

**Mad River Valley Planning District  
Steering Committee  
October 20, 2011**

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectman; Chuck Martel, Planning Commissioner

Waitsfield: Bill Parker, Selectman; Steve Shea, Planning Commissioner

Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectman; Jim Sanford, Planning Commissioner

Sugarbush: Margo Wade

MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz

Others: Jamey Fidel, VNRC; Jens Hilke, Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife; Liza Walker, VLT

The minutes of the September 16, 2011 Steering Committee were accepted as written.

Forest Wildlife Community Project (Jens & Jamey):

Jamey provided a handout to the group, which listed the FWC goals and objectives, information on the groups comprising the Steering Committee, and funders for the FWC project. He explained that the deliverables from this group are: technical assistance to Towns, a land use planning manual, technical assistance training (scheduled for December & January), conservation planning maps (to be delivered tonight), a web page (which is accessed from a link on the MRVPD site at [www.mrvpd.org](http://www.mrvpd.org), *Forest Wildlife Communities Project*), and a list of “non-regulatory” options for protecting land.

Jens presented data & maps from a recent project completed by the Forest Wildlife Community Project. Much of the data was taken from the Arrowwood Studies conducted in the 3 towns a few years ago. One map, the Ecological Conservation Focus Map, can be used by Town Conservation Commissions/Committees, to help identify areas of the town that are worth conserving based on the criteria used to rate the conservation value. This map is NOT intended for use by Planning Commissions, as its focus is on co-occurrence of ecological features – aka, where conservation dollars have the most bang for their buck. The second map, the Tiered Ecological Priorities, identifies areas in the 3 towns worthy of consideration for various levels of protection from development, based on the natural elements found there (steep slopes, wetlands, the Sanford Orchid, etc). This map was created with the help of state ecologists identifying features that constitute conservation that is primary, secondary, and tertiary. Although this map is suitable for use by Planning Commissions, Jens emphasized that this map is appropriate for landscape level planning and not site level review. A copy of the report & maps were left for the 3 towns. The final report and maps constitute the extent that science can be used to identify, analyze, and illustrate natural features on the landscape for broad-planning purposes. Policy recommendations should only be implemented in conjunction with community values. The community value work is most appropriately done via each town’s Planning Commission.

Follow up items: Jens & Jamey will send digital copies of their report to Joshua for distribution (which will be added to [mrvpd.org](http://mrvpd.org)), and paper copies to each town’s ZA and PC chair.

Mad River Watershed Conservation (Liza Walker):

MRWCP is a coalition of Vermont Land Trust, Friends of the Mad River, and MRVPD. Formed in 2001, it’s mission is to *Identify critical conservation resources and assist willing landowners, organizations and communities in protecting and strengthening the watershed’s working landscape, ecological health, rural character, recreational opportunities and community vitality*. The current value of MRV funds is \$268k. \$354k has been spent on projects since 1999, leveraging \$1.4 million in town, state, federal and private funds. 13 properties have been conserved comprising 1,473 acres. Liza reviewed the potential new properties under consideration/discussion for conservation.

### Director's Report:

Joshua provided the group with his Mad River Valley Planning District FY12 Work Plan, parts of which will be presented at the Tri-town Select Board meeting on November 3, to justify our funding request from the Towns. He also distributed the Mad River Valley Planning District FY12 Financial Report. Discussion ensued regarding the following: there is a surplus in the current budget, however, this surplus will not exist next year; with the projected increases in expenses, should we approach our current funders for a more moderate increase now, rather than an even larger request at some point in the future?; there may be resistance by some Towns, simply because they do not understand what the MRVPD does. It was agreed that these Towns need to be educated by Steering Committee members. Further discussion took place on Joshua's role in the post TS Irene flood cleanup, which was seen as a great value to the Valley. As a result, he is being asked to spearhead some of the longer-term recovery efforts and be better prepared for the possibility of a similar event in the future. The Steering Committee agreed that this is the type of effort that fits nicely within the role of the MRVPD, but that Joshua can't get to many of the items currently on his project list, and as a result, is not in a position to take on more projects. Maybe now is the time to consider another, part time, employee for the Planning District? Further discussion will be required in November.

With what little time was left to address the highlights to his Director's Report, Joshua was able to cover the following:

A journalist interviewed him from [Mountain Magazine](#) about energy planning in the MRV. A feature article is in the latest issue, which he showed the group at the meeting.

The third event in the MRV Renewable Energy Forum takes place on 10/24 and focuses on Financing Energy Projects & VT's Energy Plan. Marianne Tyrell of VT Law School will discuss broad finance options for renewables, Peter Adamczyk of Efficiency Vermont will explore the role of PACE in financing options for weatherization, efficiency and renewable energy projects. Last, Elizabeth Miller, Commissioner of the VT Department of Public Service, will provide an overview of VT's Comprehensive Energy Plan. 7 PM at the Big Picture Theater.

The annual Tri-Town Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for 11/3 at the Waitsfield School. The intent of this annual meeting is twofold: increase communication between the municipal entities and minimize the number of presentations required of local organizations.

Joshua attended a meeting with FEMA on 10/6 to discuss long-term recovery. A meeting was held on 10/19 to discuss development of a long-term recovery committee with the help of FEMA. Organizing such a committee can create an inclusive, coordinated effort to best help those affected, efficiently employ the wealth of expertise and volunteer spirit within our community, build a more broad network for organizations already established in the community, and develop a template that can be efficiently reemployed when another disaster occurs.

Motion to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

Next Meeting of the Steering Committee: November 17, 2011 at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Martel