

Friends of the Mad River (FMR) is a private, non-profit organization committed to protecting, improving and enhancing the ecological, recreational, and community values of the Mad River and its watershed. FMR has been working on issues relating to the Mad River and its watershed since 1990 and continues to provide a voice for the river in many different capacities.

Many thanks to our members for **twenty** years of support! Over the years, we have enjoyed collaborating with state and local partners and community members on a variety of efforts including:

- planting thousands of trees and willow whips in the riparian buffer
- developing and implementing “The Best River Ever”, an award winning conservation plan designed to protect and restore the Mad River and its watershed
- wildlife tracking and research with Keeping Track
- participation in the stormwater and wastewater planning process with Sugarbush Resort
- the conservation of key areas including Warren Falls, Blueberry Lake and Lareau Park, ensuring the protection of and public access to these important natural resources.

2010 Achievements include:

Mad River Watch

Mad River Watch is a volunteer water quality-monitoring program that has been collecting and archiving water quality data since 1985. In 2010, volunteers collected water samples throughout the summer at thirty-six sites along the Mad River and its tributaries. As in past years, in 2010 volunteers monitored water temperature, pH, and *E. coli* bacteria. In addition, eighteen sites were sampled for phosphorus and turbidity. MRW results are published in the Valley Reporter, on FMR’s website, displayed on signs at popular swimming holes, and submitted to the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for further analysis and archiving.

Didymosphenia geminata (a.k.a Didymo or Rock Snot) is a nuisance alga that was discovered in the Mad River in July 2008. In some areas of the world, Didymo has turned pristine streams into nasty, algae-choked waters. In 2009 and 2010, Mad River Watch volunteers were tasked

with completing visual surveys to watch for Didymo “blooms” (blooms are the proliferation of Didymo in any given area). Didymo blooms were not detected in 2009 or 2010. Mad River Watch volunteers will continue to monitor Didymo in the future.

Annual River Clean Up

Many thanks to the wonderful volunteers who came out to help during the annual River Clean Up on May 1st (Green Up Day). Volunteers worked from Warren through Moretown, on foot and in canoes, pulling hundreds of pounds of trash from the river and its banks. Please join us on Saturday, May 7th for the 2011 River Clean Up.

River Corridor Planning and Protection

This year FMR continued work on a 2-year grant funded project to implement key corridor protection strategies outlined in the Upper Mad River Corridor Plan. Corridor protection is a form of passive restoration, where vegetation is re-established along the river banks and structures are sited away from potential erosion and flooding hazards. The river is allowed room to move and adjust to changing environmental conditions, enhancing the stability and resiliency of the river system as a whole—reducing hazards related to flooding and erosion, and enhancing water quality and wildlife habitat. Through this project, several areas were targeted for outreach to landowners, and as a result of this effort, one landowner has moved forward with a corridor conservation project. Thanks to the Department of Environmental Conservation for their generous support for this project.

Fluvial Erosion Hazards

FMR supported the efforts of the Waitsfield Planning Commission in adopting Fluvial Erosion Hazard zoning bylaws, which will help protect future investments and infrastructure by ensuring that new development is located outside areas vulnerable to impacts from erosion. The Town of Fayston also has Fluvial Erosion Hazard zoning bylaws in place. FMR plans to work with the Warren Planning Commission towards implementing similar protections in the Town of Warren.

Riparian Tree Planting Projects

In 2010, more than 100 volunteers helped FMR plant nearly 1,000 plants at two sites: the Kingsbury Farm in Warren, and the town pond in Waitsfield. The Kingsbury Farm project was funded by the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a federal agricultural assistance program that provides a small annual incentive

payment to farmers who create a streamside buffer. Since buffers with large trees and shrubs provide more habitat benefits and water quality protections than grass buffers, the CREP program also provides funding for the purchase of trees and shrubs for streamside reforestation projects. At the Kingsbury Farm, a variety of locally grown, native species were planted including sugar maple, American elm, viburnum, dogwood, black cherry and white pine.

Outreach and Education

FMR worked with several school groups including Crossett Brook Middle School Students, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps at Harwood Union High School and Lee Van Dine's 6th grade class at Waitsfield Elementary School to complete stream studies, plant trees, and ultimately better understand how to be watershed stewards.

Community partnerships

FMR continued its work with watershed towns and partner organizations including the Vermont Foodbank (Kingsbury Community Farm riparian planting project); the Forest, Wildlife and Communities project; the Mad River Valley Planning District; the Mad River Path Association and the Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership.

Please contact us if you would like to get involved with Friends of the Mad River. We welcome your comments and ideas. The Friends' office is in the General Wait House in Waitsfield.

Respectfully submitted by:
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Friends of the Mad River is a membership organization. Donations and membership support can be sent to our mailing address: PO Box 255, Waitsfield, VT 05673.

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