

# CURRENTS

working together for the health of the white river watershed

Fall 2008

## mission

The White River Partnership (WRP) brings together people and local communities to improve the long-term health of the White River and its watershed.

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Carl Russell, Bethel-Gilead

## A Tale of Two Culverts

—Mary Russ, Executive Director



A rock weir below the Broad Brook culvert raises the water surface during low-flow conditions.

Trout and other fish depend on the entire river system for survival, so connecting upstream and downstream habitats is important. Culverts under roads and bridges allow fish and other aquatic life to move from one habitat to another. As a result, the WRP and its partners are in the process of identifying and implementing a series of culvert modification projects to improve fish passage, thereby connecting vital habitats and increasing native fish populations.

In July 2008, the WRP, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service, the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife, Trout Unlimited, the Town of Sharon, Thrasher Construction and two local landowners worked together to complete a fish passage enhancement project on the Broad

Brook culvert under River Road in Sharon. The culvert was perched about 1-foot above the outlet pool, deterring fish passage in low-flow conditions. Using heavy equipment, project partners constructed a rock wall across Broad Brook to raise the water surface about 6-inches above the lip of the culvert. As a result, trout and sea-run Atlantic salmon will be able to access nearly 6 miles of unobstructed spawning and rearing habitats on Broad Brook at all water levels. The Down Stream Team helped with all aspects of the project, gaining permission from neighboring landowners to access the site, coordinating pick-up of extracted gravel by the Town of Sharon road crew, and seeding the banks after the project was completed.



Wooden baffles in the Mill Brook culvert require routine maintenance.

The Down Stream Team is also helping the WRP coordinate a second fish passage project on the Mill Brook culvert under White River Lane in Pomfret. This culvert was modified in 1995 through a cooperative effort between the US Forest Service, the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Trout Unlimited. The project involved bolting wooden baffles to the floor of the culvert at evenly-spaced intervals to enhance fish passage during high-flow conditions. The wooden structures require routine maintenance, so the WRP and its partners plan to replace the missing baffles and conduct maintenance on the existing baffles this fall to ensure continued fish passage to upstream habitats.

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# Calendar

Contact the WRP at (802) 763-7733 or visit our website at [www.whiteriverpartnership.org](http://www.whiteriverpartnership.org) to get more information.

## Monthly Work Group Meetings:

**First Tuesday:** Forestry Work Group, 7pm at Royalton Academy Building in Royalton

**Second Wednesday:** Upper River Stream Team, 6pm at Ranger Station in Rochester

**Second Thursday:** Board of Directors, 7pm at Fish Hatchery in Bethel

**Last Wednesday:** Down Stream Team, 7pm at Old Sharon Academy in Sharon

## Upcoming Events and Volunteer Opportunities:

**September 27: River Cleanup, AHT Plumbing & Heating, Sharon.** Help students from The Sharon Academy clean-up the White River in Sharon from 1-4pm. The cleanup will begin and end at AHT, located at 5632 VT Rte. 14 in Sharon. For directions and more details, visit our website.

**October 18: Annual Meeting, White River Golf Club, Rochester.** Mark your calendar for this year's annual celebration! Interested participants are invited to join the Board of Directors for a 9-hole golf game fundraiser starting at 3 pm; for more information, including greens fees, visit our website. The annual meeting starts at 6:00 — we hope you'll join us to eat some delicious appetizers, visit with your neighbors, and celebrate another year of hard work to improve the White River watershed! For directions and more details, visit our website.

## Partner Updates:

As a major tributary to the Connecticut River, the White River watershed is a *Special Focus Area* of the **Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge**. The Refuge is currently in the process of updating its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) by integrating input from the last public comment deadline of June 13. It is projected that the Draft CCP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be released to the public for comment some time early in 2009.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a joint program between the VT and US Departments of Agriculture designed to help reduce pollution in streams. The program does so by installing vegetation to improve water quality and by compensating landowners for the loss of productive agricultural land. The WRP works closely with VT CREP Coordinator, **Laura DiPietro**, to conduct site visits with agricultural landowners in the White River watershed who may be eligible for CREP. Since 2007, the WRP has planted several CREP buffers through our Trees for Streams Program. For more information, visit [www.anr.state.vt.us/cleanandclear/ag-crep.htm](http://www.anr.state.vt.us/cleanandclear/ag-crep.htm)

(Project News continued From Facing page 3)

## Non-Native Invasive Plant Collaboration on Upper White



Landowners receive training to survey the Upper White River for non-native invasive plants.

The WRP's Upper River Stream Team has been working closely with the Green Mountain National Forest, state and federal agencies, towns, landowners, and local businesses in an effort to manage non-native invasive plant (NNIP) species in the Upper White River watershed. After several meetings, the working group has developed the following goals: to manage NNIP across boundaries within the Upper White River watershed (Granville south to Stockbridge); to collect survey data in order to document the spread of NNIP and to identify potential projects; and to apply for grants to fund NNIP management and eradication within the watershed boundaries. For more information about this exciting effort — or to get involved — visit our website.

## Didymo Education

This summer, didymo has been confirmed in two new locations in Vermont: the Mad River watershed and Locust Creek, a tributary to the White River. Because the invasive algae spreads easily and cannot be eradicated, the WRP, Trout Unlimited (TU), the VT Agency of Natural Resources, the Town of Royalton, and dozens of concerned citizens have ramped up efforts to spread the word about didymo to specific river users — anglers and paddlers. Through a grant from the VT Agency of Natural Resources, the WRP and its partners have hosted educational events — including a Didymo Dance and a Didymo Bingo Night — developed and distributed an informational brochure at local outfitters and businesses that sell fishing licenses, installed permanent signs along the river, and monitored the White River for didymo blooms in new locations. For more information about stopping the spread of didymo, visit our website. ● ●

# Project News

## Trees for Streams Program

This spring, the WRP planted over 2,400 native trees and shrubs along Ayers Brook in Braintree and Penny Brook in Randolph Center and over 500 native trees and shrubs at 5 additional sites in Chelsea, Hartford, Randolph, and Sharon. Nearly 250 volunteers donated their time to make the plantings a success, including students from eight schools, landowners, boy scouts, and volunteers from towns and WRP stream teams. Thanks to all of this year's volunteers, to Mike Bald for coordinating the volunteers, and to the Green Mountain National Forest and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program for funding our 2008 Program!

## River Corridor Management Updates

Through grant funding from the VT Clean and Clear Program and the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund, the WRP is working with Redstart Forestry, the VT River Management Program, and other partners to develop and implement river corridor restoration projects in three subwatersheds: Ayers Brook, the Upper White River, and the Tweed River. Specific projects were identified in River Corridor Management Plans developed by the WRP for each targeted subwatershed in 2007 and 2008. Using these Plans as a guide, the WRP and its partners have been conducting site visits with local landowners to identify opportunities to implement recommended projects, including revegetating the riparian buffer and conserving land along the river through the purchase of development rights.

Since spring 2008, the WRP and its partners have restored 16 acres of riparian buffer and conserved almost 3 miles of river frontage along Ayers Brook in Braintree and Randolph; in addition, the WRP's Upper River Stream Team has contacted dozens of landowner along the Upper White and Tweed River, laying the groundwork for future restoration projects. Although the river corridor planning approach is fairly new in Vermont, our work has become a model for restoration – in recognition of the WRP's continuing work on Ayers Brook, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation recognized the project as an "Exemplary Grant" (see [www.nhcf.org/page16898.cfm](http://www.nhcf.org/page16898.cfm)).

(Project News continued on page 2)



Equipment and supplies await tree planting volunteers at a project site in Braintree.

## Thank you!

Every summer, the WRP recruits a summer intern and dozens of dedicated community members to help us assess the health of the watershed by collecting water quality, temperature, and geomorphic data. This year's intern, Caroline LeFebure, a student at Vermont Law School, helped coordinate our eighth summer assessment by training water quality monitoring volunteers, processing *E. coli* samples, installing thermographs, and surveying permanent cross-sections. As a result, we have gathered a mountain of data that we will share with towns and communities and analyze to understand the overall health of the watershed.

Our assessment program would not be possible without the help of Caroline, our volunteers who collected, transported, and processed water quality samples, our partners who provided training and technical assistance, and a handful of local businesses that allowed us to use their drink coolers and front porches as sample drop-off sites. Thank you!

## VOLUNTEERS & BUSINESSES

Jon Bouton  
Becky Burgee  
Janice Chan  
Corner Stop, S. Royalton  
Karen & Marlys Eddy  
Don Faulkner  
Karin Furman  
George D. Aiken RC&D, Randolph  
Green Mountain Grille, Stockbridge  
Mark Heckmann & Alex Miller  
Patricia Harrington  
Richard Harvey  
John & Bonnylee Hooper  
Janni Jacobs  
Carol Jones  
Bev Kerr  
Wanda Knudsen  
Sue Lansil  
Kathy Leonard  
Locust Creek Outfitter's, Bethel  
M&N's Mini Mart, Royalton

Tom MacNair  
Jim Martin  
Mike McDonnell  
Dan McKinley  
Lynn McNamara  
Don Munro  
Mary Pavone  
Gayle Poinsette  
Terry Reddick  
Karen Reynolds  
Ron Rhodes  
Rochester Ranger Station  
Lloyd Rudolph  
Greg Russ  
Betsy Shands  
Melissa Sharkis  
Sadie Spruce  
Sue Staats  
Tunbridge General Store  
Rod VanHouten



## Get Involved!

The WRP is a nationally recognized and award-winning watershed organization because of the involvement and strong commitment of our devoted community members and partners. We depend on hundreds of volunteers each year to accomplish much of our important work. Here are a few ways that you too can get involved with the WRP this year — no experience necessary!

- Volunteer in the office — We can always use a hand in the office.
- Become a town liaison — We are recruiting volunteers to distribute newsletters and other outreach materials around their towns as well as to communicate about WRP programs and events with their town governments.
- Join a stewardship group — Get involved in your “sub-watershed” by joining a local Stream Team or working group.

To find out more about how you can get involved and support the work of the WRP, please call us at (802) 763-7733 or email [info@whiteriverpartnership.org](mailto:info@whiteriverpartnership.org).

## Join the White River Partnership

The WRP depends on contributions to support our good work in the watershed. Please become a member today by making a tax-deductible donation.

**Yes, I would like to join the WRP. Enclosed is my contribution of:**

\$30: Individual  \$40: Family  \$50: Business

Sweat Equity: 2 hours volunteering equals a 1-year membership!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to the “White River Partnership” and mail to:  
P.O. Box 705, S. Royalton, VT 05068.

## Open House Celebration

Over 40 WRP members and volunteers helped the WRP celebrate its move into the Royalton Academy Building with an open house on Saturday, June 14. Attendees caught up with friends and neighbors in the building’s spacious downstairs meeting room while enjoying a delicious volunteer appreciation BBQ, a demonstration of the WRP’s in-house water quality processing equipment, a tour of the new second-floor office, and a PowerPoint presentation about didymo, the invasive algae growing in portions of the White River. The festivities ended with a rousing series of “Didymo Bingo” — the winner from each bingo game selected a prize donated by a local business after correctly answering a didymo trivia question. Thanks to AHT Plumbing & Heating and The Sharon Trading Post for providing the refreshments; to Sandy Conrad and the Royalton Civics Club for providing and expertly running the bingo equipment; and to the WRP Board members and volunteers who helped make this and all of our events a success! ●●

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