



MAD RIVER VALLEY RECREATION DISTRICT

November 2020 Update: Due to the pandemic, we saw increased use and demand for recreational resources in the Valley. New data collected from trail counters will be released shortly. A preliminary finding was a 40% increase at Blueberry Lake versus 2018 usage. The good news is the economic impact resulting from this increase at a time when many local businesses were struggling. +

2020 Accomplishments:

- Grant program: We fielded requests from a record number of applicants totalling more than \$85,000 and awarded \$47,424 to 13 recreation initiatives (\$14,000 was unused and will be rolled into the 2021 grant program, due to cancellations from COVID.)
- Established our first staff position for a Recreation Coordinator to increase our capacity to serve the community and help us move our Strategic Plan forward.
- Pivoted to help our Rec Partners communicate decisions amidst COVID, regarding availability and safe use of trails and recreational facilities.
- Organized a Trail Collaborative meeting via zoom in March to share updates about activities and identify shared goals, with a continuing priority on linking existing trails throughout the MRV network.
- Mad River Park had an ADA compliant ramp installed (handrail to be added in 2021) and park management responded to COVID. Usage was back to almost “normal” by fall.
- Hired Laura Arnesen, experienced manager/fundraiser and Warren resident, who started Oct. 1. She is meeting with Rec partners individually to learn their history and priorities; is spearheading administration of the Grant Program; will be part of the Chamber’s initiative on trails and swim hole usage; handoff from MRVPD on the Kiosk Program and leadership of the Trails Collaborative; planning surveys and other assessment initiatives; public relations activities already started, etc.

2021 Initiatives:

- Website - make improvements for better community access after broadly surveying needs.
- Needs Assessment - we will take on new outreach with recreation partners and the public to understand needs, identify opportunities for collaboration and adjust efforts accordingly.
- January 2021 Annual Meeting - we will try a Public Recreation Forum, since the focus of the Tri-Town Meeting changed. Planning a virtual community conversation about recreation topics.
- Trails Collaborative - continue to take on a leadership role from MRVPD to achieve the goals of Mad River Moves/Active Transportation Plan. Additionally, we will address parking pressures and other impacts from increased usage such as trash at Trailhead and recreational sites and coordinate a Trailhead Kiosk MOU among partner organizations that will include ongoing maintenance.
- Events and Activities being planned such as gear swaps and recreation celebrations.
- Mad River Park facility upgrades
- 2021 grant requests from 9 organizations seeking \$57,694, with several new applicants, including: Mad Marathon, Bill Koch League and MR Chorale. Decisions to be announced in Jan. 2021.
- Two vacancies on MRVRD Board: Whitney Phillips (now) and Jeff Whittingham 3/31/21.

2021 Budget Request to MRVRD Member Towns: Many thanks to the towns of Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren for funding the MRVRD programs and our first part-time staff member. In 2021, we will seek level funding of \$30,000 from each town to support our ongoing and increasing service to recreation in the Mad River Valley.