

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

Municipal

- Joshua met with Waitsfield's Zoning Administrator Susan Senning on a few occasions to provide technical support regarding floodplain regulations in the wake of Irene.
- Joshua attended a 10/17 meeting to discuss hydraulics at the Waitsfield Covered Bridge with a VTrans Hydraulics Engineer, members of the Waitsfield Selectboard, property owners, and town staff.
- 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).
- The annual Tri-Town Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for 11/3 at the Waitsfield School. The intent of this annual meeting is twofold: increase communication between the municipal entities and minimize the number of presentations required of local organizations.

Flood Recovery

- Joshua has continued to provide support for relief effort coordination and getting the word out on opportunities. Support has been provided to the MRV HQ with communication between organizations.
- Joshua attended a meeting with FEMA on 10/6 to discuss long-term recovery.
- A meeting is being held on 10/19 to discuss development of a long-term recovery committee with the help of FEMA. Organizing such a committee can create an inclusive, coordinated effort to best help those affected, efficiently employ the wealth of expertise and volunteer spirit within our community, build a more broad network for organizations already established in the community, and develop a template that can be efficiently re-employed when another disaster occurs.
- 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, Warrens is expired as is Faystons). 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.
- Warren's SB approved interim floodplain regulations in order to expedite reconstruction. Waitsfield's SB did not approve such regulations.

- The Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership is hosting an evening to look at flooding in the MRV and exploring the evolution of river management on 11/10 at the 1824 House. Presentations will be led by river scientists from the VT Department of Environmental Conservation, local river experts & historians

Energy

- The MRV Energy Series is in high gear. The first two events, Local Energy History & The Foundation for our Energy Future (9/12) and Residential & Community Solar Projects (9/20) were both successes. The Solar presentation included a photovoltaics 101 presentation, detail on presentation on the Mad River Energy Network's efforts to establish a 150kw cooperative solar farm, and VPIRG's Solar Communities Program. The Solar Communities Program, which streamlines the process for home and businesses owners to go solar through permitting support and group discounts, is scheduled to expand to the broader Mad River Valley towns in 2012.
- The third event takes place on 10/24 and focuses on Financing Energy Projects & VT's Energy Plan. Marianne Tyrell of VT Law School will discuss broad finance options for renewables, Peter Adamczyk of Efficiency Vermont will explore the role of PACE in financing options for weatherization, efficiency and renewable energy projects. Last, Elizabeth Miller, Commissioner of the VT Department of Public Service, will provide an overview of VT's Comprehensive Energy Plan.
- The last two events in the series are Biomass & Hot Water (November 15th) and Energy Conservation, Efficiency, & Weatherization (December 13th). The 12/13 event will include a weatherization trailer set up for the day for residents to learn methods for buttoning up their homes.
- 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 month 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. The plan is available for comment until 11/4. 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 next week.

Agriculture

- The Mad River Food Hub has received its meat processing permits and is officially open. The value-add meat processing equipment is installed. MRFH has a full time Facility Manager on site every day. This week the Hub has processed lamb, pigs and chicken.
- MRFH has a new website up and running at www.madriverfoodhub.com.
- The Mad River Food Hub is hosting a food safety course on 11/16: Essentials of Food Safety for Food Producers was developed by UVM Extension and specifically designed for value-added food processors working in a shared-use food processing facility. The course will cover the primary food safety hazards of concern in food processing facilities, as well

as the key measures to reduce these hazards. The basics of sanitation will be covered, as well as the "Good Manufacturing Practices" that are required by USDA and FDA regulations to ensure food safety. The course will also provide an introduction to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans, when such a plan is required, and how to develop and implement these plans.

- CVRPC's Food Systems Planning Proposal through the VT Dept. of Health has been funded. With this grant, CVRPC proposes to work with the existing food system groups in the Region to inventory existing initiatives, organizations, and collect data to establish the foundation of a Central Vermont Food Systems Plan. The purpose of the plan will be to support farms and the preservation of farmland, strengthen local economies and increase access to healthy foods. MRVPD submitted a letter of commitment for the application, 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.
- MRPA is in the process of revamping their website, focusing on completion in December.
- Cadets from Norwich provided trail work assistance on 10/9.
- Mad Dash fundraiser on 9/18 was a success (over 200 participants), as was SIPtemberfest at MRG on 9/24.
- MRPA currently has 382 members.
- MRPA's summer intern has developed a MRPA brochure and promoted the Path sections via Facebook and the MRPA blog (<http://madriverpath.blogspot.com/>).
- 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. Despite extensive outreach to MRV lodges and restaurants located on the route requesting financial support based on a fair-share quota, very few contributions have been received.
- The Mad Bus' Warren Shuttle route has been cut for the upcoming season. GMTA had a public meeting addressing any concerns with this change on 9/29.
- The next MRVTAC meeting is scheduled for 10/24 and will focus on finalizing the route for the upcoming season.
- Joshua has been working on outreach and TAC administration.
- 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. A final design was presented to the Selectboard on 9/26. 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

- Joshua met with members of VNRC and DEC on 9/20 to finalize maps as part of the

Forest Wildlife Communities project.

- The FWC met on 10/2 and finalized conservation maps and accompanying report, worked on the web project, and provided an update on landowner outreach and realtor trainings.
- 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 committees is scheduled for 10/25 at Lareau Farm and will include updates from individual commissions, an update on the Forest Wildlife Communities Project, the status of the Welcome Wagon Kit project, and post-flood efforts.

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-winter.
- Decided to not submit an application to the US Economic Development Administration's Economic Development Assistance Program to support construction of a decentralized wastewater system. The proposal was for a co-application with Lowndes County, AL via Wastewater Education. Working with Wastewater Education to explore additional avenues for support.

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 scheduled for November 15th at Sugarbush and will focus on trail projects and opportunities for trail enhancement work during the Summer 2012.
- The Trail Collaborative met on 10/3 and discussed its ongoing work and the 11/15 summit.

Valley Futures Network

- The third installment of the Local Community Initiatives course is underway. The 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, Waitsfield Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program, Mad Rive Valley Health Center, and MRV Solar Farm.
- The kick-off event took place on 9/14 at Knoll Farm and served as the first official connection between the MRV and the 18 students enrolled in Local Community Initiatives. Over 35 people attended.
- Joshua guest lectured about VFN and related MRV initiatives on 10/13 at UVM's Sustainable Community Development course in the Community Development Applied

Economics Department (CDAE).

Economic Development

- MRVPD is attempting to undertake a baseline economic analysis of the MRV that will identify data sources, develop a set of indicators, and create a replicable methodology. This work will serve to measure the MRV's economic health in order to provide the groundwork for identifying growth inhibitors and establishing the foundation for location, type and scale of desired growth. MRVPD is preparing a grant application to hire a consultant to undertake the proposed MRV Economic through the VT Dept. of Economic, Housing & Community Development's Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) program. This is a consortia grant application (Towns of Warren & Fayston via MRVPD) for \$15k. The application deadline is 10/31/11. Joshua and Bill met with an economic consultant on 9/30 in order to scope out the project. Joshua has been meeting with the appropriate boards in Warren and Fayston – approval has been granted by Fayston's PC & SB and Warren's PC. Joshua will be meeting with Warren's SB on 10/24.

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

- Joshua attended a meeting on 9/20 in regards to CVRPC's application for a federal grant to the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program to fund the development of a Sustainable Regional Plan for Central Vermont. MRVPD provided a letter of support and is included as a partner in the grant application.
- The Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership met to discuss developing a community meeting on flooding in the MRV (scheduled for 11/10) and prioritizing conservation projects.
- The Town of Waitsfield has re-applied 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. 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.
- Joshua attended a talk on 10/13 at the VT Statehouse by Richard Heinberg of the Post Carbon Institute entitled Life After Growth: Building Community Resilience in a Worlds of Declining Energy.