

## **MAD RIVER VALLEY PLANNING DISTRICT 2009 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 addition to working diligently on all aspects of its FY 2010 Work Plan, MRVPD has continued building relationships with and between the Valley's various municipal boards, volunteer groups, and business community.

Following is a summary of Mad River Valley Planning District projects and initiatives during 2009.

### **Selectboard Funding Forum**

The Planning District organized the fourth annual Three Town Selectboard Meeting in October to provide an opportunity for groups and organizations to present their annual funding requests. Participants included – MRV Resource Management Alliance (John Malter), Warren 4<sup>th</sup> (Susan Klein), MRV Health Center (Sue Frechette & Chuck Martell), MRV Seniors (Helmut Heitzker), MRV Recreation District (Ken Felderman), GMTA (Chris Cole, Tawnya Kristen, Meredith Burkett, Steve Gladczuk, & Margo Wade), and MRVPD (Joshua Schwartz). This meeting proved to be an effective means for Valley groups to present their funding requests and for the three Selectboards to talk about Valley-wide issues.

### **Data**

In collaboration with UVM's Center for Rural Studies, MRVPD undertook a process of overhauling its data program. As specified by its Memorandum of Understanding, MRVPD maintains a database of locally important data and develops an annual data report. The 2009 Data Project consisted of an inventory of MRVPD's existing data and reports, production of an updated Valley Data Report, development of a guide for data reporting to ensure consistent high quality data collection, and creation of a database to house existing and future data. The updated Valley Data Report was completed in November (available at [www.mrvpd.org](http://www.mrvpd.org)).

## **Mad River Path**

The Steering Committee continues to hold the Path as one of its top priorities. MRVPD is represented at Path Board meetings, participates in the Path's strategic planning process – culminating in its 2009 Five Year Strategic Plan, holds a seat in the Land Owner Committee, and provides general assistance, especially in regards to working on specific properties and locating funding for the operation of the organization along with completing the Village Path and Warren sections. The Path Association has been without an Executive Director for the 2009 calendar year, but anticipates hiring for this position by late winter.

## **UVM Course**

Through a new partnership between UVM and MRVPD, the MRV served as the focus of a fall UVM Service Learning Class entitled Local Community Initiatives. Fifteen UVM students took active roles in local projects addressing a variety of essential community issues in the Mad River Valley. The students broke into groups with resident partners focusing on three projects throughout the semester: Structure of the Valley Futures Network, Mad River Path Association and Membership, and an Inventory of Renewable Energy Projects. Final reports and presentations are available at [www.mrvpd.org](http://www.mrvpd.org).

## **Energy**

MRVPD continues to work with Efficiency Vermont, Yestermorrow, Town Energy Committees, Carbon Shredders, and Localvolts and others to coordinate conservation and energy related activities.

- The Vermont Community Energy Mobilization Pilot Project resulted in nine weekends of community volunteers performing 66 energy evaluation home visits and installing hundreds of CFL light bulbs in addition to other low-cost energy saving measures.
- A Mad River Energy Study is being developed, which serves to be the go-to reference for energy information in the Mad River Valley, including current project, proposals, and funding opportunities.  
[www.mrvenergy.org](http://www.mrvenergy.org)
- The Northern Forest Alliance's MRV Community Biomass Project has completed the first of a three-year action research project, which seeks to enhance municipal energy independence throughout the Valley. Initial results have identified residential wood consumption rates. Further studies will analyze these numbers in comparison to

the ability of the Valley to provide these wood resources as well as explore related enterprises.

- Fall '09 saw two Button-Up Weatherization Workshops in the Valley for the second year in a row.
- Grant applications have been submitted for energy retrofits, energy financing, and energy production equipment by MRV towns and schools through funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

### **Mad River Byway**

Route 100 & Rt. 17 within the Valley are included in the Mad River Byway designation of the National Byway Program. As a member of the Byway Steering Committee, MRVPD is helping develop kiosk and interpretive signs to be placed in key locations within the byway. Many of the trailblazer signs were erected this fall and the kiosk and interpretive signs, identifying local information of interest, will be put up in the spring. The Byway designation provides funding opportunities for a variety of projects within the corridor. MRVPD is assisting in an effort to include a Mad River Byway sign on I-89.

### **Forest Wildlife Community Project**

The Planning District is serving as a key partner in the Forest, Wildlife, & Communities 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 benefits landowners and local conservation planning efforts. In the past year the project has created wildlife habitat maps, held a summit, developed a suite of non-regulatory tools, and coordinated discussions between MRV towns' CC, PC, DRB, and SB. Three grants have been submitted to further the efforts. This project is 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).

### **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, various community events, and three 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 numerous events hosted by the Mad River Valley Localvore Project.

### **Budget**

For the previous 8 years MRVPD has been level funded. The funding request for 2010 is \$21,010, representing a 10% increase from all four of its funders, Fayston, Waitsfield, Warren, and Sugarbush. 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 website: [www.mrvpd.org](http://www.mrvpd.org).

### Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director