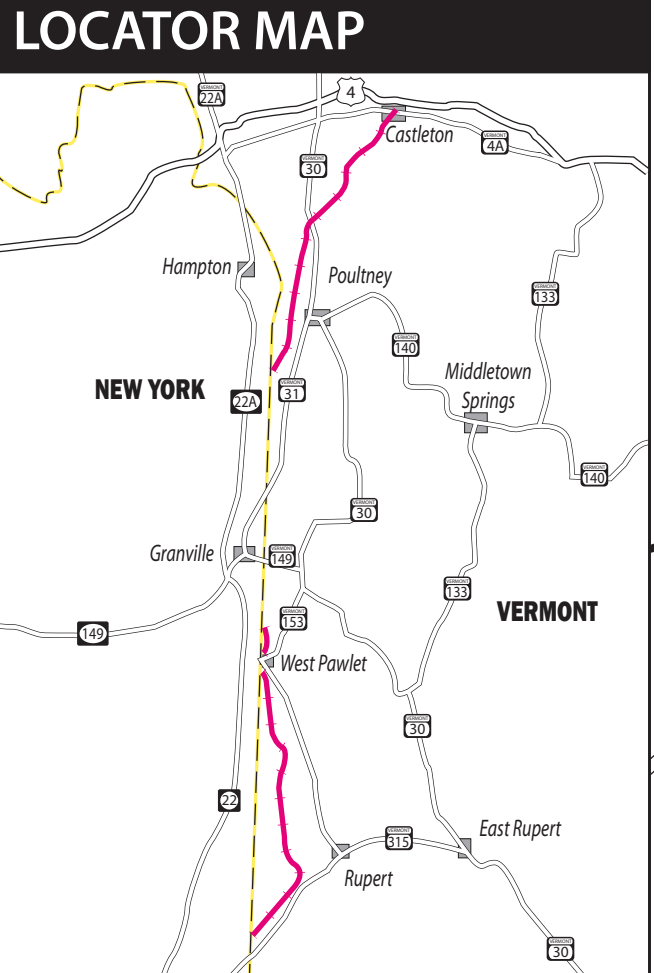
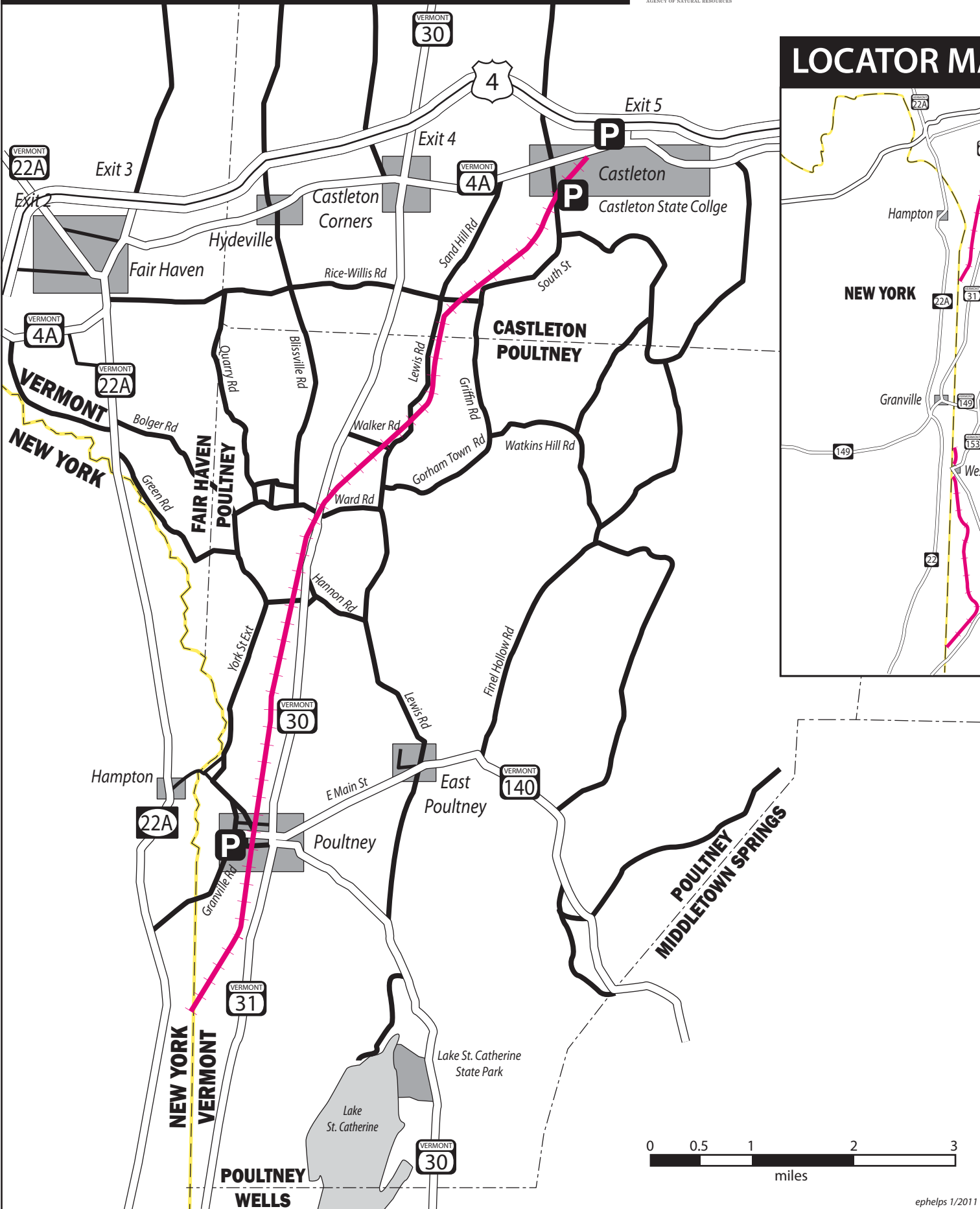
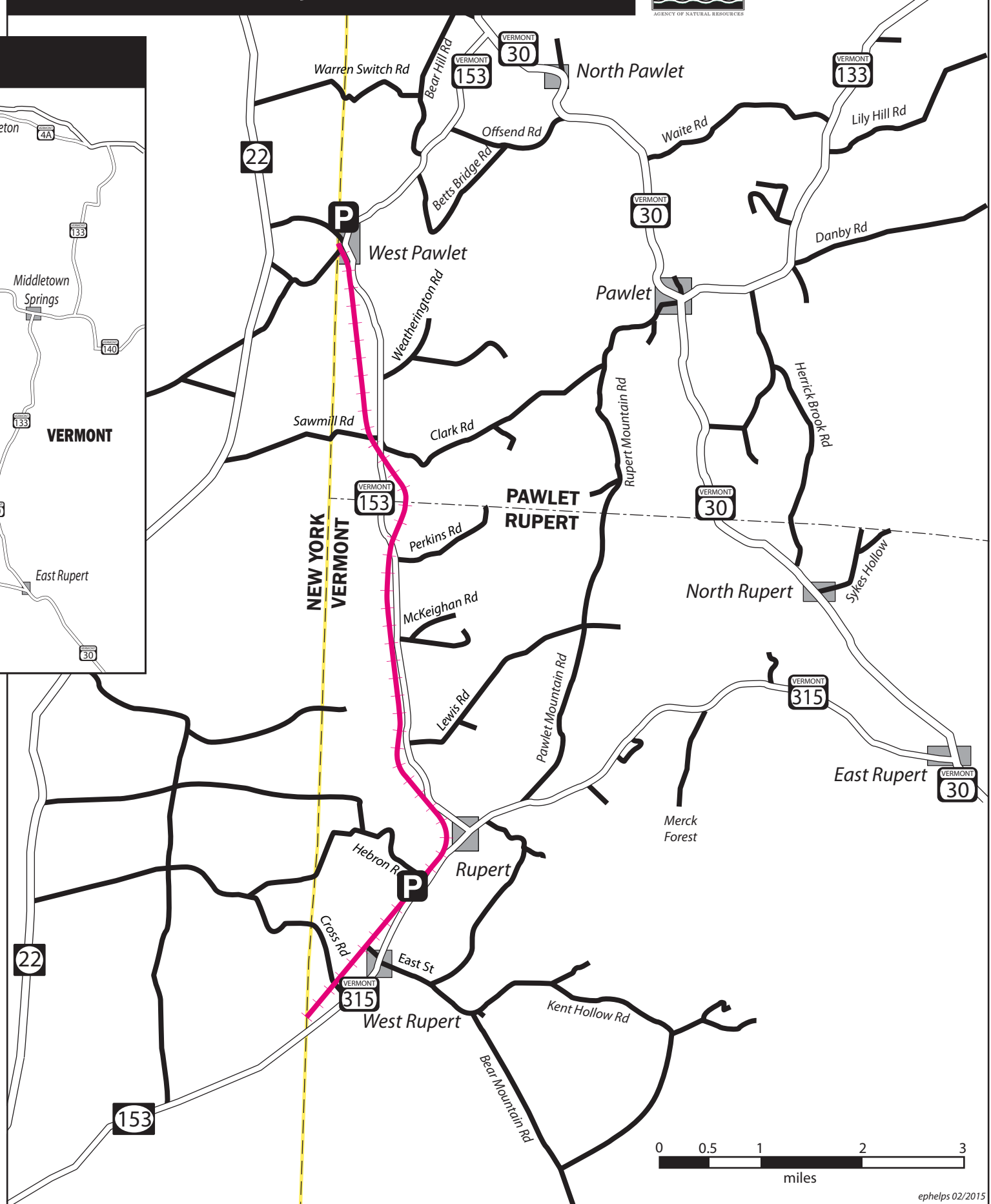


# D & H RAIL TRAIL - NORTHERN SECTION CASTLETON & POULTNEY, VT



# D & H RAIL TRAIL - SOUTHERN SECTION PAWLET & RUPERT, VT



## Trail Use

The D & H Rail Trail is a multiple use trail open to pedestrians, bicyclists and horse riders in the summer and snowshoers, skiers and snowmobilers during the winter. Snowmobiling is the only authorized motorized use of the trail; state registration and VAST membership requirements must be followed when operating on the trail. The trail has a speed limit of 35 mph.

The trail includes 17 wooden-decked bridges of various length. The bridges have 5-foot high railings and are constructed to provide a smooth travelway. The trail tread consists of the original cinder rail bed ballast, gravel and stone. In some places the cinder sections can be soft and may pose a challenge to road bicycles. The trail is better suited to hybrid and mountain bikes. For foot travel, the trail is well suited to people of all ages and abilities due to its wide, level and stable base.

The D & H Rail Trail encompasses the trail sections only in Vermont. Even though the original rail line extended into New York, and weaved back and forth between the two states several times, some sections of trail in New York have reverted back to private ownership and are not open to public use. Please respect private property in both New York and Vermont, and access the trail only at the designated trailheads.

## Trailheads & Access

The northern section has trailheads at both ends. Trail access for the northern end is available at Castleton State College or along Main Street in Castleton. Public parking at the south end can be found in Poultney village adjacent to the old train station on Depot Street and on nearby streets.

Trail access for the southern section is available in West Pawlet village on Egg Street and to the south at the intersection of Route 153 and Hebron Road.

The D & H Trail crosses state and local highways in many places, however most intersections do not provide adequate room for safe parking or sight lines at road crossings; please access the trail only at designated trailheads.

## Sights Along The Trail

Recreating on the D & H provides a very scenic and enjoyable experience. The trail winds its way along a relatively gentle grade through the rugged hills of southwestern Vermont - farm fields and woods border much of the trail. A multitude of wildlife is commonly encountered - wetlands next to the trail are good places to see beavers, herons, wood and mallard ducks and muskrats. Along the wooded and more remote sections, especially along the southern half, deer are easy to spot. The many bridges on the trail can be exhilarating to cross, especially the 100-foot spans in Poultney and West Pawlet. The trail right-of-way is a good place to see a wide variety of wildflowers, and is a great place to see many different species of trees and shrubs. These all provide edge habitat for several species of songbirds.

## Management of the D & H Rail Trail

FPR manages the two sections of nearly equal length as a multiple use trail open to non-motorized use in summer months and to non-motorized and snowmobile use in winter months. The D&H Trail Advisory Council, established in 1996, provides management input. VAST also provides management input and assistance and maintains portions of the trail as a snowmobile corridor trail. Recent major investments in the trail include using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to rebuild 10 bridges in 2010.

**The D & H Rail Trail was created with assistance from the Rails to Trails Conservancy, a 501(c)3 nonprofit devoted to creating a nationwide network of rail trails to promote healthy, connected communities.**



### Trail Use Guidelines

**Stay on the trail:** Please respect the private property of adjacent landowners. Leaving the trail may constitute trespassing on private property.

**Yield the right-of-way:** When approaching oncoming trail users, always move to your right. When overtaking slower moving users, announce your intentions and pass on the left.

**Stop at all road crossings:** Trail users must stop and yield to traffic at all intersections with public highways. There are 16 intersections with public roads; please use extreme caution when proceeding.

**Appropriate gear:** Wear clothing and protective equipment matched to the activity you pursue. Helmets are strongly recommended for bicycling, horseback riding and snowmobiling.

**Watch for obstacles:** You may encounter natural obstructions such as fallen trees, ruts, washouts or wildlife.

**Trail surface:** Care should be taken when approaching bridges as there is normally a small transition between the cinder or gravel trail tread and the bridge abutment. The trail has several different types of tread material; some sections may be softer than others.

**Pets:** Pets are welcome on the trail but must be under owner's control at all times. Dogs should be kept on a leash for their own protection as well as other users and wildlife.

**Please do not litter.**

a daily freight and passenger service that handled 15-30 cars per trip. The trains moved tons of roofing slate from quarries in western Vermont to markets along the eastern seaboard. As transportation modes continued to change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the quarry businesses declined, the rail line (as well as the whole D & H system) languished. The railroad went bankrupt in the 1970s and the Washington Branch ownership was transferred several times before being used for the last time in 1980. The Vermont Agency of Transportation acquired the northern section in 1983 with the idea of re-establishing rail service to the line. When this proved unfeasible, it was put into a "rail bank" in a mothballed state for potential future use. Vermont and New York officials met in 1985 to discuss turning the entire line into a recreational trail; as a result of these meetings, VTrans purchased the southern section in 1986. The Vermont sections were then leased to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for development into and management as a Rails-to-Trails corridor. The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers lobbied in favor of this proposal.

The D & H Railway still exists to this day, acting as a bridge line, moving freight between other larger railways. It is the oldest continuously operating transportation company in the U.S.

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*Multi-Use Trail Open Year-Round*  
*Bicycling*  
*Walking & Jogging*  
*Horseback Riding*  
*Snowmobiling*  
*Snowshoeing*  
*Cross-Country Skiing*

## Welcome to the D & H Rail Trail

The D & Rail Trail is a 19.8-mile rail trail that traverses two non-contiguous sections of the former Washington Branch of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. The trail is managed and maintained by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation as a multiple-use trail.

## History of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad

The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company was incorporated in 1823 in New York and Pennsylvania to construct a canal and towpath system along the Delaware and Hudson Rivers as a means of improving freight movement. As the decades progressed and transportation methods changed, the company built many rail lines in New York and Pennsylvania and eventually became the Delaware and Hudson Company. The rail system connected coal fields in eastern Pennsylvania with the industrial and metropolitan centers in New York and Pennsylvania; the line was also an important connection to the eastern seaboard, being commonly referred to as the "bridge line to New England." The D & H Rail Trail occupies part of the Washington Branch which ran from Eagle Bridge, New York to Castleton, Vermont. This line was constructed as part of a rail system that connected Albany with Montreal.

The Washington Branch line flourished for a time around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, running the "slate picker,"