

Middlebury Area Land Trust Strategic Plan 2022-2025



Middlebury Area Land Trust

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What We Do

Our Vision

Connecting people with the lands we protect.

Our Mission

The Middlebury Area Land Trust works with our community to conserve natural and productive landscapes, and to enhance scenic, recreation, and educational opportunities.

Who we serve

The Middlebury Area Land Trust's service area is defined as primarily the towns of Middlebury, Bristol, Cornwall, Lincoln, New Haven, Ripton, Salisbury, and Weybridge, and secondarily the remaining towns of Addison County.

What's ahead in 2022-2025?

By Jamie Brookside, MALT's Executive Director

Over six meetings and three months, the MALT team envisioned and honed our plan for 2022-2025. As we wrote this plan, MALT was supported by a full board of 11 members, 4 full-time personnel, over 175 volunteers, 301 members, and an entire community connecting with our local lands. In January 2021, we started our process by collecting input with our 2021 Community Survey and with it, we named our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Then we mapped our values as an organization, articulated goals for each area of our mission, and determined the best strategies to meet those goals. Finally, the MALT staff spent over 40 hours articulating who will accomplish the work, how we will measure it, and who we will include each step of the way. On behalf of all those who make MALT's mission come to life, MALT's Executive Director, Jamie Brookside, can't wait to share the path through our next four years. She thinks it's a fitting time to share this important work, "This June marks the end of my first four years leading MALT. It's time to share what the next four are going to look like. This organization's lands, trails, and people are resilient, just like nature. I can't wait to put our resiliency, creativity, and passion to work with a stellar plan. A beautiful recipe for connecting people with the lands we protect."

On behalf of the MALT team, we hope you enjoy our trail map for the next four years!

Jamie Brookside

Our History

1987- the organization was created and incorporated under the name “Middlebury Land Trust.” Its creation was a consequence of a gap in the state’s farmland tax abatement program. The town of Middlebury valued the continued agricultural viability of farms within its borders, and, when the state program stopped, the Town of Middlebury adopted a local farm tax abatement program. When the state re-instituted a tax abatement program, it reimbursed the Town the approximately \$150,000 the town had spent on the town program during the gap. Using this money from the state, the town established a Land Use Conservation Fund for the preservation of farmland and for other land conservation projects. The Middlebury Land Trust (MLT) was founded to advise the Town on its use of these funds and to pursue conservation projects. One-half of the income from the Conservation Fund is provided to the Land Trust for administrative support.

1989- the Land Trust began discussions on receiving its first conservation easement (i.e., development rights) on a parcel located on Cobble Road. In this same year, Amy Sheldon, MALT’s first Executive Director, and Will Jackson conceived the idea of developing a recreational path around Middlebury was born, and the name “Trail Around Middlebury” (TAM) was chosen.

1990- the Land Trust purchased its first conservation easement, the development rights to the Seeley farm, a working farm. Funding came from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and the Town of Middlebury Conservation Fund.

1991- the Land Trust received the conservation easement on a parcel on Cobble Road in Middlebury. The Land Trust, working with the Otter Creek Audubon Society (OCAS), initiated efforts to establish a “Green Belt” along the Otter Creek River between Middlebury Falls and the Pulp Mill Power Station. The first section of the TAM was established, running through Chipman Hill and the Means and Battell Woods town parkland.

1992- the Land Trust received easements on two small lots on Otter Creek as part of the “Candido property.” Conservation easements for several subdivided portions of the “Cornwall Farm” on Halladay Road were conveyed to the Land Trust. Trail designer and volunteer John Derick started speaking to landowners about potential TAM trail components such as Otter Creek gorge, Wright park, Johnson, Jackson, and Monument farms.

1993- the Land Trust received a \$6,000 donation from Willard Jackson to help support oversight of Wright Park, which had been donated by Mr. Jackson to the Town of Middlebury in 1988.

1994- the Land Trust, the Town of Middlebury, and OCAS received a conservation easement on a portion of the Marble Works’ property fronting the Otter Creek River. This conserved wetlands area is on the Creek west of the Marble Works’ office building and the “State Office” lot.

1995- the Land Trust received a conservation easement on the “Schley property” on Halladay Road. The northwestern section of the TAM, including a route through the Otter Creek Gorge, was also established. The Johnson trail opened.

1996- the organization's name was changed to the Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) to reflect a wider area of activity. Johnson, Otter Creek Gorge, and Monument trails opened.

1997- The southwestern section of the TAM, traveling through Middlebury, Cornwall, and Weybridge from the Middlebury College –Ralph Myhre Golf Course to Route 23, was established. MALT received a donation of the Jeffrey Murdock Nature Preserve from Joan Wilson, which lies between Middlebury Union Middle School and Route 7 South. The Murdock property was initially littered with junk cars from a nearby dealership, and volunteers spent a year cleaning it up. Following this donation, the southeast “Murdock Preserve” TAM section was established, and the first map of the TAM was printed. MALT Executive Director Bud Reed and John Derick began conversations with Vermont Marble to rebuild and open to the public the Belden Falls Bridge. Peg Martin, former MALT Executive Director and Middlebury legislator, played a key role in getting the Belden Falls area open to the public despite the presence of hydroelectric power generation. Bud Reed and John Derick began talks with Middlebury College about Boat House Bridge, and applied for a grant for both bridges.

1998- Willard Jackson donated the Power House property to the Land Trust, along with \$8,000 to be used for associated expenses. In addition, the Otter Creek Gorge trails were extended. A major ice storm resulted in hundreds of fallen trees and trail re-routes in Otter Creek Gorge Preserve.

1999- Abbott Fenn established an annuity trust that gave MALT a \$40,000 donation to use towards conservation of the Maple Manor Motel site or another Route 7 parcel. A MALT application to purchase a conservation easement on the Gagnon/Cloutier farm in Salisbury was approved by the VHC. The purchased easement was transferred to the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) for stewardship and monitoring. MALT received the gift of the Otter Creek Gorge Preserve from Linda Johnson, Steven Rockefeller, and Willard Jackson along with a \$20,000 endowment from the Arnold Family for property management and maintenance. MALT also received \$1000 from the Walter Cerf Foundation to pursue a project on Pulp Mill Bridge Road, which became the Otter View Park Project. MALT received the first of four easements on the Ganley-Roper property in Weybridge. The first pedestrian bridge across Otter Creek, at Belden Dam, linking the New Haven and Weybridge sections of the TAM was completed by volunteers and named the ‘Don and Peggy Arnold Bridge.’ Volunteers began construction of Boat House Bridge with the build of decking and beams over the winter and the placements of footings on site.

2000- MALT received a \$10,000 anonymous grant in support of the Otter View Park project (OVP), focusing on the undeveloped property at the corner of Weybridge Street and Pulp Mill Bridge Road. The second bridge across Otter Creek, the Boat House Bridge at the Middlebury Union playing fields was finished in July to complete the TAM loop.

2001- MALT successfully advocated a one-cent property tax in Middlebury earmarked for the town's Conservation Fund. MALT received a donation of a conservation easement on the Berthiaume property off Halladay Road, which completed the original plan for conservation of the “Cornwall farm.” Steven Rockefeller donated a conservation easement on the “Otter Creek Child Care” property bordering the Otter Creek, as part of the Greenbelt project. MALT also received the first permanent trail easement for a portion of the TAM from Jim and Elizabeth Robinson for the trail section from Route 23 and Hamilton Road in Weybridge across their property. The 2nd edition of the TAM Map was printed.

2002- MALT culminated a three-year effort to facilitate the purchase of a conservation easement on the Doris Eddy Horse Farm on South Street. Funding came from the VHCB, the Town of Middlebury Conservation Fund, and donations raised directly by MALT. The easement is held by VLT for stewardship and monitoring purposes. MALT received the last of four conservation easements on the Ganley-Roper property, conserving 30 acres in Weybridge. MALT joined a VLT and VHCB project conserving the Butterfield Farm and received a trail easement across the property. This project received \$5,000 from the Town of Middlebury Conservation Fund. A successful hiking series along the TAM was initiated.

2003- A detailed three-year strategic plan was adopted and the organization made significant progress in solidifying its stewardship program and revamping many of its internal systems. MALT signed a purchase and sale contract for the Otter View Park, the New Haven Valley View, and the Salisbury Mill projects. It also began a complete management plan for Wright Park, which is owned by the Town of Middlebury.

2004- MALT purchased the New Haven Valley View property from Rick and Tina Quenneville working in partnership with CVGA and the Salisbury Mill property from the Peterson Family in partnership with VLT through funding from the Freeman Foundation. MALT also celebrated the 15th anniversary of the TAM in 2004 and began an annual event to fund trail maintenance called the TAM Team Trek.

2005- MALT closed on the purchase of Otter View Park, a project that saw its beginnings in 1995 and was actively pursued since 2001.

2006- MALT successfully advocated for a five-year renewal of the one-cent property tax in Middlebury. A trail easement was secured on the Elmer Farm, a 90-acre parcel near East Middlebury that was the first property conserved through the Vermont Land Trust Farm Access Program. MALT also partnered with the Foote family to preserve 117 acres of farmland and clayplain forest in Cornwall through a conservation easement.

2007- MALT completed the purchase of the 11.7 acre Sessions-Neil Property along the Middlebury River in cooperation with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources River Management Program. MALT also secured a trail easement on the Wright Property, a farm near East Middlebury that is conserved by a Vermont Land Trust Easement. As far as we know, MALT's first Stewardship Coordinator was hired in 2007. Joni Osterhautd would monitor MALT's conservation easements through 2017.

2008- the Otter View Park project was completed in Middlebury and Weybridge, opening 15 acres of diverse habitat to universal public access for wildlife observation and recreational opportunities. MALT granted a river corridor conservation easement to the Vermont River Conservancy on the Sessions-Neil Property. The 3rd Edition of the TAM Map was published.

2009- MALT partnered with VLT in the conservation of the Bingham Farm. The 100-acre farm contains tilled fields, woodlands and a 9.4-acre special treatment area of state-significant clayplain forest. MALT holds a trail easement along the eastern edge of the property. Katie McEachen and Mo

Bissonnette were local nature educators who wanted to start a summer camp. They wonder where in Addison county would be the right fit and ultimately developed an agreement to host the camps at the Otter Creek Gorge Preserve.

2010- MALT completed the Dodge-Katz Conservation Easement. This Cornwall property is within the Beaver Brook watershed and boasts a variety of habitats, including clayplain forest, wetlands, and steep ravines. There is known beaver activity in the wetlands, frequent deer and bobcat signs, and substantial bird activity. As summer camps continued under the leadership of Katie and Mo, they decided to call it “MALT camp”, as a way to build name recognition for the organization. Originally calling it Living Forest. It was a mutually beneficial relationship, as Mo and Katie were able to build their business on the amazing MALT lands, and MALT gained greater visibility in the community.

2011- MALT completed an easement for the Ripton Riverbank. There are three small easements along the Middlebury River in Ripton that are in place to protect the riverbanks from development. This will help the river to move naturally in its banks, and prevent the kind of flooding that occurs when rivers are too straight and deep. As the river heads straight down into East Middlebury behind numerous houses, this is a crucial first step to preventing flooding.

2012- MALT became a trail affiliate with the North Country Trail Alliance, completing another step in bringing the North Country National Scenic trail into Vermont. A 4.5-mile spur trail was built, connecting the TAM's Jackson trail with the Snake Mountain Wildlife area. MALT completed the purchase of the Hamblin Farm, conserving 101 acres in the Beaver Brook Watershed, VLT holds the conservation easement. This is now known as the “Ledges”. Carl Robinson was hired as the Executive Director and serves through 2017.

2013- MALT received a trail easement from Middlebury College for a section of the Jackson Trail (TAM).

2014- TAM’s 25th anniversary was an important year for MALT. This year marked the start of the TAM Endowment, which was spearheaded by Jono Chapin long-time board member and volunteer. In September, MALT conserved the 103-acre Bob Collins Conservation Farm on Route 23. This project was made possible through generous community fundraising efforts, and Monument Farms with VLT now serving as the property’s easement holder. Along the TAM, gravel was added to chronically wet sections of the trail, and the boardwalk between Middle and Creek roads was rebuilt.

2015- MALT released an updated map of the TAM. MALT also received a 42-acre easement from Charlie Kireker of Middle Road Ventures. This area, now called South Ridge easement, borders Murdock Woods and contains important Indiana bat habitat, forest, and water resources. The hope is to someday connect this land to the North Country Trail south of Moosalamoo and the Long Trail. An independent contractor raised Boat House Bridge up to the 100-year-floodplain level as bridge cables had stretched over 15 years of use, and volunteers added more culverts and gravel on chronically wet sections of the TAM. MALT also gained a new and improved website, designed and created by Kathie Ross.

2016- MALT and Linda Johnson worked together to create an easement for the Johnson segment of TAM. With help from Audubon Vermont, Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation District, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Partners Program, MALT revised its Wright Park Management

Plan, adding a focus on the maintenance of young forests and open meadow habitats. The TAM map was also expanded to include an interactive digital version. This was the year the TAM reached its current day tract of 19 miles, including a re-route on Chipman Hill to include key viewshed features.

2017- MALT expanded its summer camp programs by recruiting and training staff to serve under the leadership of MALT's new Executive Director, Jamie Brookside. Simultaneously, MALT permitted Camp Terrahana to offer summer camps in Wright Park. In order to better accommodate parking and increase accessibility, Monument Farms built a new gravel lot on Hamilton Rd.

2018- Staff, volunteers, and the Board of Trustees are working together to create a new, three-year strategic plan. MALT's by-laws were also updated. The new strategic plan reflected a renewed commitment to conservation and an exploration of expanded environmental education programming for youth and adults. MALT's membership is at an all-time high. Staff received funding to upgrade all signage on the TAM's 15 kiosks.

2019 – MALT conserved the 55+ acre Hurd Grassland in partnership with Otter Creek Audubon Society. MALT hired a second full time staff member, filling the duties of a Programs Coordinator and focusing on trails, conserved land stewardship, and education programming. MALT hosted two AmeriCorps members, both full time and one for six months, the other for eleven. MALT built a new extension of the North Country Trail, south from Murdock Nature Preserve. MALT built a new website and incorporated online and monthly giving features. Record participants at TAM Trek 2019 and record \$ raised. MALT's longtime Stewardship Coordinator retired in 2017 and Caleb Basa was hired as MALT's second Stewardship staff in 2019. Mo and Katie create a new business name, Living Forest summer camp, and run camps autonomously as a MALT partner, while MALT continued to grow and staff summer camps simultaneously.

2020 – A complicated year for the organization, due to the significant impacts of COVID-19. We hosted a reduced summer camp in the Otter Creek Gorge Preserve, hosted a socially distanced TAM Trek which had record participants, and completed the conservation of Will Jackson's land in Lincoln, VT. MALT's Stewardship staff completed monitoring of our 7 owned lands, in an effort to better understand our non-conserved land holdings. As a result of the review, MALT chose to pursue the sale of New Haven Valley View and the Ledges of Cornwall. MALT maintained two full-time staff of an Executive Director and Programs Coordinator, one part-time bookkeeper, two full-time AmeriCorps members, and one Summer GIS Intern. The TAM continues to see record use, partly inspired by the nature of pandemic quarantines and social distancing. Dollars and personnel dedicated to the TAM is at an all-time high. MALT's year-round education programs for youth are popular and continue to define learning and value outcomes for participants. At this time, MALT hosts vacation camps and afterschool programs from September to June.

2022-2025 Strategies by Area of Work

A. CONSERVATION

Goal: MALT’s clearly defined conservation values and priorities are widely communicated and inform our conservation efforts.

Connection to vision: *Ensure MALT’s conserved lands maximize the impact of our organization’s values. Advance MALT’s core values through our conservation program.*

| Strategies for Reaching Conservation Goal | Priority | Timeline | Who | What it looks like | How we will measure success |
|--|----------|-----------|--|---|--|
| 1. Determine MALT’s conservation values and priorities within our mission and scope of service while seeking input from conservation partners about regional priorities. | High | 2022-2023 | Shared between ED/ Conservation Committee | After priorities and values are defined, they will be captured in prioritizing tools, keys, and/or diagrams. A report to the board will summarize research process, outcomes, and action items. | The board will adopt the priorities and values. The conservation program will use them to make strategic conservation decisions. |
| 2. Communicate values and priorities with prospective landowners, municipalities of our service area, community-at-large, and regional conservation partners. | High | 2023-2025 | Primarily ED Conservation Committee supports | MALT will communicate conservation priorities and values in publications, on our website and social media platforms, and at public forums, meetings, and events. | Addison County landowners will, for the first time, have multiple and diverse ways of learning about conservation with MALT. MALT will be easily accessible and display clear conservation values and priorities. |
| 3. Determine MALT’s capacity and responsibility to collaborate with conservation partners and strengthen appropriate relationships to maximize impact of conservation efforts. | Medium | 2024-2025 | Shared between ED/ Conservation Committee | MALT will first understand the roles and responsibilities of regional conservation partners. MALT will analyze our capacity and responsibility to collaborate with them. MALT will clearly define which regional conservation activities to participate in/support. | MALT collaborates with new and current conservation partners on a regular and realistic basis. MALT’s conservation program will be active, strategic, collaborative, and its work will match the capacity of staff and conservation resources. |

2022-2025 Strategies by Area of Work

A. STEWARDSHIP

Goal: MALT has an efficient and flexible stewardship program, focusing on community participation and up to date equipment, methods, procedures, and technology. Staff and volunteers will facilitate quality monitoring and make measurable improvements to MALT’s land management.

Connection to vision: *Inherent in the community participation model of MALT land stewardship, more people will be developing stronger relationships with the environment.*

| Strategies for Reaching Stewardship Goal | Priority | Timeline | Who | What it looks like | How we will measure success |
|---|----------|-----------|---|---|--|
| 1. Research, develop, and implement legal and ethical best practices for the stewardship of MALT’s easements and owned lands. | Highest | 2022 | Programs Coordinator, ED, Service members | Research best way to represent stewardship requirement for each conserved land. Document findings in easy-to-understand and accessible way. | Staff, AmeriCorps Members, and volunteers will reference the resource to ensure compliance during their stewardship activities. |
| 2. Research, develop, and implement volunteer recruitment and engagement for a new community science land stewardship program. | High | 2022-2025 | Programs Coordinator, ED | The community science program will execute invasive species management and conserved land stewardship with a volunteer-based model. MALT Stewardship Staff will oversee the quality, efficacy, and culture of the program. AmeriCorps members will directly supervise and serve side-by-side with volunteers. | Number of community members participating in this program will incrementally increase from a pilot of 2-4 volunteers in 2022 to at least one volunteer for 75% of MALT’s easement lands in 2025. |
| 3. Establish high quality landowner outreach, stewardship education, and relationship-building. | Medium | 2022-2025 | Programs Coordinator | MALT Stewardship Staff develop informational packet for landowners that educates on MALT’s role, how we monitor their land, and how they can better steward the land. Staff conduct annual in-person meeting. | Percentage of land owners in annual communication with MALT Stewardship Staff will increase from minimal engagement to 90% of our landowners. |

2022-2025 Strategies by Area of Work

B. EDUCATION

Goal: MALT will prioritize high quality education programs that promote equitable engagement of people to nature.

Connection to vision: *Sustainably broadening the reach of MALT’s education programs will connect people to the lands we protect in an intentional way.*

| Strategies for Reaching Education Goal | Priority | Timeline | Who | What it looks like | How we will measure success |
|---|----------|-----------|---|---|---|
| 1. Conduct needs assessment to understand our audience, capacity, and define who we will serve. | High | 2022 | Education Committee/ Staff Finance Committee/ ED | Conduct demographics study. Identify metrics to track program participants and identify underserved populations. Develop options for funding models that could broaden future reach. | Data are obtained that clarify who we are serving. MALT considers core values and gaps in participant demographics. Education Committee and Teaching Staff write and adopt plan defining target audiences and accompanying funding model. |
| 2. Define high quality education programming for MALT and set broad learning goals and objectives for programs. | High | 2022-2023 | Education Committee Staff | MALT defines education priorities in a guiding document for staff that facilitates long-term curriculum building. Education priorities align with MALT’s core values. | Education Committee and Teaching Staff present priorities and goals to MALT board and community. Teaching Staff begin surveying program participants around these set priorities to access programming effectiveness. |
| 3. Reach new and underserved participants. | Medium | 2023-2025 | Staff | MALT collaborates with new and current partners to infuse our mission and learning values in new and current programs. MALT strategically and sustainably broadens our impact using internal and collaborative resources. | MALT works towards equitably engaging people with our mission through supporting participants identified as underserved in Strategy C.1. MALT collaborates with at least one new partner to reach underserved participants. |

C. RECREATION

Goal: MALT supports and encourages recreation through a sustainable operative plan, improving quality and accessibility for our trails.

Connection to vision: *The TAM is more accessible to the community and therefore connecting people to our mission in a physical and impassioned way.*

| Strategies for Reaching Recreation Goal | Priority | Timeline | Who | What it looks like | How we will measure success |
|--|----------|-----------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Identify barriers to accessing the TAM for a wide range of user groups. | High | 2022 | Staff Trails Committee | Reviewing and synthesizing the 2020 Community Survey to understand accessibility challenges on our trails. Explore gathering more information on accessibility barriers from other user groups not covered in the survey. | Trails Committee and Staff prioritize recommended improvements to trail accessibility that will take place in 2023-2025 and are within our capacity. |
| 2. Bolster volunteer recruitment, management, and engagement goals and actions. | High | 2022-2025 | Staff | Recruiting and engaging new volunteers. Developing systems for training, tracking, and managing volunteers according to the TAM Management Plan. Establishing volunteer engagement goals that meet trail maintenance needs. | MALT has defined systems to recruit, manage, and capture the impact of volunteers. These systems work efficiently with MALT’s Stewardship Program (B.2). MALT meets defined metrics annually. |
| 3. Make the TAM more accessible to the user groups that are not already served. | High | 2023-2025 | Staff Volunteers | Taking action on the recommendations in Strategy 1, in order of highest to lowest priority. Partnering with local groups to leverage human resources. | MALT completes all high priority items on the list and continues to work through medium and low priority items through 2025. MALT develops at least three new partnerships to improve trail accessibility. |
| 4. Explore connections and expansions of MALT’s trail network through planning and easement acquisition activities. | Low | 2023-2025 | ED Trails Committee | Reviewing the 2020 Community Survey to identify feasible and desired expansions. If resources permit, contacting landowners and partners to plan expansions. | MALT has identified priority expansions and has secured or plans to secure agreements to begin physical trail expansions in 2025-2030. |

Overarching Organizational Needs

As a final exercise, the MALT team determined organization needs on an operational level to achieve the strategies above. Below is a simple summary of the foundational deliverables of this strategic plan.

General Organizational Needs:

- Define MALT's Core Values
- Adopt a four-year fundraising plan for personnel and board to execute
- Build a personnel model to meet the needs of the strategic plan

To Accomplish Conservation and Stewardship Goals:

- Cultivate an active, engaged, and experienced Conservation Committee
- Advocate for conservation funds in Cornwall and Weybridge
- Secure effective information systems/technology for conservation and stewardship program
- Adopt an invasive species action plan for MALT's owned lands

To Accomplish Education Goal:

- Improve and expand CIT program, explore a similar model with volunteers during school year programs
- Raise funds for scholarships
- Support our education programs with appropriate infrastructure and materials
- Provide professional development for MALT teachers as we define our learning outcomes and program values

To Accomplish Recreation Goal:

- Finish TAM Endowment goal of \$350,000
- Adopt an invasive species action plan as an appendix to the TAM Management Plan

SWOT Summary, Internal Reflections

Strengths

- TAM trails are well maintained and appealing to walking/hiking crowd
- Youth programs
- Financial stability
- Strong membership support; membership is growing in size
- Website and social media presence have improved
- Enthusiastic, passion, and committed staff & AmeriCorps members
- Board has robust interests and varied skills/experiences
- Core group of volunteer support
- Well established reputation as a community resource
- Major donor support is improving
- Diverse revenue stream
- Nimble, responsive organization that can react to community needs
- Organization connects people with community and nature, and helps make nature accessible; supports understanding that humans are a part of nature.
- People of all ages support and appreciate MALT.

Weaknesses

- Reliance on gifted services and materials leaves us vulnerable as these will not always be available to us.
- Board and staff do not have a clear hierarchy between its recreation and conservation goals/programming.
- Organization is not able to respond to the interest in volunteer participating that is being offered.
- There is a lack of clarity about the agreements with Middlebury College and other landowners about access to the TAM on or from their property.
- Staff workload is at full capacity and organization cannot grow with new or additional programming.
- With all of its work in recreation, conservation, and education, MALT staff are spread thin and it's hard to have a deep focus in any one of those areas.
- AmeriCorps staff are helpful, but the short term nature requires a lot of staff time in terms of training and onboarding.
- Organization is also at capacity with its operational systems and infrastructure.
- TAM trail use is reaching capacity.
- Part of the TAM are not user friendly.
- There are not clear lines of communication between MALT, towns, Battell Trust, Bike Club, and other TAM user groups.
- Organization's brand is largely the TAM; general population is unaware of all of MALT's other work and that it needs support, too.
- Board does not engage in fundraising activities.
- Education programs do not have a vision. With a vision, we could better hone in on curriculum and learning outcomes.
- The organization does not have a vision, policy, or statement regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, specifically related to conservation and use of unceded Indigenous lands.

SWOT Summary, External Reflections

Opportunities

- Define MALT's primary role of providing recreation and environmental education vs. conserving land, would help prioritize activities.
- Cross market MALT's programs to TAM users, members, and campers' families to increase donations, memberships, and participation.
- Exploring partnership opportunities that could help MALT achieve its mission and leverage more resources.
- Partner more with local school systems and offer ways to get kids outside.
- Do more to connect folks outside of immediate Middlebury areas with MALT's work and trails (programs, events, tours, etc.).
- Use technology and social media to exponentially increase awareness and maintain engagement in the off-season.
- Cultivate closer relationships with legislators to secure more funding to support the mission.
- Increase focus on Lake Champlain – farms, watershed cleanup, etc.
- Expand education programming for age groups and other demographics beyond current participants, support reparation efforts for Indigenous groups.
- Undertake county-wide invasive species management effort.
- Connect with Middlebury and other towns to help them with their conservation goals/energy goals/masterplans and other regional trail systems.
- Grow full-time staff to do more.
- Board could engage more in fundraising efforts.
- Connect with and network more with other environmentally focused nonprofits nationwide for peer support.
- Develop a specific strategy for land conservation that could help MALT prioritize which new land conservation opportunities to focus on.
- Create more volunteer opportunities, and streamline recruitment and retention.
- Improve trail signage and clarify differences between MALT, Towns, Battell Trust, etc.

Threats

- Continued land fragmentation.
- Inequity and injustice towards marginalized populations.
- High expectations of MALT within the community.
- Lack of succession planning for MALT personnel.
- Growing too fast:
 - Running on a deficit when programming (of any kind) gets ahead of fundraising;
 - Staff and board burnout from growing too fast and exceeding capacity;
 - Increased costs for infrastructure and operations.
- Loss of infrastructure in environmental disaster (i.e. bridges, boat house), triggering expensive replacement process, or other unforeseen disruption/crisis/circumstance with financial implications.
- No long term trail maintenance fund creating limited capacity to care for lands, owning lands we must care for and don't need.
- Loss of AmeriCorps service grants.

- Lack of easement agreements and potential loss of license agreements for TAM with Middlebury College.
- How we look at conservation projects: are we considering 'smart/sustainable' development that supports tying new development into our neighborhood centers?