Friends of the Mad River: Annual Report to Watershed Towns – 2015

Friends of the Mad River (FMR) is a community-supported, non-profit organization committed to informed and active stewardship of the Mad River and its 144 square mile watershed. The river connects our Mad River Valley community and its clean water is a measure of our success as stewards of the land. More information is available at: www.FriendsoftheMadRiver.org.

Resilience is the capacity of a system to change and adapt, to recover health after a stressor. Efforts to build resilient Mad River ecosystems and communities are a focus at FMR in response to predictions of a changing climate and our own local experiences with increasingly persistent flooding. We use several key strategies to help build resilience that safeguard our Mad River Valley quality of life. This year, our work emphasizes the role improved stormwater runoff management can play in building flood resilience and improving water quality.

"Slow, spread, and sink" stormwater runoff from buildings, roads, cleared areas, and farms since fast moving stormwater exacerbates flooding and the pollutants it carries diminish water quality:

- Selectboards of all five MRV towns voted to support an application to High Meadows Fund to develop a long-term approach for improved and coordinated stormwater management. Since receiving the grant in July, a taskforce of municipal representatives and interested citizens – coordinated by FMR and including at least one Selectboard and planning commission member from each town – have held monthly meetings to identify readily achievable strategies for reducing community vulnerability caused by stormwater runoff, develop information and resource-sharing strategies for municipalities, and prepare for impending state regulations related to Vermont's new Clean Water Act. The taskforce has solicited technical research and will use it to recommend innovative regulatory and non-regulatory management solutions for municipalities, homeowners, developers, farmers, businesses, and road crews. The taskforce meets each month and anyone interested in strengthening flood resilience and water quality is welcome to participate.
- Began "stormwater master planning" at Harwood Union Middle/High School to recommend a suite of stormwater retrofits that dramatically reduce pollution and sedimentation from the school buildings and parking lots into Dowsville Brook. A school and community committee is directing the process.
- Rehabilitated three problematic road sections in Fayston with the Town road crew so that 2,300 feet of steep, dirt road no longer erodes sediment and pollutants into our watershed's streams.

Other highlights from FMR's 2015 work:

- Restored half an acre of important floodplain at Riverside Park in Warren to maximize its floodplain function for the benefit of downstream landowners and the river ecosystem.
- Collaborated with the Town of Warren and agency and non-profit partners to replace a failing culvert over Bradley Brook with a new, larger one that provides brook trout access to upstream cold water habitat, allows flood waters to pass without damage to public and private property, and requires less costly maintenance.
- Collected 432 water samples from 36 sites across the watershed throughout the summer with the help of dedicated volunteers. We analyzed samples for *E. coli* presence and phosphorus and turbidity levels, publishing results in the Valley Reporter and on signs at nine MRV swimming holes.
- Worked with school classes to investigate the river as an ecosystem and enhance hands-on, applied inquiry.
- Provided technical assistance to Mad River Valley Selectboards, conservation and planning commissions, road crews and individual landowners as they steward watershed resources.

Respectfully submitted,
Corrie Miller, Executive Director
Board of Directors: Jack Byrne, Richard Czaplinksi, Ned Kelley, Sucosh Norton, Kinny Perot, Jeannie Sargent, Brian Shupe, Kate Sudhoff, Katie Sullivan, and Lindsey Vandal