Spring 2025 Fayston Conservation Commission Update

Spring has sprung, or so we thought. It seems like winter isn't quite ready to let go. As some turn to preparing for spring by getting seedlings going or doing a little spring cleaning, others are still reveling in the last surge of winter in the mountains. Despite not knowing what season it exactly is, the FCC remains busy and is planning for another exciting spring and summer.

Bears are waking up…

With spring kicking off in fits and starts, the bears are waking up. Vermont Fish & Wildlife has found that bears in Vermont are becoming active earlier in spring, with activity starting as early as mid-March. To ensure that bears and humans can continue to safely coexist in the Mad River Valley, it is time to take some important steps for you, your neighbors, our Valley and the bears. Failing to take these steps is likely to lead to more habituated bears and conflict.

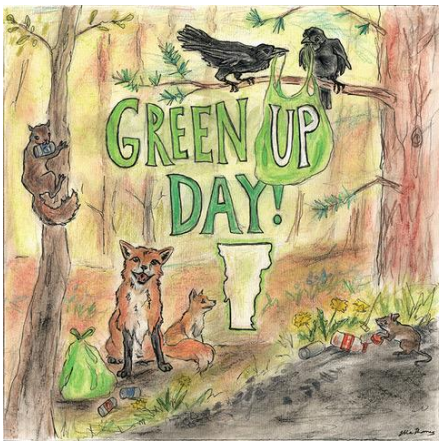
So, what to do? First and foremost, take down bird feeders, if you haven't already. It is key to prevent bears from associating humans with available food. Store garbage in bear-resistant containers or structures and use electric fences to keep chickens and honeybees safe.

Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

If a bear encounter occurs, please contact Vermont Fish & Wildlife and the Mad River Valley Bear Initiative. It is helpful to track all bear incidents so we can better educate residents and visitors about living in bear country. And if you want to learn more about living with bears in the Valley, check out the great resource from the MRV Bear Initiative here.

If you want to help promote a safe and healthy coexistence with bears through poetry, consider participating in the MRV Libraries and MRV Bear Initiative haiku challenge, as part of National Poetry Month. You can find details here. The challenge runs through April 30th and haikus will be displayed at libraries and businesses in the Valley through April and May.

Finally, you can join our friends at the MRV Bear Initiative for a presentation from Sarah Crockett, educator and advocate for human/bear coexistence on April 10th. The presentation will cover black bear ecology, common causes of conflict between bears and our community, and practical ways we can change our behaviors to reduce conflict. Expect to walk away with a greater appreciation for bears and useful strategies for keeping food and attractants away from them, ensuring we can keep our bears wild for years to come. You can find all the details here.



Springtime means clean up time with the Green Valley Rally & Green Up Day on May 3rd!

You know it's spring when you see those green bags along the side of the road. Those bags are the result of the Annual Green Valley Rally, our Valley's coordinated effort on Green Up Day. Members of the Fayston Conservation Commission, along with partners from throughout the Valley, will be at the Mad River Valley Welcome Center (at the corner of Routes 100 and 17) from 8am to 2pm on Green Up Day. Stop by to pick up Green Up bags, morning snacks, and roadside assignments.

Volunteers will be treated to a BBQ hosted by the MRV Chamber of Commerce from noon to 2pm.

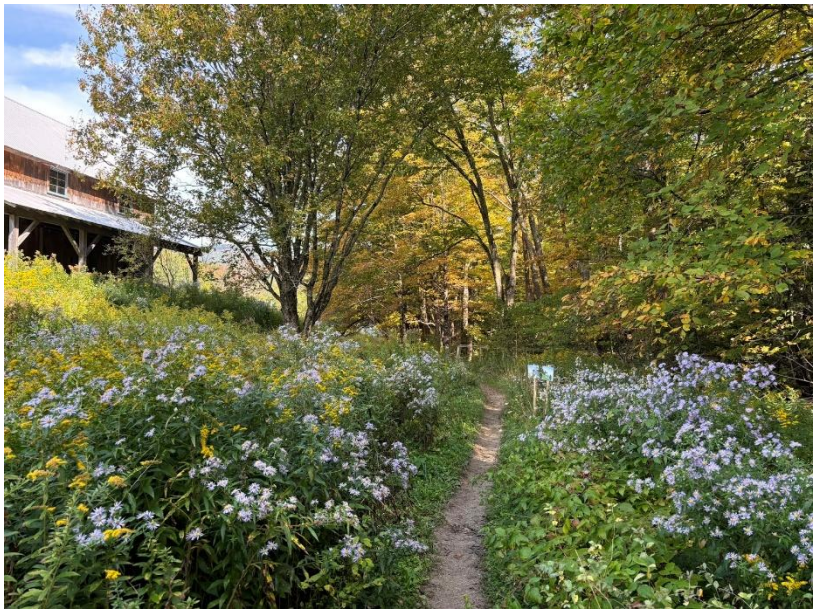
Do you want to explore ways to contribute positively in our community? From 12-2 you'll have the chance to learn more about volunteer opportunities with Friends of the Mad River, stewardMRV, Mad River Valley Bear Initiative, Valley conservation and knotweed eradication programs, and other stewardship organizations. You can get all the details here.

The birds are back!

The Mad Birders will be conducting a number of educational walks, three of which will be at Fayston's Boyce Hill. The not-to-miss Woodcock Walk will be held at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, April 23rd. Check out this and all of their events here.

Chase Brook Town Forest begins planning update

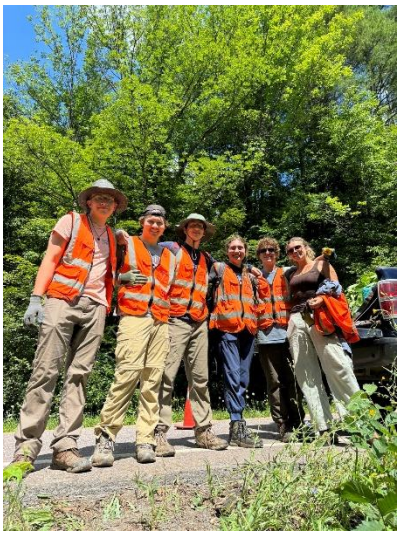
The Conservation Commission and the Town of Fayston are updating the Chase Brook Town Forest management plan this year and are excited to work with Michael Brown of Birdseye Forestry Consulting. Michael will be conducting a forest inventory so we can better understand the current ecological health of the Forest and how we can manage the Forest to maintain its ecological integrity while providing for recreational activities. There will be opportunities for the public to provide feedback about what this Town Forest means to you, starting with a survey coming soon and a public meeting later this summer.



Picture of David Moroney, *UVM Field Naturalist Program graduate and MRV Invasive Species Management GIS coordinator* conducting invasive species assessment at Chase Brook in September 2024

As the snow melts, it's time to think about Invasives.

Invasive species, like Japanese Knotweed and many other non-native plants, don't take much time off and neither do we! With spring here, the FCC, along with our partners at the Warren and Waitsfield Conservation Commissions, Friends of The Mad River, community volunteers, and student interns from the University of Vermont, are getting ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work. We have another summer of eradication and riparian buffer restoration planned, so stay tuned for more details and if you are interested in volunteering or have Japanese Knotweed on your property that you'd like some tips on managing, contact Andrea Henderson at andreahenderson@gmavt.net.



We shared our strategy and experience managing Knotweed in a webinar hosted by Vermont Land Trust, *Untying the Knot: Community-Based Scientific Management of Knotweed in The Mad River Valley* on February 26, 2025. VLT's recording is available here.

Boyce Hill's apple trees get a trim and more improvements to come.

In February, we had a great gathering of folks to learn about how to take care of apple trees. Rachel Grigorian of Clark Brook Designs led a pruning workshop and we were able to prune a number of trees in the orchard near the southern border of the Town Forest. This summer, we are excited to install some steps down to the pond. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Peter Colgan.

DEC Wastewater Workshop: Residential Septic Systems & Innovative Alternatives

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation held an informative workshop on March 27th at Yestermorrow, and shared a link to the recording and slides. Thank you to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission and Friends of The Mad River for organizing this well attended event.

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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 currently has five members, two open seats, and one open alternate seat. Current commissioners include Brian Litmans (co-chair), Andrea Henderson (co-chair), Amy Dalton, 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 learn more about being a Fayston Conservation Commissioner or volunteering to support conservation in Fayston, please check out the FCC Invitation here and contact us at faystonconservation@madriver.com.

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