



Watershed Update

Missisquoi River Basin Association

Spring 2013

Volunteers Needed!

Here is a preliminary list of field opportunities for you to help us improve water quality! We can use your help, however many hours you have to spare!

Sat., April 13, 9am - 1pm: Tree planting, Fairfield

Sat., April 20, 9am - 1pm: Tree planting, Westfield

Sat., April 20, 9am: Tree planting at Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge, Swanton (contact Ken 868-4781 or Missisquoi@fws.gov)

May-October: Water sampling every other Wednesday

For Info or to Sign Up:

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

Many more workdays are still to be scheduled for this season, please consult our website, www.troutrivernetwork.org/mrba, for an up-to-date list of volunteer opportunities.

Field Work

Happy spring! In spite of our relatively late snow cover, MRBA is looking to its earliest volunteer workdays to start the field season. Our first planned workdays are Friday, April 12th and Saturday, April 13th at Stony Pond Farm owned by Tyler and Melanie Webb. Their farm is located along Wanzer Brook in the Town of Fairfield.

Wanzer Brook drains to Black Creek and then Black Creek joins the Missisquoi River in Sheldon. Wanzer Brook is listed as an impaired water body by the State of Vermont and this project is one of several within this watershed that MRBA has supported in the past few years.



Runoff from fields along Cassidy Rd. is filtered through compost filter socks

The Friday, April 12, workday will be with students from Fairfield Elementary School from the 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th grades. Teachers Andrew Evans, Wendy Scott, Maureen Thompson and Bet Howigan are coordinating with the Outdoor Classroom program, Joanna Jerose and other staff. The Saturday, April 13, workday will be with community volunteers starting at 9am. The planting project is funded through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Partners in Wildlife (PIW) Program. CREP is a joint effort of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and the VT Agency of Agriculture (VT AAFM) and PIW is through the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS). Ben Gabos of VT AAFM and Chris Smith of USF&WS have provided the program planning and technical services to most of the planting projects in our watershed.

The third planned planting workday is scheduled for community volunteers on Saturday, April 20th on the Kearney Farm in Westfield. The planting site is along the upper Missisquoi River and the total

project area to be planted by a mixture of contractors and volunteers is 11.8 acres with 2950 trees and shrubs. This site is also provided funding and technical assistance through the CREP and PIW programs.

The fourth planned workday for this spring is on Friday, May 3rd at the Beebe property in Swanton. This site is along the lower Missisquoi River, between the village of Swanton and the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. As part of a great collaboration, volunteers from Ben and Jerry's will provide the bulk of the labor and the 400 trees for this site will be provided through a USF&WS and Intervale Conservation Nursery grant. Thanks to Pam Hakey of Ben and Jerry's and Leah Szafranski of USF&WS for supporting supplemental planting at this site that was originally planted via the CREP and PIW programs in 2010.

Additional volunteer planting and conservation projects are being scouted and planned for this spring. Projects may include (but may not be limited to) livestock exclusion fencing, riparian buffer plantings through the Trees for Streams grant (see article below for more detail), installation of Compost Filter Socks (CFS) in ditches and at points of runoff and gully stabilization. There is also the opportunity to bring a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) crew to the watershed this year and details are being figured out. We look forward to seeing you out working in the soil or you bringing us your ideas for additional worksites and volunteer opportunities. Thanks!

Brian Jerose, MRBA Technical Advisor

Trees for Streams Grant

In its recent round of Ecosystem Restoration Program grant funding, the VT Department of Environmental Conservation's Agency of Natural Resources awarded MRBA \$39,300 to implement a Trees for Streams project during 2013 and 2014 in the Missisquoi Bay watershed.

The purpose of Trees for Streams is to increase and enhance riparian buffers along the Missisquoi River and its tributaries, serving the dual purpose of protecting water quality and supporting MRBA's goal of "restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of the Missisquoi River system so that the uses and values desired by the community are supported by the river and quality of its water".

MRBA will use existing studies, data, assessments, maps and stream corridor plans to identify potential parcels in the watershed that might benefit from streambank stabilization efforts. Interested

landowners are invited to participate in the program, which is voluntary, to have MRBA volunteers plant trees in buffer areas along streambanks.

For more information on MRBA's Trees for Streams program, contact MRBA at mrba@pshift.com or (802) 933-9009.

Water Sampling

Thanks to the generosity of the State's LaRosa lab and a Vermont Watershed Grant, MRBA will be holding its 9th year of water sampling this summer. With a planned start of mid-May and continuing through October, we look to our loyal group of



John Little demonstrates technique for taking turbidity sample

volunteers to once again take water samples every other Wednesday at 21 sites in the watershed from Burgess Branch in Lowell to the mouth of the Mississquoi River in Swanton. If you would like to offer your volunteer services to help us collect water samples, please get in touch (call 802-933-9009 or e-mail mrba@pshift.com); we can always use more volunteers! No experience necessary; training provided.

Town Appropriations

We extend our heartfelt thanks to residents of the Towns of Bakersfield, Enosburgh, Fairfield, Montgomery, Richford, Sheldon, Swanton, and Westfield for their generosity in supporting MRBA through an appropriation in their 2013 Town budgets. We greatly appreciate your support of our mission to improve water quality in the Missisquoi River and its tributaries. Thank you for your generosity!

Bugworks

Thanks to funding from Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Bugworks is back! MRBA is pleased to make Bugworks, an integrated science program, available to watershed schools again this spring. Our consultant educator, Jane Williams, will hold hands-on sessions to teach students to identify the invertebrates that live in the water in their various stages of development, and then be able to evaluate the health of the stream or pond where they are found. Each watershed school may receive 2 sessions free of charge with additional sessions available for a small fee.



Students study pond life during a Bugworks session

Since being launch watershed-wide in 2008, over 1,260 students have participated in Bugworks and will now never look at a water bug in the same way again. This program was designed primarily for 5th and 6th grade students and can be adapted to the needs of the school. If you would like to have your students receive Bugworks before the end of June, contact Jane at janiewilliams@surfglobal.net or (802) 827-3879.

Public Forum

Our annual public forum was held at the Richford Town hall on Monday, March 18, 2013. A total of 17 persons were in attendance.

Jeremy and Shana Stewart Deeds gave a short talk on the results of MRBA's water sampling program last summer. They also provided copies of complete statistical data for all phosphorus, nitrogen, and turbidity sampling that was done. Of particular interest to me was a significant storm event in September which caused phosphorus and turbidity readings to increase dramatically. Seasonal averages included the high values data factored in. I would suggest a second computation of seasonal averages without including this event to

see what we get. Hope is important in our quest for water quality and more statistics probably will help in this regard. Significant storms which occur over a season must all contribute to the total pollution picture. So maybe we should track them separately in coming years, whether they occur on sampling days or not.

The statistic which shows greater phosphorus and nitrogen in tributaries than in the mainstem Missisquoi is also interesting. Maybe we are dumping some of the bad elements as water travels toward the lake at times when we aren't taking on loads of similar materials. Definitely material for further discussion.

Ben Maddox from The Flying Disc in Enosburg Falls showed some underwater videos which he took this past summer in Trout River, Tyler Branch and Missisquoi River. Some of the fish scenes in Trout River were impressive; beautiful fish in a beautiful environment to be sure. Healthy brook trout are a great indicator of good water quality. Ben is interested in doing more of this type of work and I have a number of places in mind where his talent could help our cause.

Jeremy Deeds explained the essential elements of a bill being considered in the State legislature concerning shoreline development on Vermont lakes larger than 10 acres. There were a number of editorials on this subject the next day in the Burlington Free Press. Apparently the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is considering entering the picture when towns don't do so through local zoning. The State of Maine has had such a program for years, apparently with good results.

Mike Manahan

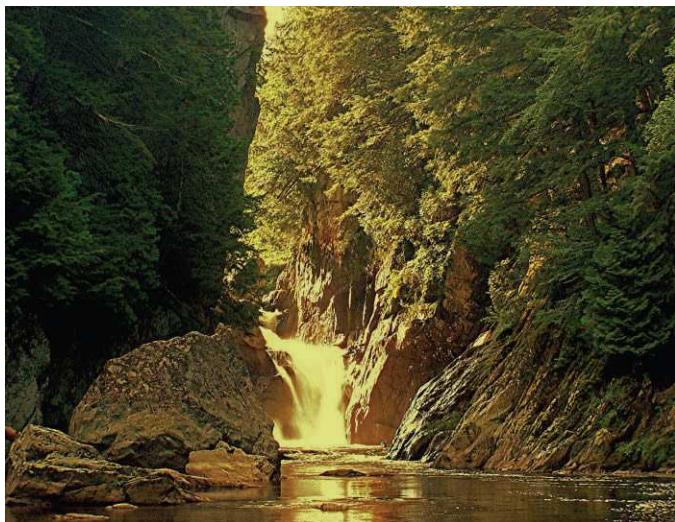
Wild & Scenic Rivers Study

The Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic Study wish to thank you for your support and update you on the outcome of the March 2013 Town Meeting votes. Berkshire, Enosburgh/Enosburg Falls, Montgomery, Richford, Troy/North Troy, and Westfield all voted yes to support petitioning Congress to include the upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers as national Wild and Scenic Rivers. Lowell did not support designation at their Town Meeting vote this March.

Many thanks to all of the Study Committee members who worked to get information to their communities so that they could make informed decisions about designation.

The Study Committee met to discuss next steps at our March 21, 2013 Study Committee Meeting in Richford. Those members in attendance voted unanimously to petition our US Senate and House Representatives to introduce bills to Congress that request an amendment to the

National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to include the Missisquoi (from the Lowell/Westfield Town Line to Enosburg Falls) and the Trout Rivers as Wild and Scenic rivers (excluding the three hydroelectric facilities).



Sunrise at Big Falls, Missisquoi River, North Troy
Photo by John Selmer

Should this pass through Congress, it would need to be signed into law by the President. Then a local, Selectboard appointed Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee would be established to oversee designation much as the Study Committee was formed. Let us know if you are interested in being a part of this post-designation Advisory Committee.

More information may be found

on our website (www.vtwsr.org) or by contacting your local representatives to the Study Committee or the Study Coordinator - 2839 VT Route 105, East Berkshire, VT 05447; info@vtwsr.org

Shana Stewart Deeds, Study Coordinator