

Mad River Valley Planning District 2010 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 2010 the Planning District continued its work on a broad base of projects. With the assistance of a summer intern, MRVPD was able to deepen its involvement on all aspects of the FY 2011 Work Plan, including building relationships with and between the Valley's various municipal boards, volunteer groups, and business community. Highlights of the year include developing and funding the MRV Trail Collaborative, playing a key role in MRV's energy discussions, finalizing Mad River Byway signage, planting the MRV Community Orchard, and connecting local leaders with UVM students to address community challenges.

Following is a summary of Mad River Valley Planning District projects and initiatives during 2010.

Grants

In 2010 MRVPD secured over \$15k in grants and provided support for efforts that resulted in over \$6 million to the MRV. MRVPD is awaiting word on \$15k in funding requests. A few highlights:

- Obtained a \$15k grant request from the National Forest Foundation in conjunction with VNRC to further the Forests, Wildlife & Communities Project.
- Obtained a technical assistance grant through the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program. This opportunity will fund the Mad River Valley Collaborative, designed to enhance networking and connections between MRV trail organizations.
- Assisted the Town of Waitsfield in obtaining an \$8k Municipal Planning Grant to undertake a decentralized wastewater assessment.
- Assisted the Mad River Valley Health Center in securing \$17.5k to fund renovations through the VT Dept. of B&GS Human Services & Educational Facilities Grant Program.
- Assisted VNRC in securing a \$93k grant from USDA to implement elements of the Forests, Wildlife & Communities Project.
- Assisted the MRV towns in submitting requests through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) Competitive

Local Government Sub-Grant program. 89% of the MRV's applications were funded, totaling \$304,107.45.

- Submitted a \$12k grant request to the UVM to develop food system mapping projects.
- Assisted the Town of Waitsfield in applying for streambank restoration and low-impact development improvements through FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation-Competitive (\$200k) grant program and ANR's Clean & Clear Program (\$70k - received).
- Provided grant writing assistance and letters of support to various Valley groups that applied for grants, such as Friends of the Mad River (Vermont Community Fund, Lake Champlain Basin Program, VT Clean & Clear), Mad River Path Association (Vermont Community Fund, Recreation Trail Grant - \$18k, MRV Rec. District - \$15k), and Waitsfield Telecom (Broadband Stimulus Award - \$5.5 Million).

Selectboard Funding Forum

The Planning District organized the fifth annual Three Town Selectboard Meeting in November. The Valley-wide meeting provided an opportunity for groups and organizations to present their annual funding requests. Participants included the MRV Resource Management Alliance, MRV Health Center, MRV Seniors, MRV Recreation District, Central VT Community Land Trust, Central VT Home Health & Hospice, GMTA, and MRVPD. This meeting proved to be an effective means for local groups to present their funding requests and for the three Selectboards to talk about Valley-wide issues.

Data

MRVPD has incorporated recommendations from UVM's Center for Rural Studies' overhaul of MRVPD's data program. As specified by its Memorandum of Understanding, MRVPD maintains a database and develops an annual data report. The project resulted in 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 is available at www.mrvpd.org.

Mad River Path

The Steering Committee continues to hold the Path as one of its top priorities. MRVPD attends MRPA Board meetings, holds a seat on the Land Owner Committee, and provides general assistance, especially in

regard to working on specific properties, fundraising opportunities, securing grants, formation of a dog-owner committee, and exploring opportunities for collaboration with municipalities. MRVPD has provided support to the MRPA Executive Director who came on board early in 2010.

UVM Course

Through a partnership between UVM and MRVPD, the MRV has for the second year in a row 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. In 2010 the groups focused on Local Food Market Study, Mad River Path Association Interpretive Materials, and the Mad Bikes program. Final reports and presentations are available at www.mrvpd.org.

Energy

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

- MRVPD hosted a MRV energy presentation exploring current consumption and exploring renewable energy opportunities.
- The Northern Forest Alliance's MRV Community Biomass Project has completed the second 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 and provided procurement guidelines for Harwood Union. 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.
- MRV towns and schools received grant funding of \$304k for energy retrofits, energy financing, and energy production through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Mad River Byway

Route 100 & Route 17 in the Valley are included in the Mad River Byway designation of the National Byway Program. As a member of the Byway Steering Committee, MRVPD has helped develop and design kiosk and interpretive signs along the byway. All of the trailblazer signs have now been erected and three of the eight interpretive signs or kiosks, identifying local information of interest, are now in place. The Byway

designation provides funding opportunities for a variety of projects within the corridor.

Conservation

MRVPD serves 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 could benefit landowners and local conservation planning efforts. In the past year the project has refined wildlife habitat maps, developed a suite of non-regulatory tools, and coordinating discussions between town's CC, PC, DRB, and SB. Three grants have been received to further the efforts, including landowner outreach, development of a conservation planning manual, and development of town build-out analysis.

Budget

For FY12 MRVPD requests level funding at \$21,010 from all four of its funders, Fayston, Waitsfield, Warren, and Sugarbush. A seven voting member Steering Committee, consisting of a Selectboard member and Planning Commissioner from each town and a representative from the Mad River Chamber of Commerce, oversees MRVPD activities. 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. Additional information may be found at MRVPD's website: 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)
Bob Ackland (Warren)	Laurie Emery (CVRPC)
Bill Parker (Waitsfield)	

Respectfully Submitted,
Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director