



Watershed Update

Missisquoi River Basin Association

Spring 2009

Schedule of Volunteer Activities

Here is a preliminary list of what's happening this field season...

Sat., April 18, 9am – 1pm – Tree planting, Sheldon/Swanton

Sat., April 25, 9 am – 1 pm – Tree planting, Highgate

Sat., May 2 – to be confirmed

Sat., May 9, 9am – 1pm – Tree planting, Troy

Sat., June 20, 9am – 3pm – River clean-up, Richford

May–October – Water sampling to be confirmed

To Sign Up or Get Directions:

Call Cynthia Scott (802) 933-9009 or
mrba@pshift.com

2009 Field Work

The first volunteer tree planting will take place on Saturday, April 18th at Wynn and Pauline Paradee's Farm at the Sheldon/Swanton town line along Hungerford Brook. The farm has initiated a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) project, a program of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets (VT AAFM). The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) is also providing cost-sharing through its Partners in Wildlife Program. This is hopefully one of many projects in the coming years along Hungerford Brook, which is listed as an impaired waterway by the State of Vermont. Hungerford Brook joins the lower Missisquoi River just west of Route 207 near Highgate Center.

The second workday will be on Saturday, April 25th at Brian and Bill Rowell's property of Green Mountain Dairy. The tree and willow planting will occur along a tributary to the Rock River in the



Students from Fairfield Elementary School helped us plant trees last year at the Boomhower farm

Town of Highgate. This project is also a CREP and Partners in Wildlife joint project. It will be planted over two years to establish a mix of tree and shrub species.

The third community workday will be on Saturday, May 2nd at a farm in Swanton, Franklin or Berkshire, to be determined. Student volunteers may be available for one or more of the sites and we will determine the workday location, as we get closer to this date. Two projects are in the second year of their CREP and Partners in Wildlife projects and one project is through the USDA Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

The fourth planned workday will be on Saturday, May 9th at the Leblanc Farm in Troy. The site is along the Missisquoi River and some small tributaries. This site is one of a number of projects through CREP and Partners in Wildlife in this town and adjacent Newport, several of which are along Mud Creek, a tributary to the Missisquoi River. Students from North Country Union High School and local Boy Scouts are also likely to participate in the volunteer efforts.

Additional conservation workdays planned for this spring include tile outlet stabilization sites in the Rock River watershed. This effort is part of a VT AAFM demonstration grant project for stabilizing the outflows from culverts and tile drainage, and restoring related gully erosion. Seven area farms have participated in this effort with collaboration from MRBA and the Franklin County Natural Resource Conservation District. An educational sign will be installed at one site, the Choiniere Farm, later this spring.

Many thanks to VT ANR for a 319 grant which will allow us to hold these and other workdays this coming field season.

If you have questions about volunteering or ideas for other volunteer work sites, please contact Cynthia (933-9009 or mrba@pshift.com) or myself. Get your boots and shovels ready....

Brian Jerose, MRBA Technical Advisor

Bugworks

The first year of Bugworks has come and gone, and with the melting of the winter snows it is time to start the new/second year of the program. I have two announcements to make. First is that myself and the Bugworks program will be receiving the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence in Education and Outreach on April 20th, 2009. Being nominated by Ms. Julie Moore makes this very satisfying. During the past year I was able to spend time in 11 of the schools within the watershed teaching both students and teachers about the wonders of our local streams, rivers and ponds. What a wonderfully fun time!

My second announcement is that we have found a teacher (award winning) to take over the program and keep it on its feet this year. I'm very excited to have Ms. Ruthanne Rust on board, and starting to schedule teachers and schools for the spring. Although we do not have the depth of funding we had last year (funding has become tough recently), we are hoping to serve each of the schools who hosted me last year in some capacity. So, if you are one of those teachers whom I worked with, and haven't developed a fear of wading in water, please contact Ruthanne at rrust1@earthlink.net to make sure you are on the schedule for this spring. If you happen to have some funding source that might help us



John Little brought his Bugworks program to over 400 5th and 6th grade students in the Missisquoi watershed last year

spread the word about clean water and reach more students, please let us know.

We are grateful to Jay Peak Resort (as a result of a concluded environmental legal action brought by the Agency of Natural Resources), the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and Ben & Jerry's St. Albans Community Action Team for providing the funding to make this year's Bugworks program available to our watershed's students.

John Little

Project Development in the Trout River Watershed

MRBA has recently started work on developing river and stream-corridor based projects in the Trout River watershed. The goal is to develop and prepare for implementation a range of conservation and restoration projects that improve water quality, increase long-term channel stability, improve fish and wildlife habitat and reduce the risk of damage to property, infrastructure and cropland from flooding and erosion.

MRBA was awarded funding from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) River Management Program (RMP) to conduct Phase II Geomorphic Assessments in the Black Creek watershed and to develop projects in the Trout River watershed. MRBA hired the Johnson Company of Montpelier as consultants to complete the assessment work (see article

“Public Forum Held”). MRBA will perform the work in the Trout River watershed in-house, with Brian Jerose acting as the project manager, with support from Cynthia Scott on administration and other MRBA members. Much of the effort is based in the Town of Montgomery; however there may be portions of the Towns of Berkshire and Enosburg that may be identified as priority project locations.

An initial steering committee meeting was held in mid-March to define the project goals, inform various stakeholders of the opportunities to address long-standing concerns in the watershed, and to begin the identification and prioritization process. The committee will also provide guidance and feedback to Jerose on his work tasks. The following individuals attended the meeting and/or have agreed to provide input on the steering committee:

Brian Jerose, MRBA and contractor, WASTE NOT Resource Solutions

Cynthia Scott, MRBA and member Enosburg Conservation Commission

John Little, MRBA Chair and Town of Montgomery resident

JoAnne Wazny, MRBA

Mike Manahan, MRBA

Wendy Scott, MRBA and member Enosburg Conservation Commission

Staci Pomeroy, ANR River Management Program

Angela Biggs, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Carol McGregor, Town of Montgomery Selectboard and Conservation Commission

Parma Jewett, Town of Montgomery Lister and town resident

Rolf Anderson, Hazen’s Notch Association and Montgomery resident

Chris Smith, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Ben Gabos, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

The possible projects may include tree and shrub buffers along streams and the main stem of the river, restoration of floodplains and meanders of streams, stabilization of eroding streambanks, reduction of sediment from roads, driveways and ditches, livestock crossings, fencing and/or other similar practices. Based on the interest of landowners, town officials and capacity of agencies to provide funding and/or technical support, several projects will be developed to the point of being “shovel ready.” This could include exploring the details of the planned projects, drafting designs, creating budgets, obtaining permits and preparing a maintenance schedule for any implemented practices. This development process is helpful in getting project ideas to the point of project reality. Past projects have taken months or years to get from a concept to being identified, designed and constructed. This effort is intended to focus and accelerate this process for this local watershed.

We hope landowners, land managers and others in the community can contribute to project ideas and participate in this effort. Similar efforts in the Rock River and Hungerford Brook watersheds have resulted in buffer and restoration projects being implemented in 2008 and 2009. Please contact Brian Jerose if you have any ideas or questions about this project, 933-8336 or jerose@together.net.

Brian Jerose, Project Manager

River Clean-up on June 20



Assorted pieces of scrap metal and tires are frequently removed from the river during our annual clean-up

Join us for our annual river clean-up, this year scheduled for Saturday, June 20 at 9 am in Richford! We will go out in canoes and kayaks to pick up trash, old tires, ag plastic, and assorted ‘finds’ along the banks of the Missisquoi River.

This is always a fun outing, giving you the chance to get out on the river and to

improve its visual appeal for other paddlers and anglers by removing unsightly items.

Participants should provide their own canoe/kayak, PFD, and picnic lunch. Trash bags will be supplied.

Contact MRBA at 933-9009 or mrba@pshift.com for the meeting place or more info.

Public Forum Held

Our public forum this year was held on March 27 in the Fairfield Town municipal building. About 20 persons attended.

The meeting was kicked off by MRBA president John Little. He gave a brief history of MRBA, as well as a status report on our application for Wild and Scenic consideration which is presently before Congress (*at time of writing*).

Adam Robtoy, a scientist with The Johnson Company, gave a summary of last summer's



Adam Robtoy presented the findings of a geomorphic assessment done last summer of the Black Creek and some of its tributaries

Phase 2 geomorphic assessment of Black Creek which was conducted by his company and funded by a grant to MRBA by VT ANR River Management program. Black Creek meanders through Sheldon, Fairfield and Bakersfield which is rich bottomland throughout and experiences particular problems when abundant rainfall and subsequent flooding occur.

Brian Jerose, who is Technical Advisor to MRBA, followed Adam with a detailed explanation of a streambank and floodplain restoration project that he was involved with on the Boomhower farm in Fairfield, which took a number of years to complete. He also gave a review of MRBA's planned projects for this coming year, 2009.

Each presenter offered time for and answered questions. Most attendees were either MRBA members or state/federal professionals involved with natural resources and associated with MRBA in some fashion. Several landowners were present from Fairfield as was one of our legislative representatives. These people provided valuable input to the dialogue. They indicated that more farmers had been interested in attending the meeting, but being in the midst of maple sugaring, could not afford the time.

Michael Manahan

'Wild & Scenic River' Designation for the Missisquoi and Trout Rivers

On Monday, March 30, President Obama signed into law the massive Wilderness Bill, which included HR5667, the Missisquoi-Trout River Wild & Scenic Study Bill, thus ending a two-year passage through the House to the Senate and back to the House and finally ending on the President's desk. We are now ready to be studied.

Having participated in this legislation, it is my feeling that if the MRBA conducted business in the same manner as the U.S. House or Senate, we would still be debating our by-laws. The beltway legislative process requires tremendous patience and determination, and we are fortunate that all three members of Vermont's Washington delegation possess those qualities.

The National Park Service is already preparing for the three-year study. They will be sending people up here in the immediate future to help us get organized. The first order of business will be forming a Study Advisory Committee. Stay tuned and get involved.

Chris O'Shea

Accountant Skills Needed!

MRBA has been fortunate to have received the pro bono services of a St. Albans accountant over the past years to prepare our annual tax return. Now that she is retiring, we are looking for someone to take over that responsibility. If you would like to help us out for the 2009 tax year, please get in touch!!

Rain Barrels Available to Reduce Stormwater Runoff in Missisquoi Watershed

The Missisquoi River Basin Association, in partnership with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and the Vermont Center for Clean and Clear, will once again be offering rain barrels to homeowners and businesses in Franklin County located within the Missisquoi River Basin.

Rain barrels are designed to sit at the base of your gutters and collect and store rain water from the roof, which can then be used to water lawns and gardens. A spigot at the base of the barrel can be used to fill a watering can or connect to a hose. Using the rain water from your roof also helps to conserve drinking water and is actually healthier for your plants and lawn than municipal water because it does not contain chlorine, fluoride or other chemicals. Rain barrels are also equipped with a covered lid to keep out leaves, mosquitoes and other pests.

Yellowwood Associates in St. Albans uses a rain barrel to capture runoff from the roof of their office on Main Street



Reducing stormwater runoff from roofs and paved surfaces is one way to help improve water quality, particularly in developed portions of the watershed. When precipitation runs off these impervious surfaces, it often carries with it fine sand, nutrients like phosphorus, bacteria from animal wastes, oil, grease and heavy metals from cars – all of which threaten the quality of our lakes and rivers. The additional stormwater also increases the flow of water within our streams,

causing greater risk of erosion and flood hazards in the stream channel.

Residents of Franklin County living within the Missisquoi Watershed should contact Deb Perry at 524-5958/dperry@nrpcvt.com if they are interested in getting a rain barrel. The rain barrels are free although recipients are encouraged to consider a donation of \$10-\$20 to the MRBA. A limited number of barrels are available, please call now!

If you are among those who ordered a rain barrel last year and did not receive one, your name is on the top of our list for this year. There is no need to re-order.

This project is supported by a grant from the Vermont Center for Clean and Clear.

*Deb Perry
Northwest Regional Planning Commission*

Water Sampling Woes!

As with many sectors of today's world, our water sampling program is facing an uncertain future.

You may have heard in the news lately that the LaRosa lab (the state lab in Waterbury) may be forced to close due to cuts in the State's budget. Should this happen, MRBA would not only lose the services provided by LaRosa (supply of sample bottles and analysis of our water samples) but also the funding to pay for those services since LaRosa covered our lab costs through a grant to MRBA. This represented a value of about \$15,000 to us annually.

Another blow to our water sampling program was the departure last fall of the State's watershed coordinator, Barry Guessner who, since the inception of our sampling program in 2005, was immensely helpful to us, especially with interpreting and presenting the sampling results. Barry's position has not been filled.

During these times of economic retrenchment, coming up with the funding to hire these services is extremely challenging. We are exploring our options and hopefully will have the ways and means to get our volunteers once again taking samples around the watershed. If you've got any good ideas, do let us know!

Cynthia Scott