

# Meet Our New Trails Coalition Coordinator!

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## Meet Our New Trails Coalition Coordinator, Kevin O'Brien!

I arrive at WABA eager and excited to advocate for the completion and growth of a world-class network of multi-use trails. This comes after having spent several months in 2021 hiking a *very different* kind of trail: the 2,192-mile Appalachian Trail that winds along the East Coast from Georgia to Maine. I'm looking forward to bringing the same love of outdoor spaces, sense of camaraderie, and dogged tenacity I experienced throughout my journey to my new role as the Trails Coalition Coordinator.

Prior to thru hiking the Appalachian Trail, I spent nearly 5 years at the League of Conservation Voters, a DC-based national political advocacy organization supporting candidates and policies to combat climate change. I wore many hats, from managing electoral compliance and preparing legal research to facilitating staff retreats and supporting organizational change initiatives. I got to see up-close the entrenched political systems that make meaningful action on climate at the federal level so elusive, but also to celebrate less-publicized important victories at the state and local levels thanks to the tireless work of organizations like our state partners (and groups like WABA!).

And my time at LCV wasn't entirely without some big triumphs — a successful organizing effort that centered and codified racial justice and equity in July 2020 was followed by cathartic electoral wins in November establishing a pro-climate majority in Congress and in the White House!

During my time at LCV I became a regular bike commuter, cutting a long and meandering route from the far northern tip of the District (hey Shepherd Park!) down to Lafayette Square. There really is no better way to experience the city, nimble and quick but still fully immersed in all the sights and sounds. While I was able to piece together a relatively peaceful ride along bike lanes each morning, I never did feel as comfortable navigating the same route after dark. The uphill bits didn't help either!

Returning to the city and riding again this past fall, I was met with the same exhilaration that comes with life on two wheels...but also the same fears of speeding cars, passenger doors, and inadequate space that keep so many would-be riders away. Undaunted, I am empowered to continue to strap on my helmet and to join WABA and the Capital Trails Coalition in the work of rethinking and remaking our transportation system to be more accessible, safer, and better for people and the planet. There's so much progress that we can make right here in our own front yards, and I can't wait to get started.

When I'm not taking apart and rebuilding my converted e-bike — the quintessential pandemic-induced project — or dreaming about future backpacking trips, I can usually be found in the kitchen with a New York Times recipe. I look forward to one day traveling again, especially to wonderful and quirky Rhode Island, home to my equally wonderful and quirky family and alma mater, Brown University.