

# Vernon Trails Area Composite (VTAC) 2026 Season Guide

## Who We Are

VTAC is a local mountain biking team for athletes in **grades 6-12** participating in the NICA league. Our region includes Vernon, Crawford, Richland, and parts of Monroe County. We belong to the Northern Conference of the Wisconsin NICA League.

Enthusiasm for mountain biking as a family-friendly sport is at an all-time high here in the Driftless region! Training and racing with a team provides life lessons in self-discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship, along with fitness and camaraderie. Our program strikes a balance between being a competitive sport and retaining gentle recreational qualities.

## Inclusivity & Growth

- **Skill Levels:** We provide development and fun at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- **GRiT:** Female participation is the fastest-growing demographic in mountain biking and a major goal of NICA.
- **Everyone is Welcome:** We invite athletes of all gender identifications to engage in mountain biking as a lifelong activity that promotes confidence, strength, and overall health.

## More Than Just Racing

There is more to NICA than just races! We participate in:

- **GRiT** (Girls Riding Together )
- **Adventure Rides** (Including Bike Backpacking)
- **Teen Trail Corps** (Trail advocacy and maintenance)

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## Try It Out: The "Rule of Three"

Not sure if you want to commit to this exciting adventure yet?

- **Athletes:** You are allowed to try our practices up to **3 times** before committing to the team (with a signed waiver).
- **Parents:** Sorry, you only get to try it **once** with a waiver!
- **Notice:** Please give us advance notice via email if you are attending. This gives us time to inspect bikes/helmets and review basic safety.
- **[[Link to Agreement & Liability Waiver](#)]**

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## Team Communication

- **TeamSnap:** This is our primary tool for practice changes, updates, and chat. It works best on the free mobile app. We ask that you **RSVP (indicate availability)** for every practice and event here.
  - *To join:* Provide Melissa or Troy with your name, email, phone, and parent DOB.
- **Facebook:** Follow "**mtb VTAC**" for public information and photos.
- **Pitzone:** All riders **must** be registered in [Pitzone](#) to attend practice and festivals. This is where you enter athlete info, register for races, and pay league fees. We recommend using a parent's email for this.

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## 2026 Participation Costs

- **Wisconsin & National League Registration:** \$360 (Covers the season and all Festival weekends).
- **VTAC Team Fee:** \$50 (Covers team expenses and supplies). *Note: This fee is waived for Level 2 or 3 coaches with a registered rider.*
- **Camping Fees:** \$12-\$15 per weekend (see "Festivals" below).
- **Payments:** We accept Cash, Check, or PayPal. (Vernon Trails cannot take Venmo because we are a non-profit group).

**Scholarships:** Our goal is that no student is denied participation due to a lack of resources. NICA offers scholarships to both athletes and coaches. [Complete the online form here].

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## Practices

- **Start Date:** Monday, July 6th.
- **Schedule:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM (Ending at 6:30 PM later in the season as light fades).
- **Locations:** Park Bowl, Hubbard Hills, Sidie Hollow (lower shelter), and KVR (Westridge Trailhead). Check TeamSnap for the specific location each day.

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## Required Equipment

- **The Bike:** Please consult with the head coach **before** you buy anything! We can help you find the right gear.

- **Inspections:** Bicycles and helmets must be inspected by a qualified mechanic for safety and re-inspected regularly. Helmets must be worn at all times when on the bike.
  - **Hydration/Nutrition:** Athletes must be responsible for their own food and drink. A water bottle with a cage (attached to the bike) or a hydration pack is required.
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## Community Service & Dual Athletes

- **Trail Work:** As part of the team, members are required to engage in trail work. These days are scheduled during practice time. Participation is expected unless an unavoidable conflict is discussed with the coach.
  - **Dual Athletes:** We encourage athletes who want to play two sports to consult with us and their other coach to see if a reasonable balance can be found.
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## Festival Weekends & Camping

Festivals are held across Wisconsin and are usually a 2-3 hour drive.

- **Camping:** One of the best parts! Camping (tent/van/RV) is available Friday and Saturday nights.
  - **Non-Racers:** It is okay if you prefer not to race! We still encourage athletes to attend for adventure rides, games, and community.
  - **Fees:** \$12-\$15 per weekend (more for RVs). These are collected by the team but paid to NICA. Fees are due the Wednesday two weeks before the Festival.
  - **New to Camping?** NICA has a "Learn to Camp" program to assist with gear. [Click here for the application].
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## Parent Involvement & Conduct

- **Coaching:** We need you! You don't need expert bike skills—NICA provides the training. Contact us at [mtb.vtac@gmail.com](mailto:mtb.vtac@gmail.com) if interested.
- **Code of Conduct:** Safety is paramount. We teach riders to ride in a controlled manner. Repeated disregard for safety rules or risky behavior will result in a rider being asked to leave the team.

WI NICA 2026 Event Calendar

| Date        | Event   | Location   | Conference    |
|-------------|---|--|---------------|
| February 1  | Financial Assistance Application Opens        | <a href="http://www.wisconsinmtb.org">www.wisconsinmtb.org</a> | North & South |
| February 3  | WI NICA Annual Meeting                        | The Lodge at Trek Waterloo, WI & virtual                       | North & South |
| March 1     | Registration opens for Coaches                | Online via Pitzone   | North & South |
| April 18-19 | WI NICA Coach Retreat                         | Trek Headquarters in Waterloo, WI                              | North & South |
| April 1     | Registration opens for Student-athletes       | Online via Pitzone   | North & South |
| May 16      | GRIT-Led Teen Trail Corps: Love Your Trails   | Emma Carlin in Whitewater, WI                                  | North & South |
| June 20-21  | Dig & Ride: Teen Trail Corps & Adventure Ride | Spoooner, WI   | North & South |
| July 7-9    | 400 State Trail Bikepacking                   | Elroy Sparta Trail   | North & South |
| July 10-12  | GRIT Coach Retreat                            | Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville                                  | North & South |
| July 25     | GRIT Student Athlete Retreat                  | Hartman Creek State Park in Waupaca, WI                        | North & South |
| July 25-26  | Northwoods Navigator Adventure Ride           | Ishpeming, MI  | North & South |
| August 5-7  | Northwoods Bikepacking                        | Nicolet National Forest in Laona, WI                           | North & South |
| Sept 4-7    | Bluff Bash Festival                           | Powers Bluff County Park in Marshfield, WI                     | North & South |
| Sept 11-13  | Cable Conquest Festival                       | Mt Telemark Village in Cable, WI                               | North         |
| Sept 18-20  | Minooka Mania Festival                        | Minooka Park in Waukesha, WI                                   | South         |
| Sept 25-27  | Englewood Epic Festival                       | Englewood Grass Farm in Fall River, WI                         | South         |
| Oct 2-4     | Hodag Hustle Festival                         | Camp Tesomas in Rhineland, WI                                  | North         |
| Oct 9-11    | Gnarly Nordic Festival                        | Nordic Mountain in Wild Rose, WI                               | North         |
| Oct 16-18   | Gnarly Nordic Festival                        | Nordic Mountain in Wild Rose, WI                               | South         |
| Oct 23-25   | Red Barn State Championship                   | Trek Trails in Waterloo, WI                                    | North & South |
| Nov 7-8     | NICA Central Regionals                        | TBD  | North & South |

Activities in bold are all included in season registration fees.

Coach Retreats and Bikepacking will have an additional registration fee.

Coaches, find dates & times for first aid/cpr training and On-the-Bike 101 and 201 courses under the Coaching tab at [wisconsinmtb.org](http://wisconsinmtb.org)

We are looking forward to a great season! Please be sure to let us know if you have any questions at [mtb.vtac@gmail.com](mailto:mtb.vtac@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

Melissa Madura, VTAC Head Coach

Troy McKay, VTAC Team Director

