



Green Mountain *National Forest*

Caring for the Land and Serving People

Spring Hiking Guidelines

General Forest Information:

The Green Mountain National Forest, the Green Mountain Club, and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation strongly discourage hiking on the Long Trail System and on other Vermont trails in the early spring, or “mud season”, particularly at higher elevations.

Hikers cause much more damage when trails are wet and muddy than when trails are dry and more stable. The trail damage due to hiker impact during mud season results because:

- Lingering snow pack creates very wet trail conditions under the snow.
- Large and steady quantities of water from rain and snowmelt seep into and run down the trail, carrying soil disturbed by hikers.
- Hikers trying to bypass water and unstable snow on the trail damage soil and vegetation adjacent to the established footpath. Please stay on the trail. Wear waterproof hiking boots and gaiters to keep feet dry.

Especially susceptible to damage by hikers is the alpine vegetation above the tree line on Camel’s Hump, Mount Mansfield, and Mount Abraham. Walk only on rocks and keep dogs leashed. The trails in these areas are officially closed to hikers by the State of Vermont from mid-April to Memorial Day.

The period of snowmelt and muddy trails varies considerably throughout Vermont depending on elevation, solar orientation, depth of snow pack, and amount of spring rainfall. Hikers must exercise good judgment in assessing the stretch of trail they are considering hiking in early spring and refrain from using trails when muddy conditions prevail. The guidelines in the following table may help hikers plan outings in Vermont during the spring season, but the final decision on whether a trail is suitable for hiking must be based on the actual trail conditions the hiker encounters.

Date	Areas usually suitable for hiking
April 15	Trails below 1000 feet in elevation
May 1	Trails below 2000 feet in elevation
May 15	Trails below 3000 feet in elevation
Memorial Day	All trails

For More Information:

Manchester Ranger District, 2538 Depot St., Manchester Center, VT 05255, (802) 362-2307

Middlebury Ranger District, 1007 Route 7 South, Middlebury, VT 05753, (802) 388-4362

Rochester Ranger District, 99 Ranger Rd., Rochester, VT 05767, (802) 767-4261

Rutland Supervisor Office, 231 North Main St., Rutland, VT 05701, (802) 747-6700

Website: www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl



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Last Modified 3/30/2010