

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

Municipal

- Joshua met with Waitsfield's new Zoning Administrator Susan Senning on 8/11 to provide technical support.
- MRVPD provided a letter of support for the Town of Warren's Transportation Enhancement Grant application to cover engineering of a covered bridge abutment replacement project.
- Joshua has been working with the MRVPD Economic Development Sub Committee to develop a MRV Economic Development focused grant application for the Department of Economic, Housing & Community Development's next round of Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs). This grant program funds planning and implementation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and guiding future development. Priority will be given to projects that further smart growth principles and town plan projects that address the new economic development element as passed by the legislature this year as [Act 52](#). The consortium grant application will be in the amount of \$15k, will not require a match, and is due by 9/30. Joshua is working with the PC's from Warren and Fayston in order to develop an appropriate grant application.
- CVRPC is communicating with all three MRV towns regarding the opportunity to purchase current and high-resolution aerial photos (30 cm ADS40 image resolution). The proposed "buy-up option" will increase resolution from existing 50 cm sets, allowing better delineation of building edges and features. Contact Dan Currier for more info (229-0389).
- Joshua has begun scheduling the annual tri-town selectboard meeting.

Flood Recovery

- Joshua has been providing support for relief effort coordination and getting the word out on opportunities via the Valley Futures Network website, VFN listserv, and MRV Post Irene Facebook Page. Support has been provided to the MRV HQ with communication between organizations such as the MRV Resource Management Alliance, Efficiency Vermont, etc.
- A new recovery webpage has been created at <http://www.mrvhurricaneirene.com/>.
- The MRV Energy Series kick-off event, *Local Energy History & The Foundation for our Energy Future*, was postponed from its original date of 8/30. The evening was repurposed to provide an update from the towns on flood relief efforts. The three MRV towns, plus Moretown and Adam Greshin presented. More than 120 people attended this important and last minute event. The Big Picture Theater waived the venue fee.
- Joshua has been coordinating efforts between the towns and the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection Program - 75% match to help private landowners deal with imminent hazards to life and property. The program requires towns to serve as the "sponsor" for such projects. NRCS undertook MRV site visits on 9/7 & 9/8. Waitsfield has inquired if MRVPD could provide administrative support for any future grantees.
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) grant funding has been released for communities effected by the flood. This is 75% funding for projects of less than \$250k.

Typical hazard mitigation projects would include: home acquisitions (buy-out), structural elevations or relocations, repair and mitigation of local roads and bridges, replacement of undersized culverts, remediation of stream bank erosion, etc. More info below. An approved Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan is required for eligibility. Warren & Fayston currently have expired PDM plans. CVRPC is in the process of helping towns update their PDM plans. If towns are interested in HMGP funds, then they should contact Jennifer Mojo at CVRPC pronto to get their plan approved (Waitsfield's is approved, Warren's is expired as is Fayston's). Application deadline of 1/20/12. More info at www.vem.vermont.gov.

- In correspondence with EPA's Office Sustainable Communities and FEMA exploring land use planning assistance for the Mad River Valley. They have in the past coordinated in other states to help with long-term flood recovery, providing land-use planning services to help rebuild after flood damage.
- More than 1300 volunteer hours have been logged by the MRV Flood Relief HQ. All hours should be submitted at <http://bit.ly/oxg72N>.
- Coordinated with 20 Harvard students who came to the MRV for flood relief efforts during 9/10-11. Exploring opportunities for recovery planning opportunities.
- The flood Plain Management section of Mitigation is reaching out to Towns to offer assistance in conducting Substantial Damage (SD) Determinations for damaged structures in flood plains. They will assist in assessing community needs for issuing letters to property owners regarding the SD process, training if necessary, collecting data and if necessary conducting the Substantial Damage Estimates. Contact david.boileau@fema.gov (571.409.4413) to provide a list of the damaged properties that are located in flood plains in order to make plans for surveyors and inspectors to provide timely services to towns.

Energy

- The MRV Energy Series kick-off event, *Local Energy History & The Foundation for our Energy Future*, was rescheduled to Monday, September 12th. This is the first of five energy presentations funded through a VECAN grant. 30 people attended the event, which consisted of presentations Bill Maclay, Principal of Maclay Architects, who gave an historical perspective of the Valley's energy production and consumption, as well as provide thoughts on producing energy locally; Brian Shupe, *Deputy Director* of VT Natural Resources Council, who provided the framework for how communities plan for and guide energy production; and Carl Etnier of Transition Town Montpelier, who shared a model for community energy planning through his efforts in developing Montpelier's Energy Descent Action Plan. Copies of the slideshows have been added to MRV.org. In addition, summaries are being compiled for each of the events.
- Subsequent energy presentations will be held monthly through the end of the year at the Big Picture Theater:
 - Residential & Community Solar Projects (September 20th)
 - Financing Energy Projects (October 24th)
 - Biomass & Hot Water (November 15)
 - Energy Efficiency/Conservation (December 13)
- Localvolts have undertaken its energy-monitoring program, entitled MRV Unplugged, recently funded through the Vermont Community Foundation. The project is developing a Localvolt led small business outreach program that will provide three months of

monitoring and follow-up energy information visits to 12 local businesses. The Warren Store is the first customer. Contact Chris Badger if you know of a business interested in participating in the project: csbadger@gmail.com.

- The Dept. of Public Service has released the public review draft of the 2011 VT Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) for review and comment. The plan addresses Vermont's energy future for electricity, thermal energy, transportation, and land use. This plan, which was scheduled to be released on 10/15, but was released on 9/14, is a long time coming and is considered a strong step forward for VT and as a major signal for economic development and for our energy future. The plan can be found here: <http://www.vtenergyplan.vermont.gov/>.
- Joshua was interviewed by a journalist with Mountain Magazine about energy planning in the MRV. A feature article is expected in Fall 2011. Joshua was also interviewed by Green Energy Times about the same subject. The GET edition can be viewed here, MRVPD list of energy projects and other highlights on pg. 23: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/62289221/Get-Aug2011-Web>.

Agriculture

- The Mad River Food Hub has received all of its state permits and is scheduled to be fully operational in October. Successful grants have been sought through the following programs:
 - \$10k from the Vt Housing & Conservation Board's Farm Viability Enhancement Program for processing equipment
 - \$7.5k from the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund for strategic planning
 - \$50k application to the USDA's Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program was one of three supported by the state and forwarded to DC. Awaiting word.
 - \$26.2k has been awarded through the Agency of Ag's Agricultural Innovation Center Infrastructure Development Program for an apprentice training program and market viability assessment for a distribution program.
 - Awaiting word on a \$15k Agency of Agriculture's VT Specialty Crop Block Grant for the purchase of a flash freezing unit.
- MRVPD submitted a joint letter of commitment to CVRPC's Regional Food Systems Plan application. MRVPD is committing to provide information and data collected from the MRV Farmer Survey and assist with networking and outreach activities.

Mad River Valley Path Association

- Mad River Path received extensive damage in the 8/28 flooding event. The only sections currently open are the Village Path in Irasville, Millbrook Path, Austin Walk and the Warren Path. All other sections are closed.
- Fifteen students from Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans assisted in cleanup on the Austin Walk on 9/9, allowing it to be re-opened.
- The new bridge across the Clay Brook, opened on 7/6 and connecting Riverside Park with Kingsbury Farm, fared well despite the flooding.
- MRPA's summer intern has developed a MRPA brochure and promoted the Path sections via Facebook and the MRPA blog (<http://madrivertpath.blogspot.com/>).
- Warren SB approved funds for dog waste stations.
- MRPA is in the process of revamping their website.

- Open Space Tax Stabilization Agreement discussion with Waitsfield has been postponed in light of the flooding event.
- MRPA has submitted two recent grant requests seeking assistance.
- Mad Dash fundraiser is scheduled for this Sunday (9/18). SIPtemberfest at MRG is scheduled for 9/24.
- MRPA partnered with VT Land Trust and Friends of the Mad River in submitting a grant to the Transportation Enhancement Grant program for a scenic easement on the 398 acre Sainsbury farm in Moretown.

Transportation

- MRV Transportation Advisory Committee is focusing on increasing outreach and ridership for the Mad Bus, whose routes are at risk of being reduced due to low ridership. Letters have been sent to MRV lodges and restaurants located on the route requesting financial support based on a fair-share quota. Despite extensive outreach, very little in the way of contributions has come in from local businesses.
- The Mad Bus' Warren Shuttle route has been cut for the upcoming season. GMTA is having a public meeting addressing any concerns with this change on 9/29, 1 PM, at the Warren Municipal Office.
- Joshua attended a MR Byway website meeting on 8/12 exploring ways in which the Byway material could be incorporated into the MRV Chamber's existing website.
- Plans are being finalized for the Waitsfield Safe Routes to School project to narrow Old County Rd. and put in a permanent crosswalk across Rt. 100. Selectboard approved the project on 7/25 along with a discussion of alternatives for the west side sidewalks. The Mad River Valley Rural Resource Commission has been engaged on the discussions for the west sidewalk proposal.
- The Mad River Scenic Byway I-89 sign is currently under design by VTrans.

Forests, Wildlife, Communities Project

- Results of the FWC funded build-out analysis were presented to the Warren PC on 8/22 by Jens Hilke of ANR and Jamey Fidel of VNRC. All three towns have received presentations. Feedback is being incorporated into the final product, scheduled to be presented to the MRVPD at its October meeting.
- MRVPD served as a host site for all four of the VT Fish & Wildlife Dept's summer webinar series. Multiple individuals representing the three towns attended the events.
- Joshua is overseeing development of the FWC web presence, which will be hosted on the mrvpd.org site.
- A tri-town meeting of the MRV's conservation committee's is being scheduled for the fall.

Waitsfield Infrastructure

- The Waitsfield Planning Commission and the Waitsfield SB approved funding the Wastewater Management Project Study proposed to the Wastewater Sub-Committee by Stone Environmental and TetraTech. The purpose of the project is to develop the scope of a wastewater management district for decentralized wastewater systems in Waitsfield. Design and creation of a wastewater management district is the next step in facilitating decentralized wastewater systems in Waitsfield in order to address the needs of homeowners and businesses in the town center. Part of the project is to

determine the funding options for decentralized systems and address the existing Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan and \$1,000,000S TAG funding that were originally developed to fund the larger scale Wastewater Plan defeated by voters in 2008.

- The Wastewater management Project Study will take place through fall, 2011.
- Exploring the potential of submitting an application to the US Economic Development Administration's Economic Development Assistance Program to support construction of a decentralized wastewater system. The proposal is for a co-application with Lowndes County, AL via Wastewater Education. Pre-application deadline is the end of July.

Recreation

- The MRV Trail Collaborative 's initial trail inventory has been created and an associated letter and questionnaire has been sent to all MRVTC organizations. Very few responses have been received. A Trail Summit is being re-scheduled for November at Sugarbush and will focus on trail projects and opportunities for trail enhancement work during the Summer 2012.

Valley Futures Network

- The third installment of the *Local Community Initiatives* course scheduled for this fall is back on thanks to a new instructor coming onboard (Erin Buckwalter, who participated in the first edition of the course). We are very fortunate to be able to continue this important partnership between the Mad River Valley and UVM. This third installment of UM's Local Community Initiative's course allows students to take an active role in local projects addressing a variety of essential community issues. The four projects for 2011 are:
 - Compost Power
Students will research the Jean Pain Method, develop educational materials for agricultural enterprises in the MRV, survey potential users, and provide a final report.
 - Waitsfield Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program
Students will research PACE programs nationwide, develop a survey of residents to gauge awareness and evaluate interest, identify knowledge gaps, and provide a report that will serve to inform best practices and next steps.
 - Mad Rive Valley Health Center
Students will develop a snapshot of the MRV from a health perspective by mapping local health resources, developing a strategy and survey to assess community health needs, collect data, and providing a final report and recommendations for improving the health status of MRV residents.
 - MRV Solar Farm
Students will research other co-operatively owned/managed solar projects nationwide, survey and compile responses regarding potential interest in such a project, develop education materials, and provide a report on education materials and survey responses.
- The kick-off event takes place on 9/14 at Knoll Farm and serves as the first official connection between the MRV and the 18 students enrolled in Local Community Initiatives.

Economic Development

- The MRVPD Economic Development sub-committee met on 8/2 to explore options for identifying existing and potential data for inventorying the economic health of the MRV and developing an application to the Municipal Planning Grant to assist the MRV towns in meeting the newly required Economic Development Town Plan goals. Joshua is in communication with Jeffery Carr of Economic & Policy Resources to develop a scope for the consortium MPG application, whose deadline has been postponed to Oct. 31.

Rural Resource Commission

- Mad River Glen's CLG funded historic designation project is moving forward. A contractor has been selected and work will be done through the summer and fall. Ellen Strauss and Joshua are administering this grant.
- Working on the Warren Dam CLG funded historic designation project. A contractor has been selected and the work is ongoing. Ellen Strauss is administering this grant.
- The MRV Rural Resource Commission is offering to provide assistance to historic structures that were impacted by the flood.

Other

- CVRPC is in the process of submitting a federal grant application to the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program to fund the development of a Sustainable Regional Plan for Central Vermont. MRVPD has been added as a partner in the grant application. Joshua will be attending a meeting on this initiative on 9/20 at CVRPC office.
- Joshua participated in a meeting with CVRPC regarding the Regional Technology Plan that they are developing.
- The Town of Waitsfield is looking to re-apply for funding in partnership with ANR water quality to do streambank stabilization along the Bridge Street Marketplace section of the Mad River via HMGP funds (Oct. deadline). This is part of a project that was applied for last year to the PDM-C program, which also included low impact development master planning and stormwater mitigation – both of which have been removed from the retooled application.