20,000 users.

This impact focuses only on the four trail organizations and therefore represents only a limited portion of the total economic impact of trails and recreation on the State of Vermont economy.
Greetings from Borderline Ridge Riders. We have closed another fantastic year as of Oct 1st, 2016. We ended the year with 416 members. Last year we ended with 257 members. A 62% increase. There are so many individuals we need to thank. We believe you know who you are. First and foremost we want to say a Big thank you to all the Land owners who allowed registered ATVs to ride the trails on their property. Without their support our Club would not be able to survive. We saw an increase in Law Enforcement ticketing unregistered machines and non-members. This year we saw a new slate of officers elected along with a new board of Directors. We had several successful events this year. Our scavenger hunt on June 25th, Andre Geoffrey ride on July 16th and our annual Poker Run on Sept 10th. Cory Spaulding, our Trail’s coordinator, was very busy with his team keeping our trails up to par. A new trail was completed that took us to Bob’s Quick Stop in Irasburg. It looks like the Town of Barton will be giving us permission to ride a section of road in their town. ATV’s will be allowed on the West Glover Road from Irasburg. That road turns into the Stevens Road in Barton. It will also be open and goes directly to West Glover Village. The club is also looking to expand the Derby area connecting trails that would lead us to Island Pond. A VASA change for next year. It was approved by the State BOD at the VASA office that next year we will no longer have WHITE plates. You will be issued 2 decals that will be place on your ATV’s (front & back) when you buy your memberships. This was truly an excellent year for BLRR club. As we close the season, thank you for all your support. We are looking forward to a great 2017 riding season. Respects our landowners. They are the heart of our organization.

Northeast Kingdom Wheelers

Just a quick note to our members– Our meetings will resume in March of 2017 and will be held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month until November. We have a potluck dinner at 6, followed by our business meeting at 7:00 pm. There will be a number of changes in the regulations for riders in Danville this year. We plan to update everyone as riding season gets closer, but please be aware that riding in Danville in 2017 will be very different. Please educate yourself by getting in touch with the local club regarding the new town ordinance and trails in the area.

Top of the World ATV Club

Top of the World members recycled some of the lumber removed from the replaced bridge at Brown’s pit. Recycled materials were used to replace the bridge deck on Bombard Road. Trails are closed now and we spent the end of the season working on updating our local trails maps for the 2017 season.

We’d like to start out the year by saying thank you to our landowners and volunteers! Without you, we would have nothing! Also, a huge thank you to the local businesses that sell TOW memberships and VASA trail access decals for us. Please support the businesses that support your sport!

Barnie’s Market: 166 Main Street, Concord, VT 05824 802-695-8133
Lunenburg Variety: 23 W. Main St, Lunenburg, VT 05906 802-892-1147
Southern Vermont Trail Riders

The 2016 riding season is now officially over and as we look toward the 2017 season, it’s time to reflect on what we’ve accomplished and the good times we’ve had over the last year. Here at the SVTR, we have closed some of the worst sections of our trails and opened up new routes around those areas. Widened and improved a number of our trails, with the help of VASA and Jesse, we have repaired a washed out section of one of our main trails. We also had another successful “Big Raffle” fund raiser that helped us upgrade some picnic tables at our trail heads and picnic area and allowed us to make our annual donations to our local community organizations. We held two organized night rides and several cookouts which are always a lot of fun. All of this would not have been possible without the excellent volunteers that make up our club. I would like to once again extend our thanks to all of those who have graciously donated their time and effort to keep the SVTR alive and well and moving forward! Your efforts are greatly appreciated! I would also like to thank our landowners for allowing us access to their land. And lastly, after eleven years of service, Lloyd Church is stepping down as President of the SVTR. Lloyd has served the club well and has shaped the SVTR into the excellent organization that it is today. We thank you Lloyd for all you have done for us and look forward to seeing you on our trails and at our meetings for years to come! Thanks to everyone for a safe, productive and fun 2016! I wish you all a good winter and look forward to working with you all in 2017.

Northwest Vermont Wheelers

Hello ATV Enthusiasts!

We hope you had a great holiday season! We had a great first year as a club. Thank you to all who helped make it happen! At the end of the riding season we were fortunate enough to have a land owner come forward who wants to work with us. I toured the property which already has trails cut. It’s really nice and has a lot of potential. Much more info to come in the spring. I would like to welcome Tim Joyal to our Executive Board. He is our Chittenden County trail coordinator and is already busy on working on trying to get areas to ride. We can be found at www.northwestvermontwheelers.com and on facebook. We are going to spend the next few months planning the 2017 events. If you would like to be part of the planning, our monthly meetings are on the third Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm at the 14th Star Tap Room and Brewery in the downtown St. Albans shopping center. It was once the old bowling alley. Hope to see you all there!

-Justin Rocque, President: atv4wheelin@gmail.com

Caledonila All Terrain Travelers

CALLING ALL CATT MEMBERS! We are in desperate need of volunteers for the 2017 season. We have officer level positions open and could really use a few extra hands this year. Our area has lots of potential for new trails but we don’t have enough hands to make it happen! Contact Dani Luce today at dcady@vtvasa.org if you are interested!
Hello and Happy New Year from the West Rutland ATV Sportsman Club. 2016 was an interesting year for our club to say the least. We came right down to the wire for having enough members to fill the officer’s positions. That seems kind of crazy when the club has close to 200 members, but it kind of shows the trend that people want to “pay to play” and not “commit or work to play”. Once we made it past the election of officers (which by the way we have a fine group of people) things started to smooth out and we had some really good work and ride days. One of the new club policies that were instigated by our new President (David Noel) is that “if you come to work or play we’re going to feed you”. When we’re at Woodlawn we pack the grill, the coolers, and whatever is needed for a Hot Dog lunch on the trail. Lunch usually consist of hot dogs, chips, cookies and water. When Steve Koza is with us which he usually is, he provides the entertainment (story telling) during lunch.

We held a Geocaching Poker Run during the summer that went over really well. We put out 5 buckets with playing cards in that the players were taken to for a draw. They were also given the GPS coordinates of 5 jokers in hidden locations. You were allowed to find one of the jokers to add to your hand as a wild card. Prizes were given to the top 3 hands. We plan on making this an annual event with some sponsored prizes, so stay tuned. You will not want to miss this. Even if it is just to see people wandering around the woods looking for the hidden jokers.

We did lose a couple riding areas this year, but the club is actively pursuing some new areas that look real promising. I can’t really say anymore as I don’t want to jeopardize the negotiations. Our trail coordinator Jim Philbrook has been working hard on a couple of projects. We still have Woodlawn, and I feel that ride is one of the best in the state if you like rugged mountain riding. If any members out there know of any riding that could be secured by the club in our area please come forward and let an officer of the club know.

Hope to see you on the trails, and have a safe 2017.

PS. The best email to reach me at the quickest is bob@vermontel.com Secretary.

President – David Noel ivianiac@gmail.com
Vice President – Fred Elliott mrfe2009@comcast.net
Treasurer – Deborah Elliott mrselliott@comcast.net

Visit our face book page “The West Rutland ATV Sportsman Club” for future event dates and news.

Vasa Receives New Grant

This is Operations Director Dani Luce accepting a giant check from Governor Peter Shumlin at the State of Vermont Buildings & General Services Grant Award Ceremony. VASA wrote a grant to repair and maintain our trail head kiosks and provide updated educational material for each kiosk. We are very proud to receive the award and can’t wait to get started on this project.
VASA Executive Director Nationally Recognized

We are very lucky to have the Executive Director that we have—this business is more than his job, more than his passion— it is his life. He lives for this sport and our state would not have the ATV opportunities that we have without him. Recently, he was awarded on a national level by NOHVCC (The National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council). We are very proud—way to go Danny Hale! Here’s what NOHVCC had to say about Danny:

“The NOHVCC Perserverance Award is presented for showing steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in success. This year’s award winner is Danny Hale, Executive Director of the Vermont ATV Sportsman’s Association, Inc (VASA). Said Ehnes (NOHVCC Executive Director) during the award ceremony. “This award is presented to Danny Hale, for his ongoing role as the leader of VASA, for his continued efforts to provide quality OHV recreation in the State of Vermont, for leadership roles in national organizations like NOHVCC, BRC (Blue Ribbon Coalition) and for his longtime dedication to OHV recreation. And Danny, I want to tell you how much I value you as a board member and a friend. You’ve been an incredible asset for us and you’ve done a phenomenal job in your State. We appreciate everything you do.”

“It’s my passion,” said Hale in accepting the award. “I’ve been very fortunate to turn it into a career, thank you all.”

2017 Riding Season

Are you ready for the 2017 riding season? Here are some things you will need to know.

2017 TADs (Trail Access Decals) will be available in March from VASA points of sale, local clubs and through the VASA office. They are valid from April 1, 2017 through March 31, 2018. All trail open and close dates must be checked and complied with despite the validity of your TAD. Please understand that trails open/close dates are subject to change without notice due to landowner/municipality and safety/environmental concerns. We always recommend that you give your local club a call ahead of time to make sure the trails you are traveling to are open. Helmets are required on the VASA trail system. Insurance is highly recommended and although not a law, many municipalities that VASA trails pass through do require it.

VASA and its local clubs have many trail projects already scheduled for 2017. Please be aware that you may come across our work crews and equipment while enjoying the trails. We ask that everyone rides alert for their own safety and the safety of our volunteers and work crew.

You may have noticed that you did not receive an invitation to the VASA annual meeting. Historically, we have always met on a Saturday in January for our annual meeting. This year we are trying something a little different. We are busy working out all of the details, but we will be meeting on June 10, 2017 this year—save the date! It will not only be our usual meeting—we plan on making an event out of it. Think Poker Run! Please save the date as we are hoping for a large turn out.

Last year, during the spring months, we had a huge increase in illegal riding. Everyone was overly eager to get out and ride after having yet another snow-less winter. This increase in spring riders cost VASA thousands of dollars for trail repair and we even lost a few trails completely because of the damage that was caused. We are asking everyone to exhibit more patience than they did last year. Please wait until your club officially designates its trails as open. Please visit our website, www.vtvasa.org to get contact information. We invite you to contact the local clubs or the VASA office for any trail updates. We hope to see you all out on the trails this year! Ride safe!
This was my first ride on the VASA trail system in IRA. It's a section of trail for everyone's riding preferences just like the trail system in Stockbridge. The views were amazing and the trails were great! I will forever be a VASA member and I appreciate all the hard work and effort that all of the members participate in and I have a whole lot of respect for the landowners! We truly couldn't do it without them and I thank them! Looking forward to another successful season of riding and helping maintain trails in 2017. Thanks again everyone! Timothy Devino

VASA would be nothing without its amazing members! Want to see your picture in the next newsletter? Send us your pictures and stories from riding the VASA trail systems and you might just see yourself here in the next edition! Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo or story!

#1: The Gregoreks #2 Liz is ready to ride!
#3 The Felkl Family #4: Liz just can't get enough
#5 The Felkl Family loves the CVQR trail system “THIS MUCH!”
#6 Timothy’s First Ride on VASA Trails #7,8 and 9: The Felkl Family getting in as many miles as possible!