



Accomplishments of Vermont's Watershed Groups 2024





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Alix Kaplan

A publication of Watersheds United Vermont

Watershed groups are community-based organizations working to protect and restore Vermont's rivers, streams, and lakes.

Watershed groups work in their communities on a suite of restoration and protection activities that improve water quality and lead to healthy and resilient waters and watersheds.

This report highlights the activities and projects of 15 watershed groups across Vermont. Each section of this report focuses on a type of watershed restoration work and includes a few of the many watershed group success stories during 2024.

Watersheds United Vermont's mission is to empower community-based watershed groups to protect and restore Vermont's waters.

The expansive network of rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands that runs throughout Vermont acts as the lifeblood of our state. These waters are central not only to innumerable natural processes, but to communities around them, providing habitat, drinking water, and space for recreation. Human activities such as development, deforestation, and damming, and the associated consequences of pollution and climate change, impact these natural resources over time, diminishing watershed health and thereby the ability of these waters to support Vermont's vibrant plant, animal, and human communities. Watershed groups are grassroots organizations formed by individuals and communities interested in restoring and protecting our waters. These groups work in their communities to monitor and assess the health of their watershed, implement restoration projects, restore fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality and flood resilience, and to connect people to Vermont's waters.



Highlights of watershed groups' work across Vermont in 2024

Monitoring Water Quality

Water quality has a direct impact on the health of aquatic ecosystems and is a key factor influencing safety for recreation. Watershed groups monitor the water quality of rivers throughout their watersheds, often working closely with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) to determine priority sites. Watershed groups recruit, train, and oversee volunteers to allow for a more widespread testing effort. Many watershed groups sample every other week through the spring and summer at designated sites and test for parameters such as phosphorus, nitrogen, chloride

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In 2024:

188 volunteers across Vermont helped to regularly monitor water quality at **330** sites!



Hoosic River Watershed Association

Volunteers of Hoosic River Watershed Association taking water samples

(salt), turbidity (or cloudiness), bacterial load, and conductivity. Some watershed groups process results in their own labs (if testing for bacteria) and many groups work in partnership with VTDEC's La Rosa Monitoring program to process results. Watershed groups

communicate these results to their communities in various ways. Additionally, they educate the public about the detrimental impacts of runoff from rain events on water quality that result in unsafe conditions for recreation.

White River Partnership: Swim Smart

As the temperatures warm and recreators begin to venture into the White River, the White River Partnership (WRP) kicks off its annual Swim Smart Water Quality Monitoring program. The program, which enlists a substantial, trained volunteer workforce, sends groups out to twenty-two sites once every two weeks from May to September to test the water for turbidity, conductivity, and bacteria. These three factors are the main determinants of how safe water is for recreation. The primary piece of advice WRP provides for recreators is that if the water is visibly muddy or a precipitation event has recently occurred, people should wait to go in the water until the muddiness and potential runoff has had a chance to settle and disperse.

Even though WRP has always made a point to share this data with the public, the group took steps in 2024 to make the information even more accessible, through the installation of Swim Smart monitoring signs. WRP Program Coordinator, Christian Pelletier, oversaw the sign installation, which are placed at swimming holes and river access points throughout the watershed. The signs include advice about what visual cues to look for to determine water safety, as well as a QR code that provides access to the most recent test results from the area. In total, forty signs were strategically placed with at least one sign in each town in the watershed in order to give recreators the most accurate results for their location. This project was conducted in conjunction with ongoing work on the White River



Signs inform White River Water Trail users how to “Swim Smart”

Water Trail, which aims to improve public access to the river by providing high-quality trails, public parking, and now, access to water quality data through the addition of Swim Smart monitoring signs. Recreators have shared that they appreciate the signs. The project supports getting people out on their waters safely while instilling in people the value and importance of protecting their watershed.

Planting Riparian Buffers

Riparian buffers play a crucial role in watershed health, water quality, and flood resilience by providing critical riparian habitat, minimizing erosion and runoff, and providing shade to cool waters for aquatic wildlife. Watershed groups plant native trees and shrubs each spring and fall to rehabilitate and improve these buffer areas. Groups either recruit volunteers from local communities or hire local professional crews to help carry out these projects, which can involve planting hundreds to thousands of small trees, shrubs, and live stakes. Watershed groups work with partners and landowners to plant on private, municipal, and state lands, benefitting waterways all

In 2024:

Over **350** volunteers and nearly **30** work crew members spent over **1000** hours planting over **14,800** trees, shrubs, and live stakes at **27** sites across the state.

over the state. Watershed groups also work to monitor and maintain these planting sites to increase tree survivorship and allow the buffers to establish.

Addison County River Watch Collaborative: Dog Team Falls Riparian Buffer Planting

Dog Team Falls, a site on the New Haven River in New Haven, Vermont, is both a beloved community swimming hole and a location with a notable history, being named after a historic tavern that tragically burned down in 2006. The northern edge of the project site has a stream running through a large, wet field. This stream and field drain into a stand of sycamore and cottonwood trees along the river. The area experiences periodic damage due to the movement of ice and rock by the river. Members of the Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC) anticipated that the trees would die and uproot over time, leaving the bank vulnerable to erosion. This pattern was likely to continue unless an understory of smaller trees and shrubs was established. ACRWC encouraged the landowners to consider riparian restoration, and they readily agreed. With funding and technical support from WUV, ACRWC created a planting plan, purchased native trees from a variety of local nurseries, and hosted a tree planting event in the spring of 2024.

In May of 2024, volunteers – nine adults and 16 students from the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury – planted 200 live stakes of willow, dogwood, and sycamore, and roughly 200 native bare root trees. In 2023, Matthew Witten, Director of ACRWC, had spoken with students in a natural resources course at the Hannaford Career Center at the Dog Team site about the significance of macroinvertebrates and river conservation work. The students returned in 2024 to help with the planting. The teacher plans to have students volunteer again in 2025 to maintain the site, both providing a useful learning opportunity and to improve survivorship of the trees. This healthy woody buffer zone will help to reduce erosion, filter runoff, and enhance wildlife and aquatic habitat.



Left: Looking upstream from the Dog Team site; Right: students from Hannaford Career Center drive live stakes.

Cleaning Up Vermont's Rivers

Vermont residents and visitors value the beauty of our rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. Not only is trash in our waterways aesthetically unappealing, it creates safety hazards for people recreating, can leach contaminants, and can impact fish, turtles, and other aquatic animals. The goal is to keep trash out of rivers in the first place, but trash accumulates over time, especially with flooding. Every year, watershed groups organize river cleanups during September's River Cleanup Month. Waters tend to be lower and warmer in the fall, making it an ideal time for trash removal.

In 2024:

Watershed groups cleaned up 139 river sites with over 396 volunteers assisting in clean-up efforts, removing more than 13,000 pounds of trash from Vermont rivers.

Missisquoi River Basin Association: Trash Treasure Hunt

Volunteering for river cleanups was how Lindsey Wight, Executive Director of the Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA), got involved in river work. Though MRBA has carried out trash removal efforts since its founding, Wight made these cleanups a priority after she joined the organization. MRBA now hosts at least one river cleanup each year, and the process of organizing and carrying out these events has grown to involve many groups, making the effort a community affair. High school interns and MRBA staff organize and run the event, volunteers help with trash collection, trash crews help remove collected waste, and Jay Peak Resort provides a shuttle to move volunteers.

In 2024, highschool interns worked with MRBA for a month, planning and organizing the cleanup, providing the students with an opportunity to

develop their outreach skills. In August, 13 student volunteers selected a 2.5 mile stretch of the Trout River between a covered bridge and public park for the cleanup. The pace of these cleanups is slow in order to be thorough, and it can be difficult especially when removing deeply embedded waste or "legacy trash," like the remnants of old junk piles. However, participants focused on maintaining a light atmosphere by doing things like noting the best item found, such as an unearthed rubber duck. Wight likes to think of these cleanups as "trash treasure hunts," evoking the shared sentiment among volunteers that the experience is fun and rewarding. Long-time participants enjoy watching the segments of river improve over time, with a satisfaction that their contribution is improving the health and function of the watershed.

MRBA



MRBA

Volunteers work to remove trash from the Trout River in August 2024

Restoring Watersheds and Improving Connectivity

Watershed groups work to develop, design, and implement a wide range of watershed restoration projects. Such projects are often quite complex, and watershed groups implement these projects alongside landowners, municipalities, other conservation partners, engineers, construction contractors, and funders. The projects, which include stormwater mitigation, river and floodplain restoration, dam removal and culvert replacement, and lakeshore and wetland restoration, are critical for reducing sediment and nutrient runoff, for restoring aquatic and riparian habitat, improving river connectivity, and for making our watersheds and communities more flood resilient.

In 2024:

65 clean water projects developed;
48 stormwater, river, wetland, and lakeshore projects designed; **10** stormwater, river, wetland, and lakeshore projects implemented; and many more projects on the way!
441 culverts were assessed for replacement or retrofit and **2** culverts were replaced with an appropriate size. **13** dams were assessed for removal and **1** dam was removed, reconnecting **6** miles of river.

Connecticut River Conservancy: Blake Higgins Dam Removal

The 90-foot-long Blake Higgins Dam, built on the Saxtons River in Bellows Falls, is thought to have been constructed as early as 1838. Originally built to generate power for a nearby paper mill, the dam has undergone many iterations since its original timber form. At one time, it was reinforced with concrete. Despite this, it fell into disrepair. The dam was no longer needed to generate power and was too damaged to be considered for the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, it barred several fish species, such as the American eel, American shad, and notably the native sea lamprey, from reaching prime spawning habitat. The dam has also caused sediment buildup and raised the flood elevation of this stretch of river, increasing the risk of damage in the surrounding area by high waters. Its removal was identified as a priority in 2010, and in 2019 VTDEC contacted Director of Programs at the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC), Ron Rhodes, to oversee its removal. After a six-year planning process and the acquisition of seven different grants, including VTDEC Clean Water funds, CRC secured the \$450,000 to pay

for the removal project. Key partners for this project included the VTDEC, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CRC and contractors began work in spring of 2024. The dam, along with 750 cubic yards of trapped sediment, were removed in August. The removal of the dam will improve water quality and reduce the flood elevation by approximately seven feet, which will allow the river to fluctuate more before overflowing. The removal will also expand fish spawning habitat by approximately one mile. The substrate of this stretch of river is especially well suited for sea lamprey spawning habitat. These fish are native to the Connecticut River and it is a priority to protect and increase connection within their native spawning range. During the spring and summer of 2025, these fish will be able to migrate past the formerly dammed area for the first time in over 200 years! CRC and the Vermont River Conservancy also have further plans for the area in 2025, including a riparian planting project and site amelioration to restore and enhance public access to the river.

White River Partnership: Beaver Habitat Assessment

Beavers are habitat engineers, providing essential services to their ecosystems. Beaver dams and their tree felling create wetlands that provide habitat for a variety of other species. Dams also “slow the flow” of water, increasing water retention while decreasing the risk of damage during flood events. Understanding the current and potential distribution of beavers is of significant interest to conservation groups and governmental agencies in Vermont. The Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT) is a Geographic Information System software-based program that can be used to analyze areas for their capacity to support beavers. This technology has been primarily tested in the western United States. In 2022, the White Mountain and Green Mountain National Forests partnered to have BRAT conducted in order to explore the applicability of the results to two eastern forests.

The White River Partnership (WRP) had already planned to do beaver-related work in 2024. When they were informed that a BRAT assessment had been conducted for the Green Mountain National Forest, of which 50,000 acres lies within the White River watershed, they contacted the US Forest Service (USFS) to explore the idea of partnering on a project to ground-truth the BRAT results. During this time, the VTDEC Tactical Basin Planner, Keith Fritschie, was also working on creating a

similar assessment tool to identify areas suitable for strategic wood additions (SWA), the purposeful felling of trees into streams to improve structure or slow the flow of water. The goal of this SWA tool was to make something more focused and accessible than larger assessments like BRAT. After mutually hearing about these ongoing projects, Fritschie joined as a project partner to see if the VTDEC’s SWA tool could also be applied to beaver habitat.

In October 2024, WRP collaborated with Keith to gather field data in order to test the BRAT results. WRP worked to estimate the number of beaver dams per kilometer and also monitored for hardwood food resources and newly dead trees, which are a critical component of beaver habitat. They also surveyed areas that BRAT identified as being able to support new beaver dams. WRP then compared this data to the predicted results and to the VTDEC SWA tool outputs, observing both areas of overlap and differences in the data. WRP will continue gathering data in 2025 to improve clarity on BRAT’s applicability and continue to provide feedback on the VTDEC’s SWA tool for future use by Vermont conservation groups. The end goal of the WRP/USFS BRAT project is to establish a protocol and means of assessment to support healthy beaver populations via habitat rehabilitation and vegetation management, in turn benefitting forest and watershed function.



White River Partnership

Gathering assessment data at a beaver pond in the Green Mountain National Forest

Connecting People to Their Waters

Watershed groups engage with communities to connect people to the conservation of their local rivers and lakes. This outreach programming can include hosting workshops, organizing problem-solving conversations within communities, teaching fun watershed lessons in our schools, and hosting recreational events geared at getting people near or on the water!

When people are more connected to nature and the waters around them, it is intrinsically beneficial for their wellbeing. Additionally, the more people care about their local waters, the more they tend to work to restore and protect them, either through volunteering, hosting a clean water project on their property, or using water-friendly practices at home. This is important

In 2024:

Watershed Groups hosted over 50 public workshops, trainings, and recreational events that were attended by more than 500 community members. Watershed Groups engaged more than 1500 students in education activities in their watersheds. More than 400 volunteers cleaned up local waters and monitored water quality.

over time, as it takes many people in a community to spread the word about protecting our natural resources.

Missisquoi River Basin Association: A Guided Nature Paddle

In 2014, 46.1 miles of the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers were officially designated as Wild and Scenic, the first and only designation of its kind in Vermont, recognizing the notable natural and historic value of these stretches of river. A primary goal of the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers (UMATR) Wild & Scenic Committee is connecting communities to these unique and beautiful lands and the waters around them. In the winter, this takes the form of tree identification walks and an online seminar series, but once the ice melts and temperatures warm, the activity of choice is exploring the rivers through guided paddles. One of the most popular paddle trips, the annual Nature Paddle, is led by county foresters on different sections of river throughout the watershed. During these paddles, groups travel at a slow and mindful pace, while the forester provides information about the surroundings and answers questions.



Guided Nature Paddle with Orleans County Forester Jared Nunery on the Missisquoi River in Troy

In early July 2024, Orleans County forester Jared Nunery led a group of nine paddlers down a calm stretch of the Missisquoi River between Big Falls and North Troy. This stretch of river is characterized by substantial riparian zones and wetlands, providing an example of a healthy and functional river ecosystem. Several past and future restoration sites were visible on the banks. Getting people out on the water is key to UMATR's goal of instilling in communities the importance of protecting and valuing their waters. Lindsey Wight, Executive Director of UMATR and the Missisquoi

River Basin Association (MRBA), says that these paddles provide an opportunity to see the river from a new perspective, as participants are able to look up the banks while moving at the speed of the water. Participants have expressed their enjoyment of these events, both as community-builders and as educational opportunities.

Lewis Creek Association: Stormwater Education

Through the Vermont Green Schools Initiative, the Lewis Creek Association (LCA) worked with two hundred 5th-8th grade students and teachers at Hinesburg Community School and thirty-five 6th grade students at Charlotte Community School in 2024-

2025. LCA provided hands-on lessons about stormwater on the school campuses, its effect on local watersheds, and ways to help improve water quality. LCA staff met twice with each group of students, first engaging students in a hands-



CCS 6th grade students mapping flow paths and learning about the design features of the gravel wetland constructed on their campus on a blustery early spring day!

on experiment to understand impervious and pervious surfaces. The second session was held with stormwater engineers from SLR, an engineering consulting company, who had designed green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) projects at both schools.

While the GSI projects at the

Charlotte Community School were constructed in summer 2024, the initial designs for the projects at Hinesburg Community School needed to be revised. VTDEC funding from the Vermont Green Schools Initiative allowed LCA to work with the engineers at SLR to engage the 7th/8th grade students in the design revisions. Students learned about the site constraints such as clay soils, wetlands, and slopes, and weighed in on how they use their campus spaces. The students spent time developing their own proposals for treating stormwater, which they presented to fellow students, teachers, engineers, and school administrators. The engineers took these ideas into account for their final designs, which they shared back with the students before the end of the school year. At this final session, and after learning about a variety of suitable native plants, 100 students voted to select six plants for the projects: monkeyflower, swamp milkweed, blue false indigo, blue joint, New England aster, and nodding onion. The revised designs for the two gravel wetlands on the Hinesburg Community School campus will hopefully be constructed and planted with these six species in the summer of 2026. During the 2025-2026 school year, LCA plans to continue their work with students at both schools to develop interpretive signage for the installed GSI projects, as well as continue the stormwater education sessions.



Students recording stormwater flow data

Friends of the Mad River: River Exploration Day

In October 2024, Friends of the Mad River (FMR) hosted their first annual River Exploration Day for elementary students from across the watershed in collaboration with experts from the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (VTFWD) and Trout Unlimited. The event was held in Lareau Park in Waitsfield, situated adjacent to a stretch of the Mad River, one of FMR's restoration sites, and a popular recreation area. Participants included 130 third and fourth grade students from the Waitsfield, Warren, Moretown, and Fayston elementary schools.

The day included three workshops. First, VTFWD fisheries biologist Bret Ladago discussed fish diversity and habitat requirements in the Mad River and showed students some of the equipment typically used for fish sampling. Second, Clark Amadon of Trout Unlimited taught students about the concept of a watershed, using a stream table to demonstrate the drainage of precipitation. Students were able to manipulate different elements of the table to better understand the impacts of land cover and the various types of precipitation events. Third, Ira Shadis, Executive Director of FMR, and Luke Foley, Climate and Engagement Manager of FMR, led students on a riparian bingo hunt. This activity gave students the opportunity to practice identifying both native and invasive species in a riparian forest and included a section on tree planting.

The elementary students were excited to spend the day outside. The atmosphere of

the event was one of curiosity and engagement. River Exploration Day created the perfect setting to share knowledge about the watershed, inspiring young people to take part in enjoying and protecting their local natural resources. Making this day an annual event will further allow young students to be inspired and informed about the ecosystems around them for years to come.



Fisheries Biologist Bret Ladago and students



Ira Shadis, Executive Director of FMR, with students at River Exploration Day

Growing Clean Water Workforce Capacity

In order to support the watershed engagement work including education and outreach, water quality monitoring, river cleanups, and complex river and watershed restoration projects, watershed groups need the staff and resources to be impactful. Over the past several years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the work that watershed groups and partners are doing around the

state to develop, design and implement restoration projects, and the need for these organizations to have the appropriate resources and staffing. While funding for operations is still a challenge, state and private foundations are making the investment to help support the organizations that are so critical in our collective effort towards ensuring clean water and healthy and resilient watersheds.

Friends of the Winooski River: Building a Watershed Workforce

Up until mid-2023, Friends of the Winooski River (FWR) had conducted restoration and protection efforts throughout the expansive Winooski watershed with only three part-time staff (paid hourly) and a handful of dedicated volunteers. When two staff members announced their departures to seek more sustainable employment in 2023, Executive Director Michele Braun knew it was time for a change. FWR was in a good place to grow, and Braun saw this moment as an opportunity to expand by hiring full-time employees. She not only wanted employees at FWR to be able to financially support themselves from their work at the organization, but also wanted to provide career growth opportunities, benefits, and an equitable workplace. Making these ideas a reality was not an easy process, and negotiations with the Board of Directors about what exactly these new positions would look like took some time.

However, with help from other watershed groups throughout the state, providing models of personnel policy and benefits structures they used, and with funding from VTDEC through the WUV Capacity Grant, FWR was able to begin its search for two full-time positions. In January 2024, two new team members, Taylor Litwin and Sam Puddicombe, were brought on board, both acting as project managers. Litwin took over volunteer coordination,

education and outreach, water quality testing, and social media, while Puddicombe took on managing strategic wood additions and the planting program, including developing new planting projects and managing old ones. The two staff share the work of managing property consultations through the Stream Wise and Storm Smart programs. These staffing additions allow Braun to focus her attention on managing operations and big restoration projects such as dam removals, as well as on FWR's ongoing role in flood resilience work. FWR's growth also included a physical move to a bigger, brighter office space.

Although this period of change was challenging, Braun expressed that overall, the experience was very positive, and she is grateful for the support from other watershed groups and the funding from the WUV Capacity Grant. The funding allowed FWR to provide employee training and improved HR systems, factoring in to Braun's goal of creating a supportive, functional, and equitable place for young professionals. The increased capacity of three full-time workers will allow FWR to complete more projects and dedicate more time and energy towards outreach and community programs, increasing the organization's reach and positive impact throughout the watershed.



New FWR employees Sam Puddicombe and Taylor Litwin at a planting event.

Supporting Flood Resiliency

Intensifying weather patterns as a result of climate change brought significant flooding to Vermont in 2023 and 2024. These floods have been the most severe and destructive since Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. Many communities across the state are still recovering financially and physically. Watershed groups played a key role in the immediate and long-term response to these

In 2024:

9 watershed groups reported flooding in their watershed in 2024 and spent over 400 hours on flood response.

disasters, providing communities with information and on-the-ground help. They have worked to both continue existing flood resilience efforts and start new resilience projects where possible. These projects include riparian plantings to stabilize river banks, dam removals, and informational campaigns to inform communities about the risks they face and how to mitigate them.

Flood Response Work

In the aftermath of the severe flood events in July 2023 and 2024, watershed groups frequently took on the responsibility of working with individuals and their communities on restoration and resilience efforts. The flood recovery and resilience needs across the state are large and involve many agencies and organizations. Watershed groups' approach to supporting communities after the floods varied depending on the extent and nature of the flooding, the community needs, and the organization's capacity and mission. For some watershed groups, the events of 2023 and 2024 were a pivotal moment, highlighting a need to increase their focus on flood resilience. For others, the flooding reinforced preexisting goals to improve watershed health and resilience. However, a common report from all groups was a general intensification of concern of community members across the state over flooding and an increased interest in resiliency projects.

The Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC) and Friends

of the Winooski River (FWR) both recall the 2023 flooding as a very significant event. Both watersheds were hit with flooding due to excessive rainfall. Matthew Witten, Executive Director of ACRWC, emphasized that this flood event "absolutely changed how ACRWC talks with landowners." He shared that the community interest in buffer planting and green stormwater installations has skyrocketed. ACRWC has additionally observed nearly twice as many participants at flood resilience events. While community engagement is a positive thing, it is also indicative of the worry many Vermonters feel about future flood events and the intensification of weather that causes the increase in the severity and frequency of flooding. Witten stated that amidst the increased interest

of landowners in these flood resilience projects, ACRWC has tried to convey to

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Patrick Hurley, MWA

MWA responded to many urgent requests for assistance across portions of Morgan and East Charleston following a 1,000-year flood.

Flood Response Work

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people that while these projects can mitigate the effects of flooding, the ultimate cause of the issue is of a bigger scale.

The Winooski watershed was one of the most heavily impacted areas in the state in 2023. In 2024, FWR was extensively involved in community outreach and flood education events. Executive Director Michele Braun explained that in times of flood crises, people turn towards FWR as the regional organization that understands how rivers work. As a result, the organization now serves on a number of community and municipal boards, committees, and task forces. FWR has additionally taken on a lead role in the Winooski Flood Resilience Collaborative started by the Montpelier Commission on Recovery and Resilience. This collaborative met for the first time in 2024 and brought together municipal officials from two dozen communities to share experiences in flood recovery. Beyond that, FWR has been asked to help with the planning and design of several large dam removal projects throughout the watershed.

Other groups, such as the White River Partnership (WRP) and Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA), noted that while the events did not significantly change the needs of their community nor their approach, the floods still caused an increase in awareness and concern around flood risk and the need for resiliency statewide. Mary Russ, Executive Director of WRP, said that the 2011 flooding from Tropical Storm Irene was the primary catalyst for WRP's engagement in flood resiliency across the watershed. Though the White River watershed did experience flooding in 2023, Russ describes the experience as having "refined" their approach rather than having "defined" it. MRBA Executive Director Lindsey Wight explained that the Missisquoi River Basin experienced much less destruction as a result of flooding over the past few years and therefore did not have to shift their priorities. Despite this, Wight did note the organization's awareness of changing attitudes statewide and their increased focus on providing accurate information to concerned community members and continuing to engage in flood resilience efforts.



Jim Deshler Photography

Friends of the Winooski staff and community volunteers clean up the Stevens Branch with the Barre Rivers Collective.

Watersheds United Vermont Subgrant Program

Watersheds United Vermont is an association of community-based watershed groups across Vermont. WUV provides information, resources and training to watershed groups; encourages collaborations and connections among watershed groups and with partner organizations; and acts as a voice and a representative for watershed groups at the state level.

WUV Supports, Connects, Informs and Represents Watershed Groups.

- Provides updates on funding opportunities, events, trainings, and relevant resources to keep watershed groups and partner organizations informed, engaged and connected,
- Convenes watershed group trainings and gatherings to provide opportunities for watershed groups to collaborate and connect to share about successes, common challenges and opportunities,
- Acts as a Core Partner for the Vermont Community Foundation to support a cohort of Watershed Groups through the Healthy Watersheds Initiative,
- Connects watershed groups to each other and partner organizations to allow for peer learning and collaboration,
- Represents watershed groups at the state agency level to foster engagement with policy makers,
- Participates in statewide sector-based groups to ensure that statewide efforts take into consideration the expertise and the needs of community-based groups,
- Works with multiple partners and funders to ensure that watershed groups have the resources and tools they need to best protect and restore Vermont's waters, and
- Advocates for a holistic and comprehensive approach to clean water and healthy watersheds statewide!

WUV and watershed groups partner with a diverse set of community-based partners working to protect and restore clean water, including Natural Resources Conservation Districts, Lake Associations, municipalities and conservation organizations. WUV and watershed groups also partner with regional and statewide Technical/ Service partners, including state and federal agencies, land trusts, Regional Planning Commissions, and water advocacy organizations. These collaborations and partnerships are critical for tackling complex challenges to protect and restore Vermont's waters.

www.watershedsunitedvt.org

Lyn Munno, *Director*

lyn@watershedsunitedvt.org

WUV Subgrant Programs for Watershed Restoration, Education and Outreach and Capacity Building!

WUV provides funding to watershed groups and partner organizations for projects to improve water quality and watershed health! For the past six years, WUV has been administering grant programs to provide funding to watershed groups and partners for the development, design and implementation of clean water projects to restore Vermont's waters. This funding through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and private funders allows WUV to provide subgrants for the design and implementation of riparian buffer planting, dam removal, river, floodplain, lakeshore, wetland restoration, and stormwater management. The subgrants also support groups' important work engaging with landowners, communities, and partners to develop these voluntary clean water projects. 2024 WUV's Subgrant Program Statistics:

\$2.4 million in funding to watershed groups and partners and supported:

13 Riparian Buffer Planting Projects

27 Natural Resources Restoration and Stormwater Design and Implementation projects

7 project development efforts

13 Watershed groups working with Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to develop and implement the state's Tactical Basin Plans.

And 29 organizations to build capacity in order to do more and more complex clean water projects!

Watersheds United Vermont (WUV) was also thrilled to administer the Watershed Education and Outreach Subgrant Program to support watershed groups as they connect people to local waters, teach kids and adults about watersheds, and inspire people to play a role in protecting and restoring Vermont's rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. In 2024, this grant provided funding to:

11 watershed organizations who recruited

400 volunteers to clean up local waters and to monitor water quality and engaged with

3,020 students and adults across Vermont who participated in more than

250 education and outreach opportunities.

Watershed Groups:

Restoring and Protecting Vermont's Waters!

The following groups are represented in this report:

Addison County River Watch Collaborative

Battenkill Conservancy

Black River Action Team

Connecticut River Conservancy

Franklin Watershed Committee

Friends of the Mad River

Friends of Northern Lake Champlain

Friends of the Winooski River

Hoosic River Watershed Association

Lake Champlain Committee

Lewis Creek Association

Memphremagog Watershed Association

Missisquoi River Basin Association

Northwoods Stewardship Center

White River Partnership

Lewis Creek Association



Friends of the Winooski River

Addison County River Watch Collaborative



Black River Action Team



Friends of the Winooski River