

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-one** 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
- 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
- stormwater planning in Waitsfield
- completion of a watershed-wide road erosion assessment to characterize and prioritize water quality threats

2011 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 2011, volunteers collected water samples throughout the summer at thirty-six sites along the Mad River and its tributaries. As in past years, in 2011 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.

River Clean Up—Spring and Post-Irene

Many thanks to the wonderful volunteers who came out to help during the annual River Clean Up on Green Up Day. Unfortunately, an ENORMOUS amount of trash and debris was mobilized and deposited during Tropical Storm Irene. Volunteers from the Mad River Valley and around the state worked throughout the fall to begin cleaning up, filling an entire 30 yard dumpster and more. There is still much to be done, so

look for ongoing river clean up events starting on Green Up Day (Saturday, May 5th, 2012) and continuing throughout the summer months.

Flood Resiliency

While “Flood Resiliency” has become a popular buzz-phrase since Irene, the strategies outlined are nothing new; FMR has been working on these strategies for many years. Strategies include: avoiding flooding and erosion hazards (getting out of the way), improving transportation infrastructure (building larger bridges and culverts and better ditches to accommodate floodwaters) and properly managing stormwater, among others.

Avoid Hazards

By limiting development in the river corridor and the floodplain, we allow the river to be a river, and avoid flooding and erosion conflicts all together. This is the most cost-effective, sensible approach. FMR partnered with the DEC in 2008 to complete the Upper Mad River Corridor Plan, which focuses conservation efforts on the most important areas to increase flood resiliency. FMR has been reaching out to and working with landowners in these areas to protect the corridor.

Improve Transportation Infrastructure

Properly sized bridges and culverts and properly designed ditches are more resilient against flood and erosion damage. FMR completed a Road Erosion Assessment in 2011 and is working with watershed towns to address problem areas.



Failed culvert under Tremblay Road, 05/21/2011.

(Photo: V. Capels)

Address Stormwater

Stormwater is runoff from impervious surfaces such as roads and rooftops. Developed watersheds have a lot of impervious surface, resulting in lots of stormwater. Untreated stormwater runoff can pollute our waterways and change the hydrology of an area such that river can become more “flashy”; a flashy river rises more quickly and to a higher peak flow. By infiltrating stormwater into the soil instead of letting it

runoff (closer to how an undeveloped forest would operate), flashiness can be avoided, and flood peaks reduced. In 2011 FMR partnered with the University of Vermont and the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District to complete a stormwater assessment in Waitsfield. With additional funding, the project hopes to implement at least one stormwater solution in 2012.

Fluvial Erosion Hazards

Tropical Storm Irene highlighted the vulnerability of our community to flooding and erosion, and the need to protect future development from these hazards. Fluvial Erosion Hazard zoning limits development in areas that are prone to damage from erosion, when a river moves in the corridor and erodes land. Erosion damage is catastrophic; structures can be entirely washed away. Waitsfield has adopted Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zoning. FMR plans to work with the Warren Planning Commission towards implementing similar protections in the Town of Warren.



Mad River at the Bridge Street Marketplace, 09/22/2011.

(Photo: V. Capels)

Riparian Tree Planting Projects

In 2011, volunteers planted hundreds of trees and shrubs at the Kingsbury Farm in Warren, and on the town-owned Austin parcel in Waitsfield. Riparian buffers improve river habitat by shading the river and providing a food source for critters. They also help protect water quality by preventing erosion and filtering run off. In some areas, healthy riparian buffers slowed Tropical Storm Irene's floodwaters, but in other areas narrow buffers were completely washed away. In 2012, FMR plans to ramp up planting efforts and work with volunteers to plant several hundred trees to replace lost buffers and strengthen existing ones.

Outreach and Education

FMR worked with the Harwood Middle School 7th grade class on a comprehensive river unit, called Mad River Matters. Students completed river assessments and mapped their data online using Google maps. Students also researched a current events river topics and made

presentation at the event “It’s a Mad River: a look at flooding and erosion in the Mad River Valley and the evolution of river management.”

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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Mad River at the Covered Bridge. 08/28/2011.

(Photo: Chris Stecher)