



MAD RIVER VALLEY RECREATION DISTRICT

Selectboard Update: November 2022

Overarching Themes:

- **We are nearing the end of our 3-5 year Strategic Plan. We are happy to report that we have made great strides in ALL of the key focus areas.**
- **Most notably, the MRVRD has significantly increased its capacity to support recreation in the Valley. Having an Executive Director has been instrumental in increasing our capacity!**
- **Additionally, the Rec. District's responsibility for administering the VOREC grant is an important measure of our increased capacity.**
- **As we look forward, a primary goal of the MRVRD is to work with our recreation partners to ensure a balance between recreation and stewardship of the environment.**

2022 Accomplishments

- Collaborated with six partners to apply to the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) for a MRV Recreation Hub. MRVRD received the largest grant statewide in this cycle, \$408,019. While the announcement was made in March 2022, due to staffing at the state, signing will take place in late 2022. Bi-weekly, often weekly meetings with partners has become a priority.
- Completed fundraising for the irrigation project at Mad River Park (\$44,100).
- Managed Mad River Park: gear swap, new lost and found box, opened MRP for winter, planned for and raised funds for a needed irrigation system to be completed in 2023.
- MRVRD launched a new website in early 2022 to keep residents and visitors aware of our many programs and opportunities. We now have a dedicated page on the Rec Hub.
- Awarded \$39,500 in recreation grant funds to 11 groups, plus a contribution to support the Community Recreation Visioning initiative. The grants serve youth and adult programs and sustain vital recreation facilities used by the community and visitors. Funding requests from 14 applicants came in totaling more than \$73,000.
- Continued participation in stewardMRV, an initiative to increase the cleanliness and environmental quality of recreation sites. Our hope is to expand stewardMRV to thank landowners and launch programs regarding dogs on leash and disposal of waste.
- Continued leadership of the MRV Trails Collaborative with an emphasis on balancing trails and environmental priorities and keeping partners abreast of Rec Hub developments. MRVRD's website has a drop-down page for the Recreation Hub.
- Hosted an E-bike lending library during August where approximately 40 people were able to try E-bikes. This partnership with LocalMotion may lead to other opportunities.
- Made the \$15 bike helmet event at the Farmer's Market annual (85 distributed).
- Worked with the Planning District and a volunteer Dog Park committee to get permission and permits from the Town of Warren for a dog park (rated as an unmet need in surveys by the Planning District and The Path). Fundraising for this effort is underway.
- Planned a community event at MRP, "Funathon", (canceled due to thunderstorms), but it will be part of our 2023 activities.

- Navigated transition in Board of Directors. Thanked departing Board member Geordie Hall (Warren) and welcomed Derek Bennett (Waitsfield) to the Board. Liza Walker stepped down in August from the MRVRD due to a move and was replaced as Board Chair by Alice Rodgers, formerly Vice Chair. Bear Simmons (Waitsfield) volunteered to be Vice Chair.

2023 Initiatives

The MRVRD will help lead the Community Recreation Visioning (CRV) project, a sub-component of the VOREC grant that will establish a path forward for balancing trails and environmental sustainability. CRV goes through December 2024 and has two main goals:

1. Engage the community in a visioning process to ensure that future initiatives reflect the Valley's dual interests in diverse, high quality outdoor recreation experiences and a thriving and intact natural environment.
2. Create a gold standard vision that is articulated both in writing and spatially in a map - for balancing environmental health and recreation in the MRV, safeguarding valuable natural resources, and planning for long-term stewardship opportunities.

In addition to leading CRV, the MRVRD will also:

- Manage and administer the 408K VOREC Grant. Outside accounting help will be hired. This grant will be a main focus of our 2023 and 2024 work.
- Fundraising for the well and irrigation system at MRP is complete, next steps: purchase and install the above ground irrigation system and determine staffing in order to protect the fields.
- Operate MRVRD annual recreation grant program, continue to streamline procedures to make it easy and inclusive for local organizations to apply. Decisions moved to December.
- Work with the Trails Collaborative to address concerns of the towns, conservation commissions and planning groups regarding Valley-wide planning for trails and balancing environmental issues.
- Host \$15 Bike Helmet opportunity as an annual event.
- Consider working with LocalMotion on additional E-bike programs.
- Work with the Skatium Steering Committee to research and implement plans for improvement.
- Continue plowing the parking lot at Mad River Park to enable winter use.
- Re-launch the community event that was canceled in September 2022 to bring people together to celebrate recreation in the Valley.
- Increase responses to the MRVRD survey and use those results and the results of the Mad River Path and Planning District's surveys to chart MRVRD future activities.
- Continue to improve the MRVRD website to serve the community and provide updates on the MRV Rec Hub and other important projects.

Many thanks to the towns of Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren for the additional funding voted in during 2022. With the increased workload of the VOREC Grant, additional accounting and reporting tasks to the State, irrigation at MRP and increased grantee activity, MRVRD will prudently use the increase to achieve concrete results.

With a total annual budget of \$122,250 (Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren at \$40,000 each and Moretown at \$2,250 to support Mad River Park), we are closer to the benchmark of Waterbury and Bristol's recreation budgets at over \$300,000 each.