

**Mad River Valley Planning District
Director's Report
March 2010**

Mad River Valley Path Association

- MRPA's new ED, Autumn Foushee, has been working for a month and meeting with a variety of individuals and organizations. She will be attending the March MRVPD SC meeting.
- Efforts are ramping up for 2010 Sugarbush Triathlon/Adventure Games Supporting MRPA.
- At their 3/11 meeting, the MRPA Board decided that land ownership by MRPA was an appropriate tool for trail protection. Such ownership would be appropriate as a bridge in order for the parcel to be held by another entity for the long term.
- A Valley Dog Summit will be held on 4/28.
- Updated paper trail maps are currently being designed and are anticipated by early summer.

Mad River Byway

- Costs are being finalized for fabrication of kiosks and interpretive signs. Installation is expected by June. Final design of the brochure is ongoing.
- Proposed MR Byway *supplemental guide sign* on I-89 continues to be shopped through the legislature.
- 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.
- MR Byway Committee has decided not to apply for a Byway Grant to fund supplemental promotional material and a website.
- New Vermont Byway z-cards and posters are available at the Visitor Center.

Valley Futures Network

- VFN hosted its second in a series of monthly MRV Community Potlucks on 2/28 at the Waitsfield Church. The next Potluck is scheduled for 3/28, 5:30 PM at the Waitsfield Church.
- Joshua and Jared have been participating in a 10 member VFN Next Stage Steering Team to set direction and organization for the Valley Futures Network. The Steering Team was developed in response to the final report developed as part of the UVM course *Local Community Initiatives*.
- Six project submissions have been received in preparation for the second installment of the MRV focused UVM Service Learning Class entitled *Local Community Initiatives*. Joshua is working with the UVM instructor to identify three viable projects for the course to take place fall 2010.
- Three talks on agriculture economy initiatives have taken place in the Valley in the past two months. Andrew Meyer, President of VT Soy and VT Natural Coatings, spoke to 70 folks on 2/10 about Hardwick's Center for an Agricultural Economy, Ben Falk of Whole Systems Design spoke to a group about the

proposed E. Warren Commons project on 3/11, and Monty Fischer, ED of Hardwick's Center for an Agricultural Economy spoke at a VFN monthly meeting on 3/12. The next planned talk is John Abrams on 4/23. These talks are part of work of a steering team that is looking to create a MRV map/analysis of Valley attributes in the realm of agriculture/innovation and designing a prototype of what this model might look like for farmers / entrepreneurs / non-profits / responsible banking, etc.

Kingsbury Community Farm

- Joshua is serving on a local advisory board for the Food Bank's Kingsbury Farm. The board's focus is on local communication, education, and collaboration. The next meeting is scheduled for 3/29.

Transportation

- Joshua, Jared, Jim H., and Margo met on 3/17 to discuss MRVDP's options in the face of GMTA's proposed structural changes. The Legislature is currently discussing a structure change that will result in MRVDP losing its seat on the GMTA Board of Directors (currently held by Margo). Although the lose of a Board seat is unavoidable, the 3/17 meeting yielded the following action items: Margo will explore how Stowe is handling this similar situation, Margo will speak with Chris Cole, CCTA's GM, and express our concerns and explore other future involvement, and Joshua and Margo will look to reinforce the work of the MRV Transportation Advisory Committee.

Energy

- All three towns and two schools met the 2/23 final application deadline for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) Competitive Local Government Sub-Grant program. Final determination is anticipated in April.
- The Central VT Energy Program, sponsored by CVRPC, has a 4/30 application deadline for municipal building audits and related weatherization improvements.
- The Waitsfield Energy Committee and Waitsfield Selectboard have endorsed applying for a grant to explore the feasibility of a small-scale decentralized biomass district heating system to serve Waitsfield School, General Wait House, and the Waitsfield-Fayston Fire Department. It is expected that the initial feasibility grant will be submitted in May to the VT Clean Energy Development Fund's Municipal Technical Assistance Grant program.

Etc

- The MRV Trail Summit on 3/10 was a success. More than 20 folks attended including trail organizations with the MRV watershed, and reps from the National Parks Service, Green Mtn National Forest, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation, and Central VT Regional Planning Commission. Topics of discussion included a trail map project, funding, and opportunities for collaboration. The meeting yielded the following topics for future discussion and collaboration: combined volunteer initiatives, future coordination of trail projects, and opportunities for a watershed-wide rec. trail initiative.
- Waitsfield's initial grant (partially written by MRVDP) to fund a community orchard

at the Town's recently obtained Flemmer Green property has made it to the second level. Waitsfield is competing with 100 communities across the country for 1 of 25 complete fruit orchards. On-line voting will determine the 25 winners, awarding 5 grants each month for the next 5 months. Visit <http://www.communitiestakeroot.com>, go to VERMONT, find Waitsfield's proposal, and VOTE! You don't need to be a Waitsfield resident to participate.

Votes will carry over month to month until all the grants are awarded. You can vote as often as once a day between March 15th & August 31st. Votes from your work e-mail and your personal e-mail addresses count as separate votes.

- Joshua provided a letter of support to Waitsfield Telecom for their application to the ARRA Broadband Initiatives Program for \$30 million in funding. If funded, the project will result in extensive upgrades in their broadband network (Ethernet capability beyond 100 MB).