

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

Municipal

- The FEMA PDM-C portion of the low impact development master planning and bank stabilization/stormwater mitigation project in Waitsfield Village was not funded. Kari Dolan is reapplying to a different FEMA program (HMGP). ANR's Clean & Clear grant portion of the project was funded at \$67k.
- Fayston hired Carol Chamberlin as their new Zoning Administrator. Joshua has been in conversations with Carol and offered support.
- Waitsfield is interviewing prospective Zoning Administrators. Vickie is staying on until a replacement has been selected.
- Provided review and comments on the Energy Chapter of Waitsfield's draft Town Plan.
- Assisting Waitsfield's new Energy Committee Chair, Chris Badger.
- Conversing with Warren's ZA on development projects.
- The Vermont Community Development Program's funding cycle starts on 6/23 with an application workshop. VCDP provides grant funds to municipalities for housing, economic development and other community development projects to benefit primarily low-to-moderate income persons. Additional info can be found at <http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/VCDP/Application/Program%20Guide.htm#ineligible>.

Energy

- MRVPD's application was funded from VECAN's grant program entitled *Building the Power of Vermont Communities to Increase Energy Efficiency and Reduce Climate Change Impacts*. The \$3k will to underwrite a series of 5 energy presentations throughout the year on topics such as solar, efficiency, etc. Joshua is working with town energy coordinators to develop the series.
- Localvolts are organizing its Energy Monitor Program, recently funded through the Vermont Community Foundation. The project will 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. Contact Chris Badger if you know of a business interested in participating in the project: csbadger@gmail.com.
- A legislative fix was passed addressing concerns regarding Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs (issues regarding the hierarchy of property liens in the event of foreclosure as recently raised by the feds). This will permit Waitsfield to move forward, who received funding to set up a PACE program last winter, but had been holding off.
- This May VNRC & VLCT released two tools designed to help communities' harness their town plans to address energy-saving and energy-generation opportunities through *The Energy Planning & Implementation Guide for Vermont Municipalities and Communities Tackling Vermont's Energy Challenges*. Bot can be downloaded here: <http://www.vnrc.org/energy/resources/energy-planning-implementation-guidebook-for-vt-communities/>.

Agriculture

- The MRVPD & Localvolts sponsored 5/10 VSJF Farm to Plate Presentation at the Big Picture was a big success. More than 115 people attended to hear about the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan and the new Mad River Food Hub L3C. Joshua presented “next steps.”
- The mission of the Mad River Food Hub is to support and strengthen the agricultural economy and access access to local food in the MRV and beyond. The Food Hub is currently under renovation and is located at Irasville Business Park. The facility will offer a state inspected facility for vegetable, fruit and meat processing and storage. Refrigerator and freezer space as well as a kitchen and butchering area will be rented out on a daily basis. Mad Taco, Gaylord Farm and the Kingsbury Market Garden have already made commitment to use the facility. The facility will be up and running by late summer 2011.
- Approximately 30 people have been added to the VFN Agriculture listserv to continue the food system conversation, a result of the 5/10 event.
- Assisting in the development of a farmer/land matching system with Liza Walker of the Watershed Conservation Partnership.
- Joshua is serving on the Mad River Food Hub Advisory Committee.
- Attended a food distribution working meeting on 4/28 with local individuals and the creator of the Brattleboro based Windham Farm & Food Network. A MRV focused online ordering and billing program for wholesale buyers is currently under development.
- Provided grant assistance and letters of support for a variety of Mad River Food Hub applications: Vt Housing & Conservation Board’s Farm Viability Enhancement Program for processing equipment, the Agency of Agriculture’s VT Specialty Crop Block Grant Program for the purchase of a flash freezing unit, and Agency of Ag’s Agricultural Innovation Center Infrastructure Development Program for an apprentice training program and market viability assessment for a distribution program.
- Scheduled to meet with Agency of Agriculture and USDA representatives in regards to a potential Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) focusing on funding business incubators and adult education programs.

Mad River Valley Path Association

- The East Side Greenway closed on 4/12 for an undisclosed period of time. MRPA continues to work with Elwin Neill to discuss various Greenway issues.
- Despite the loss of the Greenway, MRPA is committed to the Mad Dash and is looking for alternative locations.
- The Mad River Path Association Annual Meeting will be held from 4-6 pm at Lareau Farm on May 27th. All members are welcome. MRPA will hold a Path Pizza Party immediately following the Annual Meeting, 6-9 PM. The Pizza Party is a celebration of the Path and the landowners who generously host the Mad River Path on their property. All MRPA Landowners will receive free entry to the event as a token of MRPA’s appreciation for their support. Members can purchase tickets for \$10

individual/ \$30 Family, and non-member tickets will be available for \$15 individual/ \$40 Family.

- MRPA met with Sugarbush to identify further collaboration and support.
- Dog waste stations have begun to be erected at key points along the Path.
- Exploring route from Warren School to Cold Springs Farm.
- Joshua attended a MRPA Land Owner Committee meeting to discuss various topics of interest. Joshua is planning on attending future meetings for the time being.

Transportation

- Joshua attended the Mad Bus End of Season Meeting on 5/11 along with Margo, Jim H, Win Smith, and others. The discussion included a winter recap, planning for next season, and the development of a plan of action for the TAC regarding outreach efforts and strengthening the service. The Warren Shuttle will be discontinued next season due to low ridership. The Valley Floor route is in danger of being lost if ridership doesn't increase next season. The next TAC meeting is scheduled for 6/1.
- The State's Way to Go and local Valley Walk and Roll events are scheduled for 5/13-22. Promotional materials & resources can be found at waytogovt.org and valleywalkandroll.com.
- 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.
- Reviewed plans and organized comments in regards to Waitsfield's proposed sidewalk projects.

Forests, Wildlife, Communities Project

- Joshua presented results from a FWC funded build-out analysis to the Waitsfield PC on 5/3 along with Jens Hilke of ANR and Jamey Fidel of VNRC. Conversations will continue to identify opportunities for further collaboration and technical support. Meetings being scheduled for Fayston and Waitsfield.
- The FWC met on 5/6 and finalized conservation maps and worked on the future website. Work is ongoing on the website, which will be hosted on the mrvpd.org site.

Waitsfield Infrastructure

- Joshua has continued discussions with the Waitsfield PC Wastewater Committee regarding next steps. A development proposal should be identified by the end of the month.
- Continuing to explore 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 a demonstration program. Continuing conversations with VT DEC, EPA Reg. 1, and DHCA. Additional funding opportunities may be had through the VT Community Development Program.
- Meeting next week to discuss Waitsfield's SRF funding opportunities.

Recreation

- The MRV Trail Collaborative Steering Committee met on 4/25. We reviewed our priorities to update MRV Trails map; inventory existing trail access easements; create trail crew projects list. A spreadsheet has been created trail data inventory along with a letter and questionnaire to be sent to all MRVTC organizations. In addition, the SC is working with the MRV Chamber to update its trail webpage will hold a VYCC/MRV Trails Meeting in the fall. The next MRVTC meeting is scheduled for 6/8, 9 am at the Wait House.
- Joshua and Autumn have identified a scope of work for the inventory and mapping portion of the MRVTC project. Unfortunately, much of the data utilized in the 2004 Map Adventures map will need to be recollected and developed.
- Joshua attended the 5/14 USFS site visit at Blueberry Lake. USFS is taking input on a variety of improvements at the site. Joshua is developing a letter of comment highlighting the importance of the work proposed (primarily ownership and improvement of a “easy” mtn biking network within the Valley and related enhancements that add to the MRV recreation experience).

Valley Futures Network

- Joshua is working on setting up a third installment of the *Local Community Initiatives* course this fall.
- Six project applications have been received, of which three will be chosen.

Etc

- After 5 tries, Joshua, Jim Halavonich and Bob Ackland gathered on 5/9 as first MRVPD Economic Development sub-committee meeting. They discussed the breadth of econ. dev. activities that they should be engaged in, reviewed metrics developed as part of the MOU Data Project in 2009, and explored options for making the information salient. Bob has since sent out examples of work done in different regions and the group will be meeting within the next month.
- Friends of the Mad River submitted a co-application with WNRCD for a watershed grant (VT 2012 Pollution Control Projects) to undertake watershed planning for Folsom Brook. MRVPD will be providing a letter of support.
- Joshua attended The Preservation Trust of Vermont & The Vermont Downtown Program’s *Historic Preservation & Downtown Conference* in Poultney. Topics ranged from best street design practices to funding for downtown projects.
- Attended a Mad River Housing Coalition meeting and discussed status of the Valley Affordable Land Initiative. A pilot project is underway in Fayston.
- Attended a CLG grant organizing meeting with Mad River Glen in regards to their historic designation project. Ellen Strauss and Joshua will be administering this grant.
- Working with Ellen Strauss on the Warren Dam CLG project.
- MR Watershed Conservation Partnership met to discuss organization history, common goals and areas for collaboration with MRPA. Questions were raised about MRPA’s inclusion in the partnership.