Fayston Conservation Commission

Fall 2024 Update

Autumn once again showcased the beauty and wonder of the Green Mountains and our Mad River Valley. To ensure that the beauty and ecologically vibrant lands and waters of Fayston persist sustainably into the future, the Fayston Conservation Commission (FCC) has been hard at work. From managing our two town forests to battling invasives, we have been looking at ways to ensure the Mad River Valley continues to be a home for diverse wildlife and abundant natural splendor. Here's an update on our latest progress:

Boyce Hill Town Forest management and maintenance: A new information kiosk featuring a trail map and general guidance is in production. The frame has been installed, and the information panel is expected by the end of November.

The Boyce Hill Committee hosted a community stewardship weekend 10/19-20. This effort focused on clearing trees from the back side of the dam that forms the pond. Preventing trees from growing on the embankment is critical to protecting the integrity of the dam and pond. Many thanks to the 15 volunteers who took part in this physically demanding work.

Sugarbush Resort began end-of-season mowing on Monday, 10/28. This will be the fifth consecutive year it has donated the labor and equipment for this challenging job. We are grateful to John Hammond and equipment operator Warren Harrod for their efforts and willingness to continue this arrangement.

The Boyce Hill Committee is now maintaining a path to and along the western boundary to bring visitors to a stone corral and stone wall that remain in evidence of Boyce Hill's cultural history. This dead-end path will ensure protection for sensitive ecology that lies beyond the terminus; we urge you to be mindful of staying on the trail. There are also serpentine paths found in the southeastern corner of the property that provide a great opportunity to get a closer look at some of the smaller flora and fauna that inhabit the hillside. Use iNaturalist, Seek, or other apps and resources to see how many species you can identify on these nature walks!

Chase Brook Town Forest management and maintenance: If you haven't visited the Chase Brook trails recently, check out the informational signs at the trailhead about knotweed management. You may also notice two tarps and two new Serviceberry trees near the barn. These tarped sites will become pollinator gardens in the spring, and the native Serviceberries

were planted to honor Corrie Miller and Lisa Koitzsch, two long-serving leaders of the Conservation Commission.

We have begun the process of updating the Chase Brook Town Forest Management Plan by collecting input from stakeholders including the Catamount Trail Association, Mad River Riders, Mad River Path, and Fayston Elementary School. We plan to send a survey to all Fayston residents to better understand what this town forest means to you, if and how you use it, and what thoughts you have regarding the management of this town resource.

Invasives/Japanese Knotweed management: Our ongoing tri-town invasives management field work with interns from the University of Vermont, as well as a team of goats, has come to a close for this year. Collaboration with the Waitsfield and Warren Conservation Commissions, UVM Ecological Planning Laboratory (EPL), and UVM professors helped us deepen our knowledge of invasives and further the research we are undertaking. Our Valley-wide efforts were nicely documented in this short EPL video. This fall and winter, we will continue planning for next summer and determining funding needs for this important program.

Conservation & Recreation Visioning: Another Valley-wide effort, Conservation Recreation Visioning (CRV), involves local recreation and conservation-focused organizations (including the three Conservation Commissions) and focuses on finding ways to balance current and future recreational use in a manner that supports the ecological integrity of the Valley. Over the summer and fall, the CRV evaluated current recreational use and ecological conditions in the Valley and what we all would like to see in the Valley in the future. To aid in this process, the CRV also worked with Arrowood Environmental to create an online map that highlights existing recreational trails and areas along with a wide range of ecological aspects throughout the Valley. This tool will be incredibly helpful when considering the creation of new trails and places where it is important to focus on conservation needs. The CRV will host one more community forum this year on November 20th at the Valley Players Theater, with a potluck from 5 to 6pm and the forum from 6 to 8pm. This forum will focus on the last phase of CRV work for 2024 and ways to continue with this collaborative effort into 2025.

MRV Bear Initiative: You may have seen in Front Porch Forum that "bears are currently in the state called 'hyperphagia', meaning that they are eating everything they can find to bulk up for hibernation. They will den down when the cold arrives and there is no more natural food available -- sometime in December, most likely." Jacyln Comeau, VT Fish & Wildlife Biologist visited the Mad River Valley on October 3rd to present Living with Black Bears at the Warren Library. To learn more about how to keep our bears wild and live peaceably with them, check out https://madrivervalley.com/stewardmrv/living-with-bears/, and request a free Toolkit to share with guests and visitors.

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About the FCC

Your Fayston Conservation Commission has been working steadily to manage and maintain our

town's natural resources since 2008. The Commission has six members, one open seat, and one open alternate seat. Current commissioners include Brian Litmans (co-chair), Andrea Henderson (co-chair), Amy Dalton, Patty Pasley, Woody Dugan, and Peter Colgan.

Our team operates with the philosophy that small acts of community add up to large ones, and we invite all interested neighbors to join us. If you'd like to be a Fayston Conservation Commissioner or volunteer to support our activities, please contact us at faystonconservation@madriver.com.

You can learn more about the Commission on the Fayston town webpage.