

**MAD RIVER VALLEY PLANNING DISTRICT**  
**2008 Annual Report**

The [Mad River Valley Planning District](#) was created to carry out a program of planning directed toward the physical, social, economic, fiscal, environmental, cultural and aesthetic wellbeing of the Towns of Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren. In its twenty-fifth year the Planning District welcomed Joshua Schwartz as its Executive Director and revived its commitment to the Valley Towns, inter-municipal projects, and coordinated development.

Following is a summary of the Mad River Valley Planning District projects and initiatives during 2008.

**Selectboard Funding Forum**

The Planning District organized a Three Town Selectboard Meeting in November to provide an opportunity for groups and organizations to present their annual funding requests. Participants included - MRV Solid Waste Alliance (John Malter), MRV Health Center (Sue Frechette & Chuck Martell), MRV Seniors (Valerie Hale & Helmut Hietzker), MRV Recreation District (Ken Felderman), GMTA (Chris Cole, Tawnya Kristen, Steve Gladczuk, & Margo Wade), VTrans (Nancy Rice), and Central Vermont Humane Society (J. Schwartz for Marcia Bellas). In addition, Peter Laskowski provided an update on the Mad River Community Police Association, Inc. This meeting proved to be an effective way for Valley groups to present their funding requests and for the three Selectboards to talk about Valley issues.

**Continuing Work from 2007**

**Mad River Byway:** Route 100 and Route 17 within the Valley were included in the Mad River Byway designation of the National Byway Program at the end of 2007, making the routes eligible for federal grant dollars for signage, kiosks, trail enhancements, and possible easements to assist the completion of the Mad River Path. The Planning District's ED served on the Byway Steering Committee, developing kiosk and interpretive signs to be placed in key locations along the corridor. Signage and kiosks will be erected in 2009. A grant request was submitted in conjunction with the Town of Warren to develop a welcome center on Route 100.

**Forest Wildlife Community Project:** The Planning District continued to serve as a key partner in this planning initiative, focused on creating a coordinated approach to wildlife and forestland conservation through assisting in conservation efforts across town boundaries and providing mapping data, planning information, and guidance that could benefit landowners and local conservation planning efforts. The project developed numerous landowner education workshops, a Natural Resources Values Forum, and a summit in the fall. This project was made salient due to the existence of quality wildlife maps for Fayston, Waitsfield, and Warren (funded through Wildlife Habitat and Natural Resources Grants in 2007 and 2008).

**Kingsbury Community Farm:** 2008 marked the year in which the Vermont Foodbank was selected as the next owner of this prominent farm, combining agricultural production with community and educational uses. Since 2007, the Planning District's ED served on a committee with representatives from the Vermont Land Trust, the Friends of the Mad River, the Warren Conservation Commission, the Mad River Path Association, Yestermorrow, the Mad River Valley Housing Coalition, and the Localvores in making a community purchase of the Kingsbury Farm. The project has been made possible as a result of extensive

community input from Valley residents and organizations. Fundraising efforts are ongoing, with a finalized purchase by the Vermont Foodbank slated for spring 2009.

### **Mad River Path**

The completion of the Mad River Path continues to be a high priority of the Planning District. The Planning District's ED has been attending Path Board meetings to offer assistance, especially in regards to working on specific properties and finding funding sources for the Village path and Warren sections. In conjunction with the Path Association and the Town of Warren, the Planning District applied for \$100k to purchase a key parcel in the Town of Warren through VTrans' Transportation Enhancement Grant program. Awards are expected in 2009. In addition, ED is currently playing a role in the Path's strategic planning process.

### **Transportation**

The Planning District has served as a liaison between the Valley and VTrans for the launch of their new carpool/vanpool program, entitled Go Vermont. The Planning District hosted a community meeting in August and the ED is working with residents and businesses to increase ridership options. The Planning District also serves on the Mad River Valley Transportation Advisory Committee, which participates in the planning of the Mad Bus transportation service.

### **Mad River Valley Housing Coalition**

The Coalition has been meeting regularly throughout the year to implement strategies in the Mad River Valley Housing Study. In 2008 the Coalition has focused on housing awareness, an Accessory Apartment program, and a potential Land Bank program. The Coalition received funding (a \$1000 grant from CVCLT and a \$500 contribution from MRVPD) to develop Valley-specific accessory housing information and related programs, to be released in 2009.

### **Energy Self-sufficiency**

The Planning District continues to work with Efficiency Vermont, Yestermorrow, Town Energy Committees, Carbon Shredders, and VFN's Energy Group and others to coordinate conservation and energy related activities. The Planning District partnered with these organizations to develop a Valley Weatherization workshop in the fall and has received funding to organize community volunteers to directly install low-cost energy saving measures in homes within the Valley. The Planning District ED also serves as a member of the Central Vermont Regional Energy Network.

### **Valley Futures Network**

In 2007, the Planning District convened a meeting of 25 Valley representatives to discuss growing leadership in the Valley. The diverse group included people from all 4 Valley towns, landowners, renters, part-time residents, business people, professionals, non-profit folks, contractors etc and met over a full day at Knoll Farm. Since then various project oriented committees have formed, a mission statement and vision have been developed, and two more retreats have taken place in an effort to engage the entire community in growing individual leadership around the key issues affecting the landscape of our community: housing, energy, agriculture, transportation, and local commerce. Related projects have included Waitsfield's Community Bike Program, the Walk 'n Roll Festival, and over 25 events hosted by the Mad River Valley Localvore Project.

## **Regional Activities**

The Planning District ED served on the Central Vermont Brownfields Committee (Warren received two grants for the Town Garage area and the old Town Dump) and the Central Vermont Collaborative and Housing Partnership, which works to bring affordable housing to the area and assists with legislation to benefit housing. In addition, the ED served on the Central Vermont Community Land Trust's Board of Trustees.

## **2009 Activities**

The Planning District will continue to focus its energies towards the completion of the Mad River Path, increased transit options, inter-town collaboration and education, creation of work force housing, energy initiatives, support of sustainable agriculture, update and review data trends, and providing planning support to its member towns. The Director is also involved in VEDA (The Valley Economic Development Association), the Community Local Government/Rural Resource Commission, and the Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership.

## **Budget**

The Planning District is funded through contributions from its member towns and Sugarbush Resort. This year's funding request is \$19,100 from each funder, an amount which has remained unchanged for eight years.

## **Steering Committee**

MRVPD activities are overseen by a seven voting member Steering Committee, consisting of a Selectboard member and Planning Commissioner from each Town and a representative from the Chamber of Commerce. Representatives from Sugarbush and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) serve ex-officio. Meetings are open to the public and are usually held the third Thursday of each month at the General Wait House in Waitsfield at 7pm. The Executive Director, Joshua Schwartz, can be reached at 496-7173 or [mrvpd@madriver.com](mailto:mrvpd@madriver.com). Additional information may be found at the Planning District's new website: [www.mrvpd.org](http://www.mrvpd.org).

Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee

Jared Cadwell (Fayston), Chair  
Jim Sanford (Warren), Vice Chair  
Chuck Martel (Fayston)  
Burt Bauchner (Warren)  
Brian Parker (Waitsfield)  
Steve Shea (Waitsfield)  
Jim Halavonich (MRV Chamber)  
Jason Lisai (Sugarbush)  
Laurie Emery (CVRPC)

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director