Fall 2025 Fayston Conservation Commission Update

With winter making an appearance, we want to reflect on all the good work conducted by the Fayston Conservation Commission and its collaborators. Together with an incredible number of partners, including the other Valley Conservation Commissions, the Mad River Valley Bear Initiative, Bee the Change, students from UVM Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, along with countless volunteers, we were able to accomplish an impressive amount of work to protect our Town Forests, our watershed and wildlife. As our partnerships grow, we are finding innovative ways to support our lands, waters and wildlife.

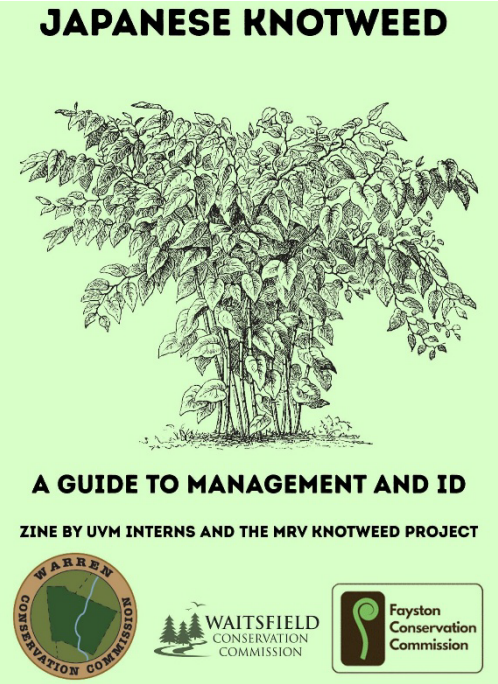
Engaging with the Mad River Valley Community

Conservation and Community Connections go hand in hand. To that end, the tri-town Conservation Commissions tabled together at the MRV Community Connections Fair sponsored by Mad River Valley Rotary, The Bee App, and the MRV Chamber of Commerce on September 21st. We engaged new volunteers and shared information about our Valley's treasured natural resources and conservation efforts with residents.

MRV Tri-town Conservation Commissions table at MRV Community Connections Fair on September 21st

A Team of Volunteers Tackles Invasives in the Valley

In 2025, we continued to build on the invasive species management work we began in 2023, thanks to the Fayston Knotweed Pilot Project. This project enabled the Fayston Conservation Commission to bolster our volunteer efforts with UVM Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources interns, in collaboration with the Waitsfield and Warren Conservation Commissions. The town's support demonstrated Fayston's commitment to invasive species management and native habitat restoration, which contributed to the Town of Waitsfield's successful Lake Champlain Basin Program grant application for *Invasive Species Management and Ecosystem Restoration in the Mad River Valley*, awarded in December 2023, of which we are a partner. We are grateful for the continued support and partnership of the Mad River Valley's three Conservation Commissions.



Each site we manage requires fewer hours year over year as we weaken the energy stores of the Knotweed plants and seed managed areas with a conservation mix. This allows us to take on additional infestations and expand the area under management of existing sites. The Adopt-Some-Knot initiative has encouraged many residents to take on Knotweed management on their own properties or stretches of roadway in areas they frequent.

In addition to local homeowners, we engaged with Valley businesses and helped them get started with Knotweed management on their properties. As part of our 2025 restoration and education efforts, South Burlington High School students (through the Big Picture program) joined us for hands-on experiential learning in May. In September, together with North Branch Nature Center, we hosted a field workshop to share our

management techniques, successes, and learnings, including why managing invasives requires community building and systems thinking. And to wrap up the season, eleven enthusiastic volunteers planted five Silky dogwood fascines and 25 Yellow birch, Red osier dogwood, and American elm along the Chase and Mill Brooks in one hour on November 2nd.

With sustained efforts across Fayston and the entire Valley, we are succeeding in restoring roadsides and riverbanks to their natural state. Check out our efforts and progress at [The Knotweed Project (@madriverknotweed) • Instagram photos and videos]

Keeping Busy at Boyce Hill

Thanks again to our friends at Sugarbush, who recently completed the job of mowing the portions of Boyce Hill being managed to maintain the views while optimizing for long-term blackberry and other soft mast-producing vegetation productivity. Mowing is only done after ground nesting birds have fledged. We tried a new approach this year, using a tracked snowcat with a front-mounted mulcher. Let us know what you think of the results! Sugarbush offers this service in exchange for the use of Fayston's side-arm mower for some of their harder-to-reach terrain.

Sugarbush snowcat and mulcher

In August, members of the Boyce Hill Committee built and installed a bridge over the stream that feeds the pond and a series of bog bridges on the same pond trail over a typically wet area. On September 28th, a crew of about 20 volunteers throughout the day took on a tree-felling project just downhill from the viewpoint at the end of the Boyce Hill Trail. The goal was to remove a band of aspen, birch, and poplar that would impede the views west to the Green Mountains. Whitney Tree Service then chipped the trees, scattering most of the chips along the hillside to help with soil restoration.

New bog bridges along the pond trail

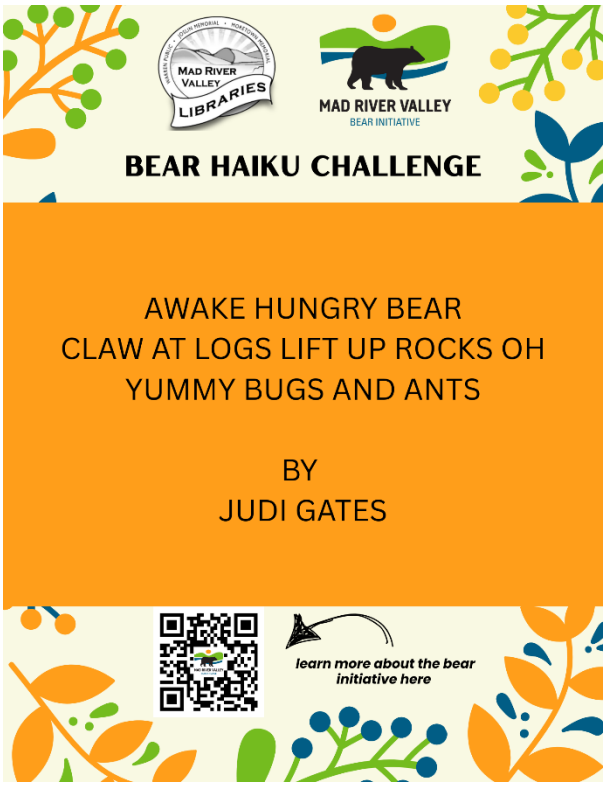
Friends of the Mad River's Julie Frost shares Boyce Hill's story with UVM Forestry students.

Toward the end of October, we hosted a group of UVM forestry students and, a day later, Trustees of the Vermont Land Trust, owner of the conservation easement that protects the property from future development.

Volunteers felled trees to help protect Boyce Hill's amazing views

Partnering with the Mad River Valley Bear Initiative

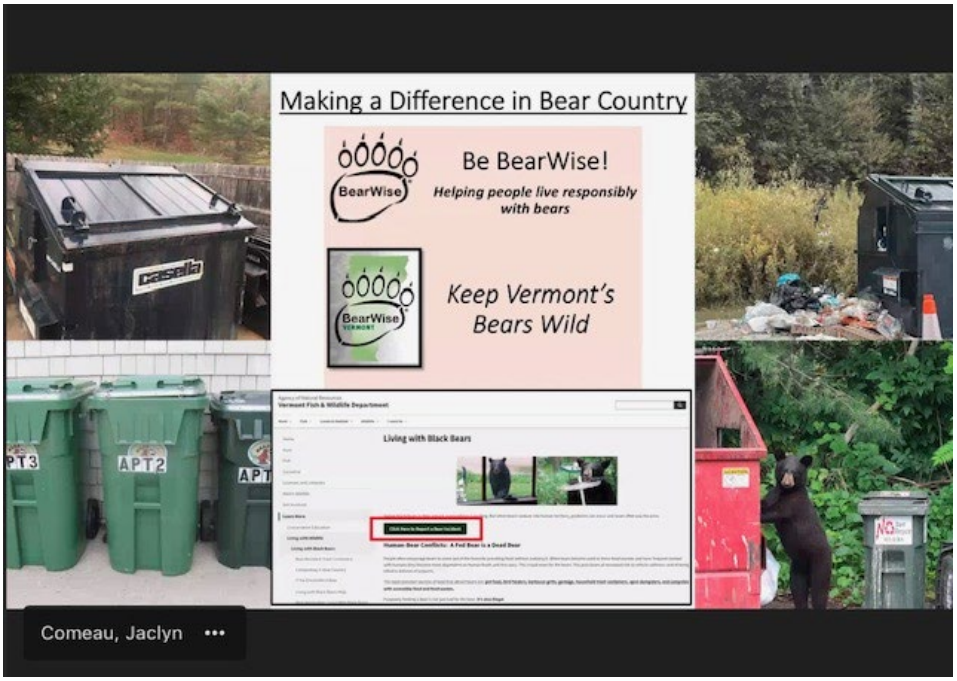
The Mad River Valley Bear Initiative shares BearWise informational handouts and best practices for living in bear country at Waitsfield Farmers Markets and other tabling events throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Through collaboration with the Moretown, Joslin Memorial, and Warren Libraries, we had a record number of submissions for the MRV Bear Story contest, and hope the community enjoyed reading the clever haiku posted at local businesses and organizations.

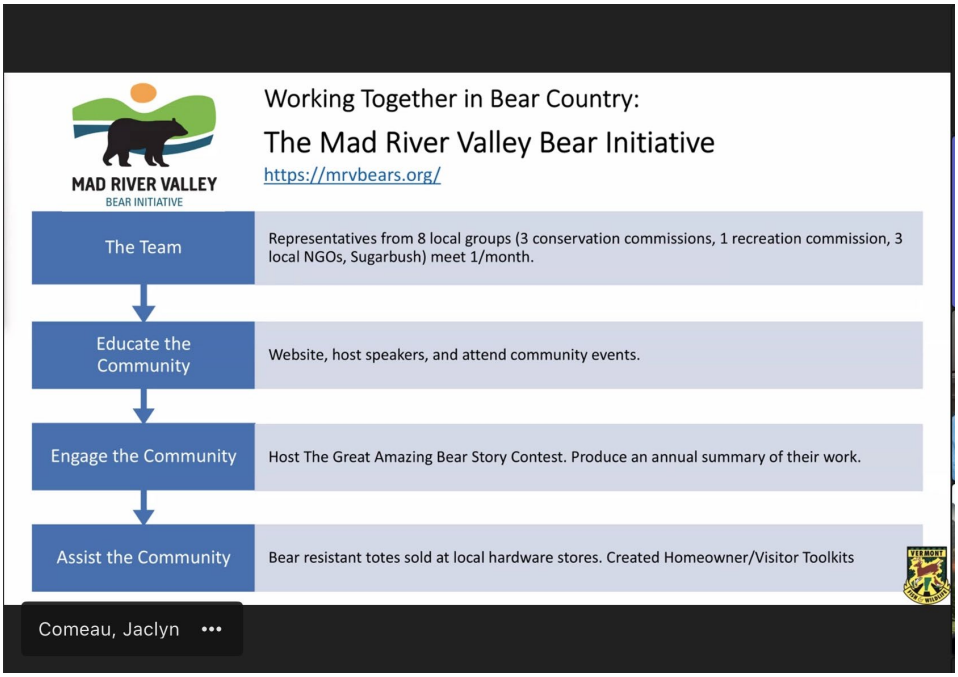


Over the summer, we purchased two BearSaver® receptacles and collaborated with stewardMRV to install them at Lareau Swim Hole and Bridge Street. When used properly, these bear-proof receptacles help prevent our bears from accessing human food sources.

BearSaver® receptacles at Bridge Street and Lareau Swim Hole stewardMRV sites.

The MRV Bear Initiative also partners with Vermont Fish & Wildlife biologists and game wardens. VT Fish & Wildlife's fall 2025 webinar ***Living with Bears*** included an overview of bear habitat, food sources, and population trends in Vermont. The webinar highlighted the MRV Bear Initiative's outreach and education in the Mad River Valley as an example of a robust community engagement program.





VT Fish & Wildlife slides from November 6, 2025, Living with Bears webinar

Bringing Pollinators to Chase Brook Town Forest

Last fall, we shared news of the beginnings of two pollinator gardens at Chase Brook Town Forest. Together with a few other graduates of the Vermont Field Naturalist MRV Program (2023-24), and in collaboration with Bee the Change, we solarized two 20’ by 40’ areas at the far end of the parking area and in between the McCullough Barn and German Flats Road. This fall, we removed the tarps and planted a cover crop to prepare for spring 2026 sowing of a native pollinator seed mix and planting pollinator-friendly plants. We also worked with a group of six enthusiastic Harwood juniors who volunteered at Fayston Elementary on Harwood’s Day of Service in October. They edged and planted aster, geranium, hyssop, bee balm, and zizia around the Fayston Elementary School sign and tended existing raised beds. Lastly, you’ll notice some fencing around one of the two Serviceberry trees near the barn to protect it from deer browsing. These trees were planted to honor Corrie Miller and Lisa Koitzsch, two long-serving leaders of the Conservation Commission.

Cover crop growing in soon-to-be pollinator garden at Chase Brook Town Forest.

Harwood’s Day of Service, six Harwood juniors weeded and transplanted perennials at Fayston Elementary School.

Perennials were planted around the newly edged flower bed at Fayston Elementary School.

Upcoming Events

- November 18, 2025, 10 - 11 a.m. - **VT Fish & Wildlife webinar, *Using Overlay Districts to Protect Connecting Habitat*** **Register here**
- November 20, 2025, 6 - 8 p.m. - **TriTown Conservation Commission meeting** at Lareau Inn
- December 5, 2025, 5 - 8 p.m. - **Common Ground x MRV** at Afterthoughts: This gathering, sponsored by **The Bee App**, is all about connecting neighbors and community leaders who make the Valley such a special place. After the panelists share what they've been working on and how people can join in, the space will be open for everyone to connect, grab some food, swap ideas, and find new ways to make good things happen together.

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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 six members, one open seat, and one open alternate seat. Current commissioners include Brian Litmans (co-chair), Andrea Henderson (co-chair), Amy Dalton, Woody Dugan, Peter Colgan, and Kim Phelan.

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.

If you were forwarded this email and would like to receive future Fayston Conservation Commission emails directly, please subscribe to the Town of Fayston, VT's email listserve HERE.