

**Mad River Valley Planning District
Director's Report
January 2011**

Mad River Valley Path Association

- Steel girders were put in place on 1/14 for the Clay Brook Bridge project, funded by an ANR Recreation Trail Program Grant totaling \$18,671. Decking and other related work will commence in the spring.
- Updated trail maps are going to print.
- New trail segments are being added to existing trailhead signs.
- MRPA is gearing up planning for the SB Adventure Games, to take place on April 3rd. Exploring option of utilizing Harwood students as volunteers.
- MRPA's Land Owner Committee has spent the last few months exploring the possibility of an open space agreement/tax stabilization proposal with the Town of Waitsfield. Initial exploration has found that such an agreement would have a fairly minimal benefit to the property owner as the reduction in taxes can only be on the municipal side, not education. MRPA will further vet the concept with additional landowners to determine its usefulness.
- Applying to the New England Grass Roots Fund to implement interpretive signage as proposed by UVM students involved in the *Local Community Initiative* class project.
- MRPA sent holiday cards to all current landowners.
- Exploring funding for new dog waste stations.
- MRPA sent proposed easement language for town-owned land to the Waitsfield SB for their review. Language currently being reviewed by the Town Attorney.
- MRPA ended 2010 with over 400 members, donating \$18k.

Housing

- MRV Housing Coalition is actively exploring a potential affordable housing site on German Flats Road, owned by Sugarbush, to be part of the upcoming Valley Affordable Land Initiative. Septic suitability and attorney review are ongoing.

Transportation

- Continued contact with Senator Leahy's staff about the Sugarbush Access Rd. funding request. The project and cost proposal are currently under review by his staff. I expect to hear from them this week, at which time it is likely that a local meeting will be scheduled. A formal letter from MRVPD is not necessary at this time.
- Participated in a follow-up discussion with the VTrans ROW Chief and representative from the Attorney General's office to explore issues related to requirements to remove historic structures (and signage) within the State's ROW. Continuing to explore the option of developing language to provide appropriate exemptions for such structures, to be brought up this legislative session.
- The MR Byway Committee is communicating with Green Mtn. Power in regards to the development of the Taplin School for a Byway grant funded restoration project.

- Next Byway meeting scheduled for 1/21.

Valley Futures Network

- VFN's Network Resource Group has been meeting to support the network in areas of systems, resources, communications, policies, and web protocols. New webpage layout and content to be up and running in January.
- The final presentations and reports from this fall's *Local Community Initiatives* are available for download at the VFN blog: <http://valleyfutures.net/blog/>. Joshua is working on setting up a third installment of this course – project solicitation will commence in the spring.
- MRVPD's application to the E-Vermont Community Broadband Project on behalf of the Town of Waitsfield was not funded. Joshua has had follow-up conversations about how to bring Front Porch Forum to the MRV. Moretown's application did receive funding.

Energy

- Joshua is in communication with VPIRG about bringing Solar Communities to the MRV in 2011. Focused effort on installer discounts, bundling gvt incentives, and attractive private financing.
- Joshua will be submitting an application to Vermont Energy & Climate Action Network's (VECAN) new grant program called *Building the Power of Vermont Communities to Increase Energy Efficiency and Reduce Climate Change Impacts*. The program provides grants ranging \$1-3k to support Vermont groups working on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in their communities that support local sustainability. The goal of the MRV submission is to underwrite a series of 5 energy presentations throughout the year on topics such as solar, efficiency, etc.
- Submitted a MRV application to the Vermont Community Foundation's Energy Monitor Program. The energy monitors are a simple piece of equipment installed in a building's electrical panel that allows its owner to see his or her electricity usage in real-time. The project, if funded, would develop a Localvolt led small business outreach program that will provide three month of monitoring and follow-up energy information visits to 12 local businesses. Final notification is expected next by 1/28.

Agriculture

- MRVPD applied for a \$12k grant to implement a *MRV Food System Mapping Project*, which would identify the MRV's assets, gaps in its current food system, illustrate relationships, and provide a structure for enhancing the MRV's agricultural economy. The funding is being sought through *UVM CRS' Vermont Mini-Grant Program for Community-Campus Partnerships Working on Research, Implementation, and Outreach in Food Systems*. Expect to hear by the end of the month.
- Joshua is participating in a small working group focused on developing a local food distribution system in the MRV. Initially the group is exploring other innovative distribution/processing/storage models around VT and exploring their potential

relevance here. The creator of the Brattleboro based Windham Farm & Food Network will be providing a talk to the group at the end of the month.

- The [USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas](http://www.ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/atlas/) has recently been released which provides more than 90 indicators of the nation's food environment. The tool allows users to query things like how many households have no car and are located more than a mile from a grocery store; the price ratio fruit/pkg savory snacks; low-income preschool obesity rate; recreation & fitness facilities by population; socioeconomic characteristics; etc. AND see the results on a downloadable map. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/atlas/> The Food Atlas only drills down to the county level, resulting in MRV info grouped within Washington County.

Forests, Wildlife, Communities Project

- The Forest Wildlife Community Project is moving in high gear, with progress on MRV maps identifying ecological priorities, development of build out models, creation of a land use planning manual, formation of engineer and realtor trainings, exploration of additional conservation funding, and development of outreach tools (including sap bucket kits to new large land owners, elementary school curriculum development, and a website).
- Joshua is working with FWC partners to develop build-out models for each of the Valley towns. The build-out models of the towns will show future development patterns based on existing land use policies. Through GIS and spatial analysis, the build-out will demonstrate how future housing development will impact the viability of working forests and ecosystem functions, such as impacts to identified wildlife corridors and connectivity between large forest blocks. The current funding limits the build-out analysis from looking at specific development patterns in the towns' growth centers and won't include scenarios based on proposed land use policies. The Town of Warren is seeking MPG funds to build upon this existing work and incorporate the growth center and proposed land use scenario elements into the build-out analysis and their current municipal plan update process.

Rural Resource Commission

- Joshua is providing support on three Community Local Government grant applications from the MRV: Mad River Glen for Historic District nomination, Warren Blair Barn restoration/preservation project, and update Warren's Historic District Register to include the Timber Crib dam.
- Participating in discussions with the Mad River Rural Resource Commission in regards to upcoming work on the Waitsfield Covered Bridge.
- Participating in discussions with the Town of Waitsfield in regards to proposed sidewalk improvements on the west side of Main St.

Waitsfield Infrastructure

- The Waitsfield Planning Commission's Wastewater Committee will be presenting the results of the DHCA funded Decentralized Wastewater committee study on February 1, 7 PM, at the Big Picture Theater, entitled *Assessment of Decentralized Wastewater Options: A survey of needs, capacity and solutions for Historic*

Waitsfield Village and Irasville, Vermont. The study evaluates the needs and capacity for "small pipe" decentralized wastewater treatment options in Irasville and historic Waitsfield Village. The effort was initiated by the Town of Waitsfield Select Board as a method to evaluate viable alternatives to the "big pipe" taxpayer-supported centralized wastewater system, which was voted down in spring, 2008. Launched last August, the study was prepared by Stone Environmental Inc. of Montpelier, and was overseen by a volunteer subcommittee of the Waitsfield Planning Commission. The study updates the existing 2001 survey of water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure in the Town; re-evaluates wastewater treatment and dispersal capacity and needs in light of the municipal water project now under construction; and evaluates wastewater management options. The final report and executive summary, both of which will be available at the meeting, incorporates results from a homeowner/landowner survey of the study area, detailed maps which spotlight capacity and need, and recommended next steps.

- Joshua is exploring appropriateness of applying distributive wastewater beyond Waitsfield (i.e.: Alpine Village).
- Exploring options to utilize SRF (State Revolving Funds) and \$1 million in EPA State & Tribal Assistance Grants) STAG to fund the creation of a decentralized wastewater system, develop a Wastewater Management District, and start demonstration program. Moving forward via conversations with VT DEC (Roger Thompson), EPA Reg. 1 (Rob Adler - septic), and DHCA (Joss Besse).
- Assisting the Town of Waitsfield in updating its existing SRF application.

Recreation

- The first meeting of the MRV Trail Collaborative initiative, funded by National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Technical Assistance program, will take place on 1/25 at the Town of Fayston. The intent of the collaborative is to enhance networking and connections between MRV trail organizations. The meeting will establish a project steering committee and establish objectives. MRPA partnered with MRVPD this past fall to request assistance in establishing the Mad River Valley Trails Collaborative, designed to enhance networking and connections between MRV trail organizations.

Etc

- Joshua continues to coordinate with ANR water quality on a low impact development master planning and bank stabilization/stormwater mitigation project in Waitsfield Village. ANR's Clean & Clear grant portion of the project has been funded at \$67k. Awaiting word on the PDM-C grant that was submitted in November. Working on creating a partnership between this project and a rain garden course to be taught at Yestermorrow in August.
- Assisting the Warren ZA and PC on its town plan rewrite. A draft is available for review at the town website.
- Warren's Municipal Planning Grant request to DHCA for town plan map creation and development of a robust build-out analysis was not funded.

- Efficiency VT is undertaking a new initiative entitled Business Energy Ambassadors, which provides trained volunteers to conduct on-site “business energy visits” to identify opportunities for saving energy for small businesses in Central VT. The primary focus is on lighting, where Efficiency VT has limited-time enhanced rebates for replacing inefficient T12 fluorescent lighting via their newLIGHT program. Those interested in a site visit should contact Chris Badger at csbadger@gmail.com.
- Joshua attended Fayston’s ribbon-cutting ceremony on 12/29 for their EECEBG funded wood boiler.
- Met with Bob Ackland and Jim Halavonich to discuss items for inclusion in the FY12 Work Plan.