



**MAD RIVER VALLEY**  
PLANNING DISTRICT  
Fayston • Waitsfield • Warren

# 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

PRESENTED BY THE MAD RIVER VALLEY PLANNING DISTRICT



PREPARED BY:  
JOSHUA SCHWARTZ  
SAM ROBINSON



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mad River Valley Planning District History</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Grant History</b>	<b>5</b>

## RECENT PROJECTS

<b>MRVPD Partners Meeting</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sugarbush Access Rd Shared-Use Path</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>VT-100 Multi-Use Path</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Short-Term Rental Efforts</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2023 Annual Data Report</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Boyce Hill Education Project</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Recognition</b>	<b>15</b>



# A WORD FROM STAFF

February 28, 2024

As we begin this new year, the Mad River Valley Planning District (MRVPD) would like to reflect on the past year of achievements and resilient community engagement.

Despite the challenges our community faced, our collaborative efforts led to noteworthy progress in several work domains: municipal planning efforts, infrastructure development, transportation planning, housing, enhanced recreational services, and historic preservation.

This report not only showcases our collective accomplishments and the impact of our work but also illustrates our commitment to fostering a sustainable future. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our staff, volunteers, partners, and community members who are instrumental in helping drive our mission forward: to be an ***innovative, vibrant, connected, and caring community honoring its past, celebrating its landscape, and actively pursuing its potential.***

Together, we continue to build a brighter, more sustainable, and inclusive future for the entirety of the Mad River Valley.

JOSHUA SCHWARTZ,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SAM ROBINSON,  
COMMUNITY PLANNER



## MAD RIVER VALLEY PLANNING DISTRICT

A LOOK BACK.

The history of the MRVPD, and of planning in the Mad River Valley (MRV), is the story of a community working together to enhance its identity amidst a changing landscape and economy.

With the advent of skiing (Mad River Glen in 1948 and Sugarbush Resort in 1958), came rapid changes to land use and development patterns in the MRV. MRVPD was created at a time of rapid ski-associated development, which brought both new life and economic activity to the Valley--and along with it, intense growth pressure.

An agreement was made between the towns of Fayston, Waitsfield, and Warren to participate in an innovative multi-town planning program, to be facilitated by the newly created Mad River Valley Planning District.

As noted in the *Mad River Valley Planning District Articles of Agreement* (March 1985), MRVPD's purpose is to:

*"[. . .] carry out a program of planning for the future of the Mad River Valley. The planning program shall be directed toward the physical, social, economic, fiscal, environmental, cultural and aesthetic well-being of the Towns of Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren [. . .] and their inhabitants."*

To this end, MRVPD provides professional planning, leadership, coordination, awareness, implementation, and grant support to the broader MRV and its member towns.

MRVPD's activities are overseen by a 7-voting member Steering Committee, consisting of a representative from the Selectboard and Planning Commission from each of its member towns, and a representative from the MRV Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, representatives from Sugarbush Resort and the Central VT Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) serve as non-voting members. MRVPD Steering Committee meetings are open to the public and are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7 pm. Meeting details can be found at [mrvpd.org](http://mrvpd.org). Staffing consists of Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director, and Sam Robinson, Community Planner.



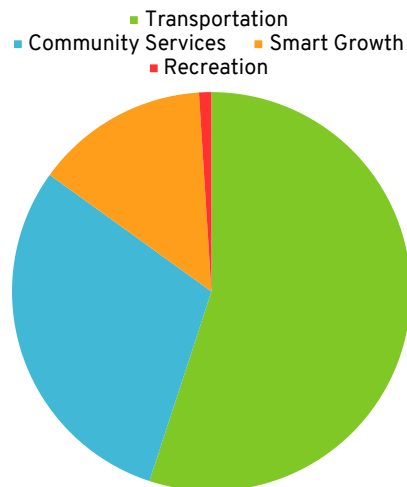
# GRANT HISTORY

One of the ways the MRVPD contributes to the vitality and growth of the MRV is through the pursuit of federal and local grant opportunities. Our commitment to securing these funds is a testament to our dedication to the Mad River Valley, ensuring that the MRV towns & Sugarbush Resort financial contributions to MRVPD are supplemented with additional resources. This approach leverages and amplifies the impact of every dollar spent by bringing in significant external funding, which is essential for the implementation of diverse and crucial projects across the MRV.

These grants have enabled the undertaking of initiatives that would have otherwise been beyond our reach, directly benefiting the residents and enhancing the quality of life in our community. We are proud of our role in

these achievements, yet remain humbly aware that our efforts are a small part of the larger collaborative spirit that defines the Mad River Valley.

## 2023 Grants by Type



**MRVPD BROUGHT \$1,394,091 IN GRANTS TO THE MRV IN 2023, EITHER THROUGH DIRECT PURSUIT OR THROUGH GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT TO TOWN OFFICIALS OR LOCAL ENTITIES, TOTALLING \$5.6 MILLION SINCE 2009.**

The image is a collage of several photographs. The background is a dense forest with green trees. In the foreground, there are several large, rectangular panels of corrugated metal, some standing upright and others leaning against each other. A semi-transparent blue horizontal band is overlaid across the center of the image, containing the text 'RECENT PROJECTS.' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. Below the text, there are three distinct scenes of construction workers. On the left, a man in a black tank top and shorts stands in front of a corrugated metal panel. In the middle and right, two men are working together; one is using a tool to cut or shape a piece of corrugated metal while the other looks on. The overall scene suggests a construction project in a natural, wooded environment.

# RECENT PROJECTS.



The MRVPD Steering Committee hosted a gathering to take stock of MRVPD's last 40 years of work, review the organization's purpose, assess its relationships with member entities, and identify strategies for enduring relevance and success. The event was attended by 42 individuals in person, along with additional attendees online via Zoom and a live stream by MRVTV. The evening provided context, dialogue, and insight into where both the MRVPD and the MRV have been, where they are, and what elements are key to charting a path forward.

The meeting resulted in several key themes voiced by participants, one of which was a strong interest in MRVPD's continued leadership in addressing valley-wide challenges. Participants acknowledged the MRVPD's unique position to help develop and support a unified vision for the MRV.

The discussions also highlighted the need for clear visioning, further enhancement of MRVPD roles and responsibilities, and the notion that MRVPD is most effective when it commits to a realistic work plan balancing multiple priorities.

This event was a pivotal start to the year's visioning efforts and was instrumental in identifying various roles MRVPD could play in addressing current community challenges, including key and timely support for Waitsfield's Community Wastewater Project.

During subsequent Steering Committee meetings throughout the year, members worked toward further defining the roles, responsibilities, and strategic planning priorities for the future of MRVPD.

A central theme from the MRVPD Partners Meeting was the necessity for collaboration between MRV towns towards a common goal. Ted Brady of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) concluded the meeting and emphasized the importance of empowering regional governance for success. Brady noted that some issues cannot be easily resolved by a single town and underscored MRVPD's value in such scenarios.

# WAITSFIELD COMMUNITY WASTEWATER PROJECT



Since the Fall of 2021, the Town of Waitsfield has been actively exploring wastewater infrastructure possibilities for Irasville & Waitsfield Village. This initiative is reinforced by various sections of the Waitsfield Town Plan, including those addressing Natural Resources, Infrastructure, Housing, & Land Use. These efforts are aimed at identifying and implementing sustainable and effective wastewater solutions in line with the town's development goals. The motivations for municipal wastewater in Waitsfield & Irasville Village are:

- Protect water quality in the Mad River;
- Safeguard human health near water wells;
- Ease economic burdens of septic system replacements;
- Expand housing options and boost economic activity;
- Preserve historic settlement patterns, and
- Build and maintain a modern wastewater system with affordable user rates at no cost to taxpayers.

Waitsfield completed a [Wastewater and Water Feasibility Study for Irasville & Waitsfield Village in 2022](#). In 2023, the project advanced to the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) stage, which detailed specific wastewater and water system scenarios and identified a preferred option.

The preferred option consists of a municipal wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal system serving Irasville & Waitsfield Village, utilizing multi-stage treatment and in-ground disposal of 89k gallons per day at the town-owned Munn Site.

MRVPD served as Project Coordination Team Lead through the PER stage. The [Final PER](#) was accepted by Vermont DEC in December 2023, signifying the completion of the project's planning stage. The project's final design phase began in January 2024.

Waitsfield will be holding a bond vote on June 11, 2024, for the entirety of the project cost. A positive bond vote increases the town's likelihood of securing substantial state and federal funding necessary to meet the project goals of an affordable user fee and no taxpayer impact outside of connections to municipal properties.

The Mad River Valley Planning District is fully committed to supporting the Town of Waitsfield to ensure the ongoing success of the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project.

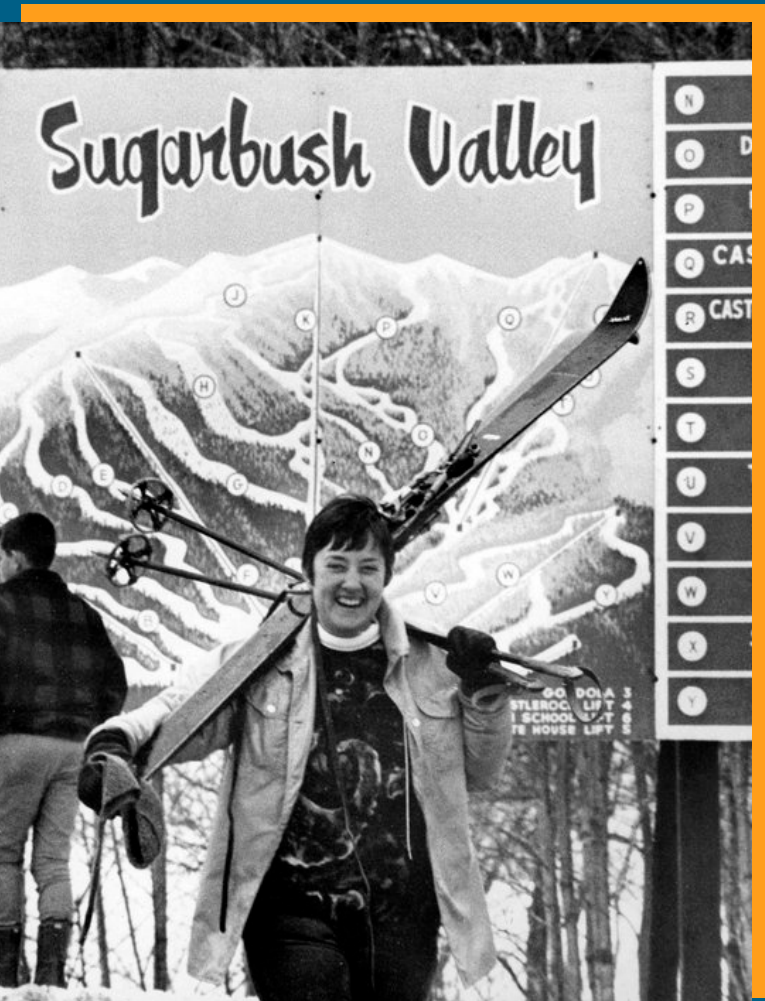
# SUGARBUSH ACCESS RD. SHARED USE PATH, SEGMENT I

In the spring of 2023, the Town of Warren, Mad River Path (MRP), Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC), Sugarbush Resort, and the MRVPD worked together on a third attempt to secure funding from the [Vermont Agency of Transportation's \(VTrans\) Bicycle & Pedestrian Program](#) for the Town of Warren's initiative to build a shared-use path adjacent to the Sugarbush Access Road. Warren's application for 80% funding was submitted on June 8th. The application's purpose was to finance the engineering and construction of the first segment of the path, Inferno Rd. to Golf Course Rd., as detailed in the [2017 Town of Warren Sugarbush Access Road Path Scoping Study](#).

The project's ten-foot-wide, ADA-accessible shared-use path aims to enhance transportation options and pedestrian safety within Warren's Primary Growth Center. That said, we believe that constructing this path will provide benefits that extend far beyond pedestrian safety and transportation. Segment I has the opportunity to positively impact employment by providing a safe and healthy way for employees to commute to work, implementing a key active transportation route identified in the MRV Moves Active Transportation Plan, increasing ridership on existing public transportation routes by providing convenient stops, providing connections to existing recreational opportunities, and bolstering the MRV's four season economy.

On August 15, 2023, the Town of Warren received confirmation that it had been awarded \$769,280 in federal funds from the VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant Program.

Moving forward, MRVPD is committed to supporting the Town of Warren and its partners in the engineering and design phases of this project. A municipal project manager has been hired for daily project coordination, with MRVPD, MRP, Sugarbush Resort, CVRPC, and the Town of Warren providing necessary support. This collaborative project represents a significant step toward the enhancement of community infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable transportation. It is the realization of community aspirations that date back to the 1980s and were planned in the 2010s. It is a powerful example of how communities can leverage a single infrastructure improvement as a way to address multiple critical aspects of the community: recreation, transportation, & the economy.





During MRVPD's October 19, 2023, Steering Committee Meeting, Misha Golfman of the Mad River Path (MRP) provided a progress report on the VT-100 Multi-Use Path initiative that he helped launch earlier in the year. Golfman explained that he attended 31 informational meetings with municipal, state, and business organizations within and outside the MRV as part of MRP's Coalition of Support (Phase I) for the VT-100 Path project. As part of the presentation, the MRP requested the support of MRVPD for Phase II: Scoping Study & Phase III: Project Implementation. MRVPD subsequently pledged to support the MRP through the completion of Phase II of the VT-100 Multi-Use Path Project.

To begin Phase II, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC), MRP, and MRVPD applied to the [VTrans Transportation Alternatives Program](#) (TAP) on December 8th for funding to assess the feasibility of a multi-use path along the VT-100 & VT-100B right-of-way from downtown Warren to the intersection of VT-100B and Hooper Lane in Moretown. Awards announcements are anticipated in March 2024.

The VT-100 Multi-Use Path is envisioned to significantly enhance pedestrian and bicycling safety and serve as a vital component of the MRV's active transportation network. It will offer a multi-jurisdictional route for both commuter and recreational use, contribute to the area's recreational economy, and provide inclusive, accessible alternatives to car travel. Integrating with the MRV trail network, the path will link village centers, schools, businesses, and essential services, bridging gaps between community assets. It will also form part of the Velomont Trail, connect to the Cross Vermont Trail, and align with the VT-100 Alternative Fuel Corridor. This project is central to enhancing MRV's recreational resources, driving sustainable economic growth, and realizing a primary connection outlined in the [2016 MRV Moves Active Transportation Plan](#).

The submission of the TAP application was an important first step of Phase II. MRVPD is excited to continue its support in establishing the VT-100 Multi-Use Path along the VT-100 & VT-100B right-of-way.

# SHORT-TERM RENTALS IN THE MRV

## A THREE-TOWN APPROACH.

Since 2016, MRVPD has endeavored to assist its community in better understanding the specific impacts and opportunities associated with short-term rentals (STR).

In 2021, MRVPD authored a white paper, [\*Short-Term Rentals in the Mad River Valley\*](#), which organized the variety of STR-related concerns that have been voiced in the community: Health & Safety, Year-Round Housing, and Community Externalities. Based on these concerns, a three-town approach was developed to address STRs, consisting of three phases: (1) Understand the Issue, (2) Explore Options, & (3) Communicate Research & Policy Options. Phase 1 consists of three action steps: 1(a) Inventory Community Perception & Issues, 1(b) Gather Accurate & Unbiased Data, & 1(c) Establish Larger Strategic Objectives.

In 2022, the [\*Mad River Valley Short-Term Rental Survey\*](#) (MRV STR Survey) kicked off step 1(a); an information-gathering effort to better understand the impact of STRs on community members. A total of 388 responses were received across the three pathways of respondent types: community members (262), STR owners/hosts (118), and business owners (8). The survey was conducted by MRVPD between August 29 - October 5, 2022.

The MRV STR Survey captured a variety of insights, including the benefits community members associate with STRs, STR owner/host offering types, and goods and services businesses provide to STR owners. The top challenges community members attributed to STRs in the MRV were: Year-Round Housing (Long-term renter displacement) and Community Externalities (Impacts on neighborhood character, Disrespectful guests, Increased noise, and Trash concerns).

Having made substantial progress with step 1(a) of the three-town approach, MRVPD recently evaluated three platforms from October 3 - December 22, 2023, that offer data collection and analysis tools that could help better understand the MRV's STR market, transitioning us into step 1(b); Gather Accurate & Unbiased Data.

This analysis resulted in the creation of MRVPD's 2023 [\*Short-Term Rentals in the Mad River Valley: Platform Evaluation Memo\*](#). The memo explores each vendor's ability to answer key questions relating to the community concerns identified in the [\*Mad River Valley Short-Term Rental Survey\*](#), offering several approaches to collecting unbiased data to enhance the community's understanding of STR impacts in the MRV.

MRVPD is committed to continuing to support the MRV towns and is excited to explore opportunities to assist in their future STR efforts. While certain community-wide goals have been identified, each town must consider its role in understanding the overall MRV short-term rental market as well as what platform would suit those goals best.



# MAD RIVER VALLEY ANNUAL DATA REPORT

2023

Each year, MRVPD collects, analyzes, and shares data about various community indicators for community use and planning purposes. The effort is focused on ensuring community understanding of how it is doing, identifying what areas can be improved upon, and ultimately enabling data-informed decisions that affect the future.

In 2015, the [Mad River Valley Vision Statement](#) was developed by the community through a participatory process, drawing from each of the Town Plans, historic visioning processes, in-depth research and data, and direct input from residents to genuinely reflect the values and priorities of the MRV. The 2023 Data Report aims to build off of this Vision Statement to improve the connection between historical community trends and where the community wants to go.

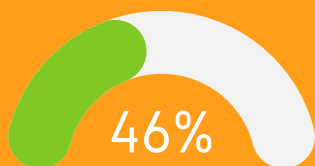
The [MRV Data Report](#) also addresses the requirements of the [1998 Memorandum of Understanding](#) and provides information for community use and planning purposes.

This is a deeply valuable tool, helping inform the work that MRVPD engages in. We highly recommend that residents of, and visitors to, the MRV spend some time reviewing the report and its companion, the [MRV Community Dashboard](#).

The [2023 MRV Data Report](#) focuses on trends relating to population, housing, economics, the environment, town infrastructure, and much more. Within each section, the report explores the long-term changes that have occurred and provides an opportunity to reflect on what these changes may mean for our community.

MRVPD's last full data report was in 2019, at which time the organization doubled its efforts and created the [MRV Community Dashboard](#), an online tool for accessing data. In 2023, MRVPD has developed both a full printed data report as well as an updated version of the MRV Community Dashboard. The [2023 MRV Data Report](#) and updated [MRV Community Dashboard](#) can both be found on our website.

## DID YOU KNOW...



OF MAD RIVER VALLEY HOUSING UNITS ARE SEASONAL OR VACANT

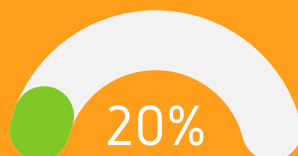
46%

### THE POPULATION OF THE MAD RIVER VALLEY

Has grown by +51% since 1990, while the population of Washington County has grown by +9% in the same timeframe.



MAD RIVER VALLEY ELECTRICAL USAGE INCREASED BY 20% FROM 2018 - 2022



20%

LEARN MORE BY  
READING THE  
[FULL REPORT!](#)

# BOYCE HILL EDUCATION PROJECT

In the late 1980s, MRVPD helped to form the [Mad River Valley Rural Resource Commission](#) (RRC) for the “Identification, evaluation, registration, and preservation of historic properties,” and integration of “local preservation interests and concerns into planning and decision-making processes.” The RRC was the first district of its kind in Vermont to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the National Historic Preservation Act. As a CLG, the Rural Resource Commission is eligible for [Historic Preservation Grants](#) through the [Vermont Division for Historic Preservation](#) (VDHP).

On March 7th, 2022, the Rural Resource Commission applied for a CLG grant through VDHP to help facilitate the Boyce Hill Education Project (Education Project). On March 29th, the RRC was awarded \$5,340 to hire a Historical Research Consultant to conduct research relating to Boyce Hill, which was donated to the Town of Fayston in 2019.

This town-owned property in North Fayston, conserved through the Vermont Land Trust in 2020 and managed by the Boyce Hill Steering Committee, boasts rich cultural, agricultural, and natural history, including extensive stone fences, a cellar hole, a viable apple orchard, and a stone corral. The purpose of this project was to inform the general public about the vast historic resources at Boyce Hill and the preservation work underway by the Boyce Hill Steering Committee.

The project began in late 2022 and continued throughout 2023. The project involved multiple site visits and extensive deed & land records research to help understand the history of Boyce Hill and inform the long-term management plan under development by the Boyce Hill Steering Committee.

The project included a successful public site walk with Valley residents and the hired research consultant exploring the history of Boyce Hill. The project’s final product is the [Boyce Hill Historical Research Survey](#) (HRS), which surveys, documents, and records the cultural history of Boyce Hill. The HRS will serve to deepen the understanding of the property’s cultural resources, historical uses, and activities.

Thanks to the Fayston Conservation Commission, Boyce Hill Steering Committee, Turn Stone Research, VDHP, and the MRV Rural Resource Commission, this project was a great success and helped elevate an already spectacular aspect of the Mad River Valley: Boyce Hill.

More Info: <https://mrvpd.org/rural-resources/>



# IN SUMMARY

As we close another successful year, the Mad River Valley Planning District stands proud of our collective achievements.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners, whose tireless efforts continue to drive us towards a brighter future. Together, we have strengthened the bonds of our community, laying the foundation for continued growth and improvement.

We look forward to another year of making a positive impact, guided by our commitment to the wellbeing and vitality of the Mad River Valley.

## **Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee:**

Bob Ackland, Warren Selectboard (Chair)  
Dan Raddock, Warren Planning Commission (Vice-Chair)  
Jared Cadwell, Fayston Selectboard (Secretary & Treasurer)  
Doug Day, Fayston Planning Commission  
Brian Shupe, Waitsfield Selectboard  
Alice Peal, Waitsfield Planning Commission  
Margo Wade, Sugarbush Resort  
Eric Friedman, MRV Chamber of Commerce  
Christian Meyer, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

## **Mad River Valley Planning District Staff**

Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director  
802-496-7173 | [joshua@mrvpd.org](mailto:joshua@mrvpd.org)

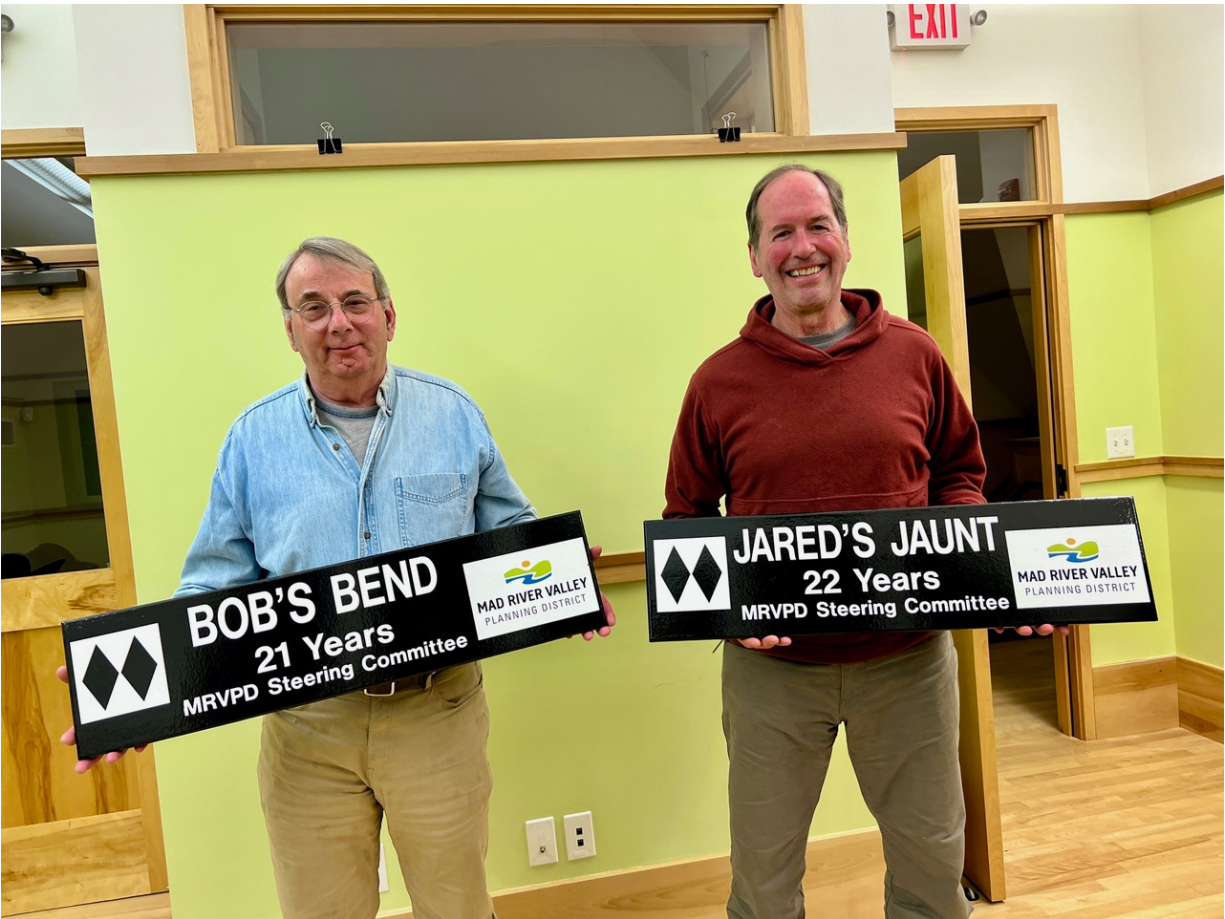
Sam Robinson, Community Planner  
802-496-7179 | [sam@mrvpd.org](mailto:sam@mrvpd.org)

[mrvpd.org](http://mrvpd.org)

**QUESTIONS?**

**DON'T HESITATE TO  
REACH OUT!**

# RECOGNITION



The Mad River Valley Planning District would like to recognize Bob Ackland (Warren Selectboard Representative) and Jared Cadwell (Fayston Selectboard Representative) for their combined **43 years of service** to the MRVPD as Steering Committee members. They will be stepping off the Steering Committee this spring.

For over two decades, they have generously dedicated their time and energy to the betterment of their towns and the greater Mad River Valley. The MRVPD expresses its heartfelt gratitude for their unwavering commitment to our community.



**MAD RIVER VALLEY**  
PLANNING DISTRICT  
Fayston • Waitsfield • Warren