

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

Municipal

- 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.
- Joshua met with a Post-Doc student at UVM who is undertaking a research project that will analyze two areas within Waitsfield and identify opportunities for integrating Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater treatment within the existing landscape. Joshua introduced the student to Steve Shea and the Waitsfield PC.
- Assisting the Warren ZA and PC on its town plan rewrite. A draft is available for review at the town website.
- Met with Waitsfield ZA Vickie Trihy to explore potential zoning amendments.
- Joshua has communicated to town ZAs, PCs, and Adam Greshin regarding a bill being discussed in the legislature entitled *An act relating to the role of municipalities and the public in the siting of electric generation and transmission and natural gas facilities* ([S. 27](#)).
- Attended Waitsfield Town Hall Relocation Hearing
- Met with Clare Rock of CVRCP to discuss options for PC/ZA support.
- Provided comments on Fayston Zoning Amendment notice.

Energy

- MRVDP hosted a Smart Grid presentation on 1/25 regarding VT's upcoming Smart Grid. The presentation was made by Robert Dostis, Leader of External Affairs and Customer Relations at Green Mountain Power and the former Chair of the Vermont House Natural Resources and Energy Committee.
- Joshua submitted 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*. MRVDP requested \$3k to underwrite a series of 5 energy presentations throughout the year on topics such as solar, efficiency, etc.
- MRV's application to the Vermont Community Foundation's Energy Monitor Program was funded. 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 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. Final notification is expected next by 1/28.
- Legislative amendments have been proposed to update the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program in order to address issues regarding the hierarchy of property liens in the event of foreclosure as recently raised by the feds. Waitsfield received funding to set up a PACE program last winter, but is holding off until legislative fixes are put into place.
- The Shumlin Administration recently announced that ANR will be going through a process of identifying areas of the state that should be off limits to wind developers.
- VNRC is about to release a tool designed to help communities harness their town plans

to address energy-saving and energy-generation opportunities through the new *Energy Planning & Implementation Guide*.

Mad River Valley Path Association

- MRPA applied to the New England Grass Roots Fund to implement interpretive signage as proposed by UVM students involved in the *Local Community Initiative* class project. MRVPD provided a letter of support.
- Undertaking a campaign to purchase dog waste stations. Exploring funding options.
- MRPA is gearing up planning for the SB Adventure Games, to take place on April 3rd. Harwood students will be volunteering on PR for the games.
- New MRPA decals/stickers have been printed and will be distributed to members.
- Current number of path membership for 2011 is 90+.
- Joshua met with MRPA, Friends of the Mad River, and VLT reps to discuss common goals and overlap in efforts to conserving riparian parcels.

Transportation

- Continued contact with Senator Leahy's staff about the Sugarbush Access Rd. funding request. Unfortunately, Leahy's staff is not prioritizing any projects in light of President Obama's message during the State of the Union. It is expected that earmarks are off the table for at least the next 18 months. Leahy's staff will keep an eye out for additional opportunities, but suggest that our efforts focus on state and local resources
- 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.
- Joshua has included Autumn at the Path into Byway discussions.

Agriculture

- MRVPD's \$12k grant to implement a *MRV Food System Mapping* Project was not funded, which would have provided a process for identifying the MRV's assets, gaps in its current food system, illustrate relationships, and provide a structure for enhancing the MRV's agricultural economy.
- Joshua is participating in a small working group focused on developing a local food distribution system in the MRV. Initially the group has explored innovative distribution/processing/storage models around VT. The creator of the Brattleboro based Windham Farm & Food Network gave a talk to the group on 1/28.

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.

- Jens Hilke's position at VT Fish & Wildlife has been restored.

Rural Resource Commission

- The MRV received funding for all three of its recent grant requests through the Community Local Government Grant Program: 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.

Waitsfield Infrastructure

- The Waitsfield Planning Commission's Wastewater Committee presented the results of the DHCA funded Decentralized Wastewater committee study on February 1st 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 a demonstration program. Continuing conversations with VT DEC, EPA Reg. 1, and DHCA.
- Assisted the Town of Waitsfield in updating its current SRF application.

Recreation

- On 1/24 23 people attended the MRV Trail Collaborative kick-off meeting. MRVTC has as its goal to *develop a public and partner visioning process to assess existing resources, identify community defined goals (trail goals, conservation goals, economic goals, etc), develop concept plans, propose products and identify potential funding sources*. The meeting provided an opportunity to network with interested trail representatives, explore the project's intent and objectives with Jennifer Wait of NPS

RTCA, list the variety of opportunities that such a collaborative can provide, and identify members willing to participate in an ongoing project steering committee.

- The first meeting of MRV Trail Collaborative Steering Committee took place on 2/14. The 8 member group worked winnowed the list of projects identified on 1/24 to four: Update and reprint MRV trail map, inventory trail options, work with the MRV Chamber to update its trail webpage, and hold a VYCC/MRV Trails Meeting in the fall.

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. Exploration of subdivision options are under review.

Valley Futures Network

- VFN has overhauled its website to reinforce its recent shift from a project generation to networking organization. <http://valleyfutures.net/>
- Joshua is working on setting up a third installment of the *Local Community Initiatives* course this fall. Project solicitation has commenced – deadline is May 15th.

Etc

- Met with Kate Stephenson at Yestermorrow to discuss potential projects and opportunities for coordination.
- Met with Justin Kenney, District Manager of Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District and discussed ongoing projects and opportunities for coordination.
- Joined the Vermont Council on Rural Development's (VCRD) VT Working Landscape Partnership (VWLP). VWLP is a new non-partisan and broad-based partnership dedicated to supporting local agriculture and forestry, growing and attracting farm and forest entrepreneurs, and conserving VT's working landscape. By joining the partnership, MRVPD helps move the *VT Working Landscape Action Plan* (released Dec. '10) into reality and will stay informed on activities. The 5 point action plan of VWLP are: Build a Major Campaign to Celebrate the Distinctiveness of the Working Landscape that is Vermont, Target Strategic Investment through a Vermont Agriculture and Forest Products Development Corporation, Designate and Support "Working Lands," Develop Tax Revenue to Support Working Landscape Enterprise Development and Conservation, and Build a State Planning Office and Activate the Development Cabinet.
- The Census Bureau has released the first substantial data from the 2010 Census for our state, counties, communities and more. This initial data release is intended primarily for legislative redistricting purposes in each state and includes population counts, detailed race, Hispanic ethnicity, and housing unit totals, occupancy and vacancy. The VT State Data Center has prepared a presentation of a sample of the data at http://crs.uvm.edu/census/2010/vt_2010_census_feb_2011.xls. The data release marks the beginning of the state's redistricting process. The process begins with the [VT Legislative Apportionment Board](#) taking the first crack at drawing new districts; deliberations and decisions are expected in the 2012 legislative session.
- Waitsfield School students enrolled in the after-school Lego League spent the past few months developing a Waitsfield of the Future. The Lego creation will be on display at the Waitsfield Town Meeting and a video is being created for MRVTV Ch. 44.