

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

Mad River Valley Path Association

- Joshua met with MRPA ED Autumn Foushee to discuss potential grant opportunities related to key parcels.
- The 2010 Sugarbush Triathlon/Adventure Games Supporting MRPA was a success with over 120 volunteers and 200 participants.
- Trails Committee has set out priorities for the upcoming season, including establishing a workday program, establishing the Kingsbury Farm Trail section, and finalizing the Bridge Street Connector (top priority).
- The Valley Dog Summit has been postponed.
- Updated paper trail maps are currently being designed and are anticipated by early summer.

Mad River Byway

- Fabrication of kiosks and interpretive signs are estimated to begin this week. Towns will be in charge of installation, expected to start at the beginning of June.
- Final design of the brochure is nearly complete. Printing is expected to coincide with completion of byway interpretive panels.
- Proposed MR Byway *supplemental guide sign* on I-89 is currently being reviewed by the Travel Information Council.
- 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.

Valley Futures Network

- Joshua facilitated the 4/9 VFN morning meeting. The 17 participants discussed the VT Festival of the Great Outdoors, funding potential for increasing online community conversations, and heard updates from various working groups.
- VFN hosted its third in a series of monthly MRV Community Potlucks on 3/28. The next Potluck is scheduled for 5/1, 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*. Final products, consisting of a reformed mission and clarified directives, are expected by mid-April. The group's recommended mission statement is "Valley Futures Network is a network connecting individuals and organizations working towards a healthy and sustainable Mad River Valley community."
- 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.
- Joshua participated in a meeting of the new agriculture economy initiatives working group, who 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.
- The next planned agricultural economy talk is John Abrams on 4/23.

Kingsbury Community Farm

- Joshua participated in the first meeting of the VT Food Bank's Kingsbury Farm local advisory board. The board's focus is on local communication, education, and collaboration.

Transportation

- Margo Wade followed up on a previous discussion concerning MRVPD's options in the face of GMTA's proposed structural changes. Due to their similar position, Margo spoke to a representative from Stowe who stated the town has decided to not join CCTA and is planning to rely on Lamoille RPC to represent them on the new board. The legislation has been signed by both the house and senate and is pretty much a done deal. Without the Valley's contribution coming through one of the towns the MRV will not have a seat on the new board. Options may exist to have representation through CVRPC.
- The Legislature is currently discussing a structure change that will result in MRVPD 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.
- The 3rd annual Valley Walk 'n Roll Festival is scheduled for 5/12-22 to coincide with the state's Way To Go Commuter Challenge. Various bike rides, walks, Bike or Walk to School / Work Day and others are planned.
- The Mad Bikes of Waitsfield is working with a group of Harwood VYCC students to repair bikes in preparation for putting them back on the road. Next week the group will be making an additional 12 new bike racks.

Energy

- All three towns and three MRV schools received funding through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) Competitive Local Government Sub-Grant program, totaling \$304,107.45. Eight of the Valley's nine applications proved successful through the two-stage application process. This constitutes 89% of the Valley's applications, where the statewide percentage of funded projects was 47% (147 grants out of 323 proposals). Here are the winners:
 - Energy Efficiency Retrofits
 - Town of Waitsfield \$49,999
 - Town of Warren \$50,000
 - Town of Fayston \$18,282
 - Harwood U. High School \$47,302
 - Waitsfield School \$49,900
 - Warren School \$17,208.45
 - Financial Incentive Programs
 - Town of Waitsfield \$13,700
 - Renewable Energy Technologies
 - Town of Fayston \$57,716
- The Central VT Energy Program, sponsored by CVRPC, has a 4/30 application deadline for municipal building audits and related weatherization improvements. Joshua has been working with Waitsfield and Warren to prepare applications.
- 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 June to the VT Clean Energy Development Fund's Municipal Technical Assistance Grant program.

- Local volunteers are following up on last spring's Vermont Community Energy Mobilization (VCEM) project. All participants who had energy visits (approximately 70 in the MRV) will be interviewed on their satisfaction. Efficiency VT is providing a \$150 coupon on an energy audit for all participants. This results in \$400 in available rebates on an audit.

Rural Resource Commission

- The Rural Resource Commission met on 3/31 and responded to a request to weigh in on the status of a "historic barn" in Waitsfield in light of the town's Adaptive Reuse of Historic Barns zoning provision.

Etc

- Last summer Joshua sent in a pre-application to develop a MRV specific version of Front Porch Forum (Burlington based online community network) through the E-Vermont Community Broadband Project. The larger Project is designed to help rural Vermont towns use the internet more effectively to advance a wide variety of local needs including downtown marketing, community engagement, economic development, school innovation, job creation, health and social services, and e-commerce. The project has received the requested federal funding allowing up to 24 projects across the state. See <http://www.frontporchforum.com/> for more information. Joshua is currently soliciting interested individuals to move the project to the next level.
- Joshua attended Central Vermont Regional Planning Commissions' Warren Town Plan Review Committee meeting on 4/1. Joshua provided support and expertise throughout the Town Plan endorsement process.
- Joshua attended the Warren Selectboard's 3/30 discussion on law enforcement with the Washington County Sherriff's office.
- Joshua is leading an effort to apply for a technical assistance grant through the National Parks Service Rivers & Trails Program to explore the development of a MRV recreation trail initiative.
- Joshua has lined up an unpaid intern to work 20 hrs between the end of May and beginning of August. Jeff Guevin is about to finish his first year in Vermont Law School's JD program and currently holds a Masters in Urban Affairs from Boston University and recently completed a 2-year stint with the Peace Corps in West Africa. Joshua has a long list of potential projects that span data project update, developing a regional recreation trail collaborative, and grant writing.
- Joshua met with Harwood Union High School civics teacher Jean Berthiaume and explored potential for future collaboration with his Sustainable Communities class in the fall.
- Joshua was interviewed by WCVT on account of their 10 year anniversary and discussed the value of public access to community participation and MRVPD.
- Waitsfield's community orchard proposal for Flemer Green is still in competition with 100 communities across the country through online voting at <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.
- Joshua provided support to Valerie regarding the potential for LED street lighting within the Town of Waitsfield.

