



MAD RIVER VALLEY RECREATION DISTRICT

Selectboard Update: November 2023

Overarching Themes:

- **The Rec. District's responsibility for administering the VOREC grant is a measure of our increased capacity and will continue to be a focus of our work until year end 2024.**
- **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.**

2023 Accomplishments

- Continued collaboration with our five partners to implement the \$408,019 MRV Recreation Hub grant from Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC). The route for connecting the Welcome Center to town was changed, but all permits were obtained and the grant was signed in August 2023. Work has begun on various components and the first reimbursement has been made.
- The irrigation system at Mad River Park is now operational and other enhancements were made like better signage and an additional portolet during peak months.
- MRVRD's website receives frequent updates with dedicated pages for Conservation Recreation Visioning (CRV) and the Rec Hub.
- Awarded \$45,400 in recreation grant funds to 11 groups in 2023. The grants serve youth and adult programs and sustain vital recreation facilities used by the community and visitors. Funding requests for 2024 were \$58,153 from 13 applicants with \$49,023 awarded, plus a \$5,000 contribution to support CRV.
- Continued support of stewardMRV, an initiative to increase the cleanliness and environmental quality of recreation sites. Our hope is to work with the Chamber to expand stewardMRV to thank landowners and launch programs regarding dogs on leash and proper disposal of waste.
- The MRV Trails Collaborative is shifting toward a broader Valley vision with an emphasis on balancing trails and environmental priorities, the CRV project. Keeping partners and the community up to date on Rec Hub developments and managing change is a focus.
- Conducted in-person meetings with more than 12 recreation partners to identify ways (beyond just grants) to help these partners. Answers helped inform the questions we posed to the community in a Rec Survey this fall where we have more than 230 responses so far.
- We worked with volunteers to successfully fundraise (more than \$50,000 total including a Better Places Grant) and build the MRV Dog Park in Warren. Many thanks to the town of Warren for the use of the land. A dog park was rated as an unmet need in surveys by the Planning District and The Path. The park is complete (minus one last structure) and volunteers are monitoring usage. There is approximately \$14,000 remaining to fund maintenance, insurance and any needed improvements moving forward. The MRV Dog Park has its own website with a Paypal button to facilitate on-going fundraising: mrvdogpark.com

- Navigated transition in Board of Directors. Thanked departing Board members Derek Bennett and Shevonne Travers and welcomed Corey Ayotte (Fayston) and Gina Gaidys (Waitsfield) to the Board.

2024 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 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. To this end we have engaged Arrowwood Environmental to help with research, mapping and other components of the project

In addition to leading CRV, MRVRD will also:

- Manage and administer the 408K VOREC Grant. Outside bookkeeping help was hired. This grant will be a main focus of our 2024 work.
- Engage Moretown in considering a more robust participation in MRVRD moving forward.
- The well and irrigation system at MRP are operational. Next steps: determine staffing (most likely Kingsbury) in order to use the irrigation system when needed 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 a bi-annual event (we skipped 2023 since we believe we had saturated the market.)
- MRVRD has earmarked funds to host a community safety event to get reflectors and lights onto bikes. Bikes on Route 100 remain a major safety concern.
- Consider working with LocalMotion on additional E-bike programs.
- Collate MRVRD survey results to chart MRVRD's future programs and activities.
- Continue to improve the MRVRD website through an annual review. We will check the accuracy of links (with all volunteer youth sports programs, links are prone to change), update photos, enhance updates on CRV and VOREC as well as other important projects.

With a total annual budget of \$122,250 in 2023 (Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren at \$40,000 each and Moretown at \$2,250), we seek level funding for our three member towns and an increase from Moretown. Moretown typically pays for 25% of MRP expenses. Expenses at MRP have increased substantially, so we are asking Moretown to consider \$3,000 in 2024 and greater overall support moving forward. As a valley, we are closer to the benchmark of Waterbury and Bristol's recreation budgets at over \$300,000 each. Many thanks to our member towns for funding MRVRD.