

- MRV Trails Collaborative and Community Recreation Visioning Update as of 12/16/22
We've been busy in the Mad River Valley working hard on many things, including the big Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant for the [MRV Recreation Hub](#), additional branded Kiosks, starting up Community Recreation Visioning (CRV), the close of the second steward MRV season, planning and fundraising for a Dog Park, and other important initiatives and transitions that we wanted to update you on (see below).

During January/February 2023 the MRV Trails Collaborative will meet via Zoom to continue its work. A Doodle poll will go out in Jan. to pick a date. Please email laura@mrvrd.org with any agenda topics you feel are important.

- The reason we are sending this update instead of having a meeting in December is that many of our partners are involved with the Rec Hub and/or Community Recreation Visioning projects. We are trying to keep communications to the broader group going without putting extra meetings on the calendar. We are certainly open to your thoughts on whether or not you agree with this approach.

All the best,
Laura Arnesen
Ex. Director MRVRD

Rec Hub Updates:

1 Downtown Trail: The Waitsfield Selectboard has chosen to wait for the results of the full scoping study by VTrans of the Route 100/Route 17 intersection before moving forward with the alignment proposed for the Downtown Trail as part of the original VOREC Grant application. They are still supportive of the Rec Hub project, but believe the results of that study will inform the Town of Waitsfield's next steps in terms of pedestrian and bike access, routes and safety along Route 100. Per Annie Decker-Dell'Isola, Waitsfield Town Administrator, the State has hired a consultant for that project with an expected start date of early 2023. The Waitsfield Selectboard supports the Mad River Path and the MRV Recreation District

pursuing an alternative route from the Rec Hub utilizing Fiddler's Walk as an option. The Fiddler's Walk route involves private landowners and does not involve town land. The Mad River Path's Ex. Director, Ross Saxton, had preliminary discussions with those landowners in 2021 as part of our research in citing the connection from the Rec Hub into Irasville. He is back into conversation with them now that the route as proposed in the grant is no longer available. Fiddler's Walk is not the first choice of the The Path or Recreation District because we think people will see the shortest route to town (just a human nature thing) and end up on Route 100 where there is virtually no shoulder. We are awaiting VOREC's decision to see if they will allow the \$52,000 of funding in the grant for the Downtown Trail to be transferred to Fiddler's Walk enhancements. VOREC funds must be spent by December 31, 2024.

2 Community Recreation Visioning (CRV): The following article appeared in the 11/23/22 edition of the Valley Reporter and describes CRV and where we are at this point in time.

Trail Mix: The Gold Standard for Conservation & Recreation, By Ross Saxton and Phil Huffman

- <https://www.valleyreporter.com/index.php/news/sports/17478-trail-mix-the-gold-standard-for-conservation-and-recreation>
- **3 MRV Chamber of Commerce** moved its office to the Rec Hub, at the corner of Route 100 and Route 17 (9 VT Route 17, Waitsfield), next to the Stark Mtn bike shop in early November. Extensive renovations, interactive displays, eye catching information kiosks, professional lighting, clear signage and other amenities are being planned for this space. The theme is Explore, Connect and Protect. A public open house is being planned for the spring/summer of 2023 when the work is complete. Meanwhile, the Chamber office is open and beginning to recruit volunteers for staffing this space in order to welcome MRV visitors in the busy season.
- **4 Bike/Pedestrian Bridge over the Mill Brook**, the parking, riparian buffer, and outside elements of the Rec Hub are being developed. Permits are in process and presentations to the Waitsfield DRB are being planned for the first quarter of 2023.

- As part of our CRV Steering Committee Meeting on 10/26, organizations did quick updates on projects and priorities. Here are those individual group updates:
- **Laura Arnesen, MRV Recreation District:**
MRVRD raised more than \$40,000 to complete an above ground irrigation system (non-potable water) for Mad River Park that will be operational in late Spring 2023. The parking lot at Mad River Park, 236 Airport Rd., Waitsfield, will be plowed to allow public access for winter sports. Also, MRVRD, the MRV Planning District, the Town of Warren, and a volunteer Dog Park Committee are developing a Dog Park in Warren. A site has been secured at Brooks Field, as well as a site plan and a fundraising plan. The Warren Dog Park crowdfunding campaign is underway, taking place 11/15/22 - 1/15/23. The campaign is made possible due to a successful Better Places grant administered by the VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development, which matches local fundraising 2:1 and utilizes the crowdfunding platform Patronicity. As of 12/16 the project is 90% to its goal - the group feels confident they will meet the match.
https://www.patronicity.com/project/help_us_bring_a_dog_park_to_mad_river_valley#!/

Ira Shadis, Friends of the Mad River:

On Thursday and Friday, October 27 and 28, FMR worked with a private landowner in Waitsfield and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to plant almost 500 trees as part of a riparian buffer restoration project along the Mad River. As the trees mature, they will help reduce erosion, filter pollution before it reaches the water, and offer habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial organisms.

Steve Sharp, MRV Backcountry Coalition (MRVBC):

MRVBC has been busy this fall with numerous events including

- - Wilderness First Aid course in September at MRG
- - BC Primer Workshop in November at MRG
- - BC Film Festival at the Big Picture Theater in November
- - Earn-Your-Turns Roundtable at SB in December

- MRVBC submitted a “pre-proposal” to VT Forest, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) proposing the establishment of a “managed backcountry ski zone” near the Old Callahan Trail on the lower eastern flank of Camel’s Hump. This is an area which FPR identified in the CHMU’s Long Range Management Plan as follows: “Consider options for management of existing backcountry skiing use, ongoing maintenance of existing skiable lines, and the addition of new lines in the vicinity of the old Callahan Trail.” This area is also identified in David Goodman’s well-known “Best Backcountry Skiing in the Northeast” guide book (probably since its original publication in the 1990s). FPR reviewed our pre-proposal and has invited MRVBC to submit a “full-proposal.” MRVBC is considering this option. NOTE: This area is outside of The Valley (beyond the Mad River’s watershed).

Chris Stephenson, Moretown Rec Committee:

Moretown Town Forest management plan is up for renewal, we are working as a subcommittee of the Select Board. We have a forester actively mapping harvest opportunities for consideration only, mapping the recreation trails, and the ECO outdoor classrooms used by Moretown Elementary School. The Town Forest plan requires inputs and approval from ANR and the VT Land Trust given this parcel was used as a deer yard protection area to offset the Moretown Landfill project from nearly a decade ago. Further, In coordination with the MRR a refresh of the bike skills park and nature trail, a new storywalk has been installed in partnership with the library, working with beethechange.org we installed two new pollinator gardens.

Clark Amadon, Trout Unlimited:

The Moretown 8 hydroelectric dam is about to go through FERC relicensing. This is a once in a generation process that dam owners are required to go through in order to continue to operate. In the case of Moretown 8, which is the dam about 1/2 down river from the Ward Access area in Moretown on Rt. 100B, critical issues are river flow and recreation. There are also studies re the fishery in this section of the river. Boating-wise the reach below Moretown is a very popular white water section. The Friends of the Mad River, MadDog Chapter of Trout Unlimited, The Vermont River Conservancy and American White Water are interveners in this process.

Ross Saxton, Mad River Path:

- We are researching the new Fiddler's Walk trail route with landowners to connect people between downtown Irasville and the new Rec Hub/Welcome Center and new bridge over the Mill Brook. This is an alternative to the originally proposed route along the hillside below the Blue Stone to Addison West.
- We were awarded the requested funds, \$3,924, from the State's Building and General Services (BGS) grant for new kiosks in 2023. This covers 50% of the costs for:
 - Boyce Hill Town Forest - major (Fayston Conservation Commission)
 - Battleground Condos - minor (MRV Backcountry Coalition/Catamount Trail Association)
 - Spaulding Greenway (east trailhead) - minor (Mad River Path)
 - Spaulding Greenway (west trailhead) - minor (Mad River Path)
 - Yestermorrow - minor (Mad River Path)
 - Featherbed Inn - minor (Mad River Riders)
 - Moretown School - major (Mad River Riders)
- The Spaulding Greenway off Tremblay Rd is now open—the newest addition to the Mad River Path. It's a flat, beautiful section with river access and fantastic views.
- The trail loop (a lollipop loop) on the hillside above Yestermorrow is open. Due to deer wintering yards, this trail is closed between December 15-April 15.
- We continue to add new permanent trail easements. The latest this year include at the Swanson's Inn trailhead for the Mill Brook Trail and a future section owned by Mac and Bobbi Rood off Folsom Brook Rd in Waitsfield.
- We collaborated with the Warren Library to install a new StoryWalk display at the Warren Path, which is refreshed with new stories throughout the year.
- **Phil Huffman, Waitsfield CC:**
 - The Waitsfield CC continues to work steadily on reestablishing a native floodplain forest on part of the Town's Austin Parcel, in collaboration with FMR, MRPA, and other partners. The next step will be planting about 100 seedlings on October 29th from 9-11 am. Volunteers welcome!

- The CC is working with a small group of family and friends of Virginia Farley's to develop a memorial to Virginia at the Town's Tardy property, across the Mad River from Lareau Farm Inn and across Rt 100 from Alpino Vino. Virginia, who died last spring, was a long-time leader in advancing conservation, recreation, and community values in the MRV and far beyond through her work with the VT Land Trust and other entities.
- The CC has an RFP out currently for a trail construction contractor to build new sections of footpaths on the Scrag Mountain Town Forest "Gateway Parcel" during the 2023 field season. This will be the first of three phases of trail construction work to create a more walker/hiker friendly trail network on the Town Forest, implementing the conclusions of a deliberative planning process over the past 18 months that the CC led with assistance from the trail firm Sinuosity and with substantial public input.

With questions please email Laura at laura@mrvrd.org