



Lamoille County Planning Commission

Fall 2012

Lamoille County Wins Grant for Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Access Development

LCPC has been awarded a \$249,982 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission to support trail access for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) in Lamoille County. The grant will be used to construct trailheads in Cambridge, Johnson, Hyde Park, Morristown, and Wolcott. The grant leverages a \$5.2 million grant Senator Bernie Sanders previously secured for the construction of the 93-mile, four-season, multi-use trail across northern Vermont.

"This grant is critical to the Towns' efforts to move people from the trail into communities. It will strengthen village-trail connections and bolster the County's efforts to promote tourism and recreation as fundamental parts of our economy," said LCPC Board Chair George Robson.

"This project reinforces our belief in Lamoille County's dedication to the Rail Trail. The County has consistently demonstrated support and enthusiasm for the LVRT, and we voted last month to pursue construction of the Cambridge to Morristown section of the Rail Trail as our first priority," said Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee Vice Chair Clayton 'Zeke' Zucker.



Rail Trailhead in Cambridge

"Several towns contacted LCPC about trail access projects," said LCPC Executive Director Bonnie Waninger. "They agreed that a county-wide approach would deliver the most benefits and insure Lamoille County is ready to take full advantage of the Trail when it opens."

LCPC is partnering with the Towns of Johnson, Morristown, and Wolcott, the Village and Town of Hyde Park, and the Cambridge Greenways Trail Committee on this project. The partners will own and manage their respective trailheads.

Vermont's congressional delegation was influential in creating the border commission, which directly invests federal resources for economic development and job creation in economically distressed regions of northern New Hampshire, New York, Maine and Vermont. Last year, the commission awarded nine grants to the four states totaling \$1.45 million, including \$206,690 for projects in Vermont.

Eligible projects include those that develop regional infrastructure, support job creation and economic development, promote sustainable land use, or develop renewable energy sources.

For more information, contact Bonnie Waninger, Executive Director, at 802-888-4548 or bonnie@lpcvt.org.

On October 25th we received notice that the District Commission had approved the LVRT Act 250 Permit which "authorizes construction of improvement to establish the ±44 mile long Phase 1 portion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT), a year-round multi-use recreation and alternative transportation path/trail."

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Welcome 2012 New Directors!

LCPC's 23-member Board of Directors includes 18 members appointed by our member towns and villages and five County Directors elected annually. Appointment representation is based upon population. Municipalities with populations of 2,500 or greater are eligible to appoint two Directors. All other Towns and incorporated Villages are eligible to appoint one Director. Fiscal Year 13 Board members include:

Municipal Appointees

Hugh Tallman	Belvidere
Mark Delaney & Vacant (new seat)	Cambridge Town (2)
Vacant	Cambridge Village
Shaun Phillips	Jeffersonville
Jeff Carter	Eden
Jill Lindenmeyr	Elmore
Richard Bailey	Hyde Park Town
Adam Lorey	Hyde Park Village
David Bergh	Johnson Town
Vacant	Johnson Village
Ron Stancliff & Tricia Follert	Morristown (2)
Ed Debor	Morrisville
Arnold Ziegler & Tom Jackman	Stowe (2)
Vacant	Waterville
Maxfield English	Wolcott

County Directors

Caleb Magoon	Hyde Park Town
George Robson	Morristown
Dennis Shanley	Cambridge Town
Valerie Valcour	Hyde Park Town
Vacant	

Among our other activities, LCPC will be updating the Regional Plan this year. Chapters related to economic development, natural resources, energy, and transportation will be updated, and the entire plan will be reformatted to strengthen its readability. If you are interested in participating on the LCPC Board, please contact Bonnie Waninger at bonnie@lpcvt.org or 888-4548.



The LCPC Board of Directors meets at the Tegu Building in Morrisville on the 4th Tuesday of each month.



Federal Transportation Bill Reauthorization

For the first time in three years, the federal government has passed a two-year, \$105 billion (per year) transportation bill, the **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)**, which the President signed into law on July 6, 2012. The bill authorizes a slight increase in funding, providing almost \$464 million to Vermont through 2014.

Changes include the consolidation of around 90 programs down to fewer than 30, focusing on improving safety, maintaining infrastructure condition, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency of the system and freight movement, protecting the environment, and reducing delays in project delivery.

MAP-21 eliminates all transportation-related earmarks. The bill includes an amendment from Senator Bernie Sanders that allows the FHWA to cover 90 percent of the cost of road repair in states recovering from extreme natural disasters, which could mean up to \$10 million in additional funds for Vermont's Irene recovery efforts.

It creates two new formula programs:

- Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities – replaces a similarly purposed discretionary program.
- Transportation Alternatives (TA) – a new program, with funding derived from the NHPP, STP, HSIP, CMAQ and Metropolitan Planning programs, encompassing most activities funded under the Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and Safe Routes to School programs under SAFETEA-LU.



Historic Town Highway Maps Available

The VTrans Mapping Unit has made available all the maps within their Town Highway Files, which include town highway maps from 1931 to the present. Each town's maps were scanned, indexed and posted to the Agency's FTP site for access by any interested parties. To access the VTrans Mapping Unit's Map Archive, please visit the following link:

http://www.aot.state.vt.us/Planning/mapgis/mapping_maparchive.htm

From this page, you may search by county, town, or year, or simply by individual town and then you will receive the results that meet the search criteria. The Map Archive also provides access to other maps, such as the County-Town Map Series from various years, as well as several statewide transportation maps. For more information contact Johnathan Croft, VTrans Mapping Unit, 802-828-2600.



Cambridge Highway Map—1931



Advanced Consultations

As part of its FY13 contract with the Agency of Commerce, LCPC will be meeting with local communities to complete an "Advanced Consultation." During the Consultation, RPC staff will meet with the Planning Commission, Selectboard members, RPC Board members, and ZBA/DRB members. The meeting will include:

- Overview of RPC programs and projects
- Presentation of the municipal plan review and associated recommendations
- Discussion of the planning and training needs of the community
- Review of the new economic development element and related recommendations for the town plan
- Review of the merits of a DRB system (if applicable)
- Presentation on downtowns, villages, and growth centers and other state programs related to municipal plans
- Review of Board representation and participation
- Discussion of other local and regional issues and priorities

The goal of Advanced Consultation is to develop a more consistent and qualitative review process across regions and municipalities; raise the effectiveness of municipal and regional plans in achieving the goals of Title 24, Section 4302; and target areas for improvement or implementation.



Flood Recovery Tax Credits

In 2012, \$2,286,484 in state income tax credits are available for projects that enhance the historic character and improve building safety of older and historic commercial buildings located in Designated Downtown or Village Center districts (\$500,000 of the total is dedicated to refundable flood recovery credits). In Lamoille County, projects within portions of Cambridge Village, Jeffersonville, Johnson Village, Hyde Park Village, Morrisville, Stowe, and Waterville may be eligible. The credits support general rehabilitation work, code compliance work, and exterior improvements and may be combined with the federal program. Past projects range from small retail, office, and rental apartment rehabilitations to multi-million dollar redevelopments.

The *10% Flood Recovery Credit* is only available for building damages or repairs that resulted from a federal disaster, including site restoration and eligible mitigation costs (damages to equipment, furnishings, and inventory are ineligible). Examples of eligible mitigation costs include elevating mechanical systems (water heater, furnaces, electrical panel, computer server, etc.) above the flood plain (out of the cellar), so long as the damages resulted from a federal disaster. Costs to repair flood-damaged walls qualify, but not costs to relocate the walls to improve the floor plan or create new spaces. There is no cap; however, the total amount of refundable credits is limited to \$500,000.

Unlike the traditional tax credits that may be used to offset state income, franchise, or premium tax liabilities, refundable credits are not limited by the amount of tax liability. In other words, taxpayers who do not owe taxes are entitled to a refundable credit from the state, which simplifies and accelerates the payment process for flood victims. Please note the traditional tax credits and refundable tax credits are claimed on different tax forms.

For more information, contact Chris Cochran at the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development at Chris.Cochran@state.vt.us or 802-828-3047. LCPC staff is available to provide assistance on the tax credits applications. Contact Seth Jensen at seth@lpcvt.org or 888-4548.

Flood Insurance

Increased Cost of Compliance Coverage

If a home or business in your community is damaged by a flood and your community has certain building requirements requiring property owners to reduce future flood damage before a structure is repaired or rebuilt, please be aware that all new and renewed Standard Flood Insurance Policies include Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Flood insurance policyholders in high-risk areas, also known as special flood hazard areas, can obtain up to \$30,000 to help pay the costs to bring their home or business into compliance with their community's floodplain ordinance. Policy holders have four options for complying with ordinances and helping reduce future flood damage:

Elevation - Raises your home or business to or above the flood elevation level adopted by your community.

Relocation - Moves your home or business out of harm's way.

Demolition - Tears down and removes flood-damaged buildings.

Floodproofing - Making a building watertight through a combination of adjustments or additions of features to the building that reduces the potential for flood damage. (available primarily for non-residential buildings).

Increased Cost of Compliance coverage claims can be filed in two instances:

Substantial Damage - A community determines that a home or business is damaged by flood to the point that repairs will cost 50 percent or more of the building's pre-damage market value.

Repetitive Loss - A community has a repetitive loss provision in its floodplain management ordinance and determines that a home or business was damaged by a flood two times in the past 10 years, where the cost of repairing the flood damage - on the average - equaled or exceeded 25 percent of its market value at the time of each flood. Flood insurance claim payments must have been made for each of the two flood losses.

You can find more information about Increased Cost of Compliance coverage at <http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-2/increased-cost-compliance-coverage>.

Contributed by Casey Romero, Johnson



Vermont Transportation Board Public Hearings

Vermont statute Title 19 V.S.A. § 5(d)(8) charges the state’s Transportation Board to collect public comments via hearings “for the purpose of obtaining public comment on the development of state transportation policy, the mission of the Agency, and state transportation planning, capital programming and program implementation.” The hearings provide a forum for citizens, municipal officials, and businesses people to provide their views on the state’s transportation system.

These comments are summarized in a report prepared for the Vermont State Legislature and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). This fall, the T-Board has identified “six hot topics” that it will highlight and ask the public to address. These include:

- Transportation Revenues
- Bike & Pedestrian Issues
- The Future of Passenger Railroad & Inter-City Bus Services
- Climate Change – Resilience & Adaptation of the Transportation Network
- VTrans’ Accelerated Bridge Program
- Roadway Safety

While these six topics will be discussed at every hearing, time also will be provided for Vermonters to broach any additional transportation topic they wish.

The Chair of the T-Board, Moe Germain, is quoted in the announcement as saying “...we also want people to provide us an earful regarding whatever topic is most important to them.” This is an opportunity to remind legislators and VTrans managers of your and your community’s concerns regarding improvements to our transportation system

The hearing sites are selected with the intent of providing access to as many Vermonters as possible and rotate annually. This year, board members and regional planners will convene six hearings, the hearings near the Lamoille region include:

- November 8** in St. Johnsbury at 6:30 p.m. at the NVDA, 26 Eastern Avenue, St. Johnsbury, VT
- November 13** in Winooski at 6:30 p.m. at the CCRPC, 110 West Canal Street, Suite 202, Winooski, VT
- November 14** in Montpelier at 6:30 p.m. at the CVRPC, 29 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT

For more information, contact the Board’s Executive Secretary John Zicconi at john.zicconi@state.vt.us or by calling 802.828.2942. *If you cannot attend a hearing you can submit written comment by visiting the Board’s website at*

<http://www.aot.state.vt.us/tboard> or you can contact Amanda Holland at amanda@lcpvt.org or 888-4548.

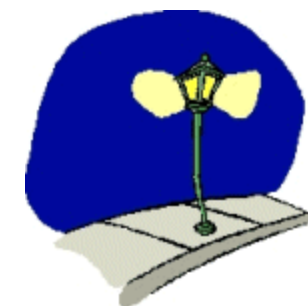


Guide to Improving Efficiency in Municipal Street and Public Space Lighting

Efficiency Vermont has developed a step-by-step guide to “**Improving Efficiency in Municipal Street and Public Space Lighting**”. Street lighting is an important part of a municipality’s nighttime landscape—lighting can be used to enhance public safety and security while improving the aesthetic appeal of the surrounding properties. However, street lighting can account for one-quarter of a municipality’s electrical bill. The guide is part of a larger effort by Efficiency Vermont, in partnership with the state’s utilities, to encourage municipalities to evaluate their present use of older, less efficient street and public space lighting, eliminate unnecessary lighting, and upgrade remaining lighting with LED technology.

The Municipal Streetlight Guide can be downloaded at:
www.encyvermont.com/streetlighting.

To obtain a hard copy or for information about the Program, contact Kathleen Brown at Efficiency Vermont at 888-921-5990 x7740 or kbrown@veic.org.



Spatial Analyses of River Restoration Projects in Lamoille County

For this year's 604b Water Quality Grant, the Lamoille County Planning Commission focused on furthering efforts to coordinate river restoration efforts in Lamoille County. LCPC convened two meetings of partner organizations involved in riparian restoration work in Lamoille County, completed a partial update of the 2002 watershed restoration database by inventorying and cataloging Trees for Streams restoration projects, and conducted analyses of the existing river restoration database to review restoration efforts in the region and to determine where restoration efforts could be strengthened. This 604b water quality work follows up on the Commission's work to identify and catalog riparian restoration projects in Lamoille County (604b FY00).

There are several possible approaches to analyzing a watershed restoration database, depending on the kind of information sought; two different approaches are compared and contrasted here. Using a non-spatial approach, we aggregated all the restoration projects in the County to determine the number of restoration sites and projects, the practices used, the miles of stream restored, and the acres of riparian buffer planted. Since the late 1990s, at least 155 stream restoration projects on 93+ sites have been completed in Lamoille County; nearly 8 miles of stream bank have been restored and 30 acres of riparian buffer planted.

Clearly, much stream restoration work has been accomplished in Lamoille County. However, for planning purposes, it would be much more useful to know where this restoration work was taking place. To get that information we need to conduct spatial analyses, of which there are varying degrees. Using the most basic spatial analyses of grouping the restoration sites by town, stream and subwatershed (Figures 2-4); we see that much of the restoration projects are happening in the Towns of Stowe (24 of 91 Lamoille County sites, or 26%) and Morristown (22 of 91 sites, or 24%), on the Lamoille River (35%), and in the West Branch Little River subwatershed. Notably, the Green River and North Branch

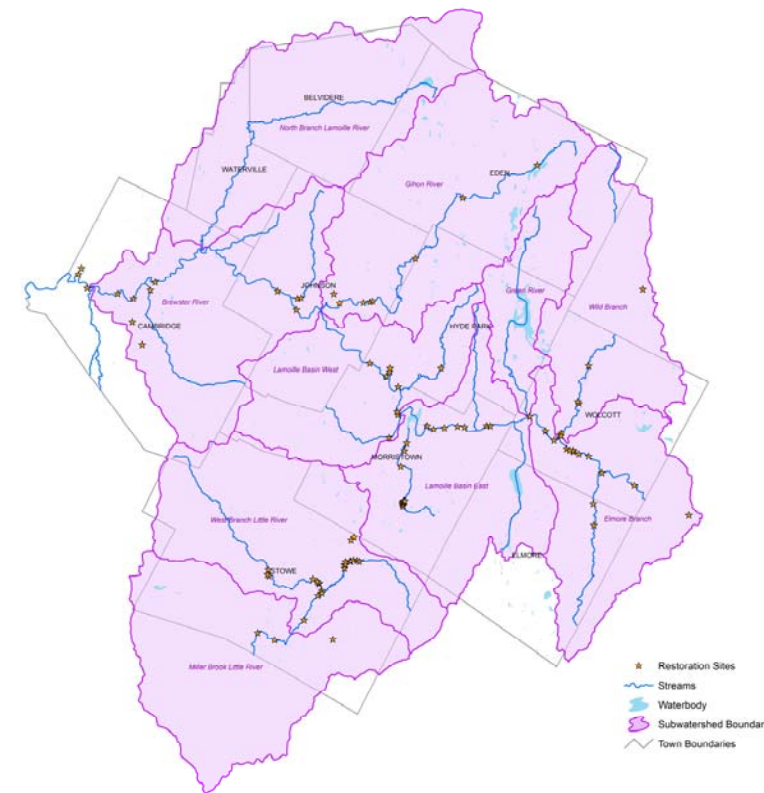


Figure 1: Lamoille County towns with subwatersheds

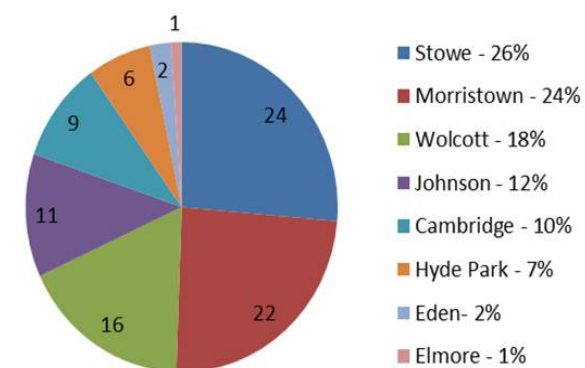


Figure 2: Restoration sites by town

Lamoille subwatersheds have no documented restoration sites. Having this information allows us to investigate further to determine if restoration work should be refocused to those locations where it currently is lacking.

Having access to a spatial dataset in the form of points or lines on a map allows us to conduct a "deeper" spatial analysis. For example, we superimposed the restoration site locations on top of current aerial imagery (Bing Maps 2010) to assess the relative stability or instability of the stream channel since the restoration work. Sites were determined to be stable if they had a visible buffer, there was little evidence of excess sediment build-up, and little evidence of stream channel movement over time; sites were assessed as somewhat unstable if there was visible evidence of excess sediment

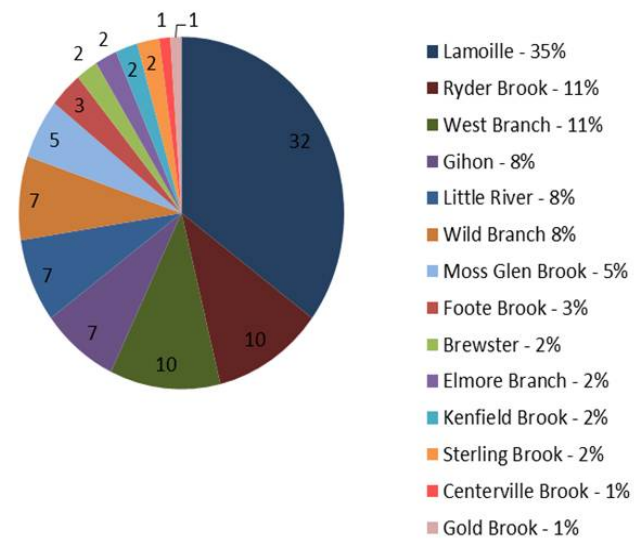


Figure 3: Restoration sites by stream

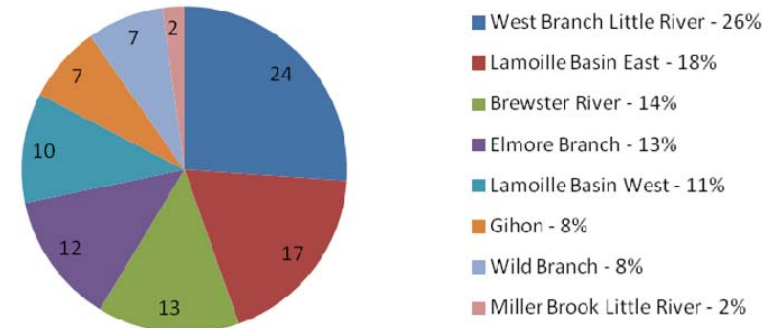


Figure 4: Restoration sites by watershed

build-up and/or evidence of moderate channel movement, and sites were flagged as very unstable if there was evidence of dramatic changes or movement of the stream channel (see Figure 5);. This spatial evaluation revealed that 38 out of 63 sites appear stable, while 20 sites show some instability and 5 sites appear to be very unstable.

This level of spatial analysis can be extremely helpful from a planning perspective, allowing us to determine if there are certain locations where restoration projects are more successful than other locations. According to the manual "Living in Harmony with Streams: A Citizen's Handbook to How Streams Work," (2012), in the 1990s, stream restoration was approached on a project-by-project basis, without any systematic assessment process behind it. Many restoration projects were undertaken to control erosion, with little understanding of the process of fluvial geomorphology and why stream banks erode in the first place. As a result, many of these erosion control attempts were unsuccessful. A rigorous scientific approach to assessing stream conditions has since been developed, and there is general agreement among river scientists that the preferred approach to stream restoration and protection is to first assess stream conditions to determine the causes of instability before undertaking restoration projects. It is equally imperative to employ a *coordinated* approach across entire watersheds, rather than a site-specific approach. As noted in the 2001 Lamoille County Stream Stability Assessment, such a coordinated approach requires:

1. Inter-agency communication of past, present and future restoration efforts;
2. Site-specific knowledge of restoration projects – their location, goals/objectives, methods employed, status, concerns/comments, and any further remediation work needed;
3. Continued long-term inventorying and monitoring of past and present restoration projects to determine success rates and need for maintenance.

The lesson learned from this most recent attempt to update the inventory of river restoration projects is that 10 years is too long a time lapse between inventories; ideally this information should be tracked annually. If the inventory is complete and regularly updated, periodic analyses can reveal interesting and informative patterns that will only help with future restoration efforts.

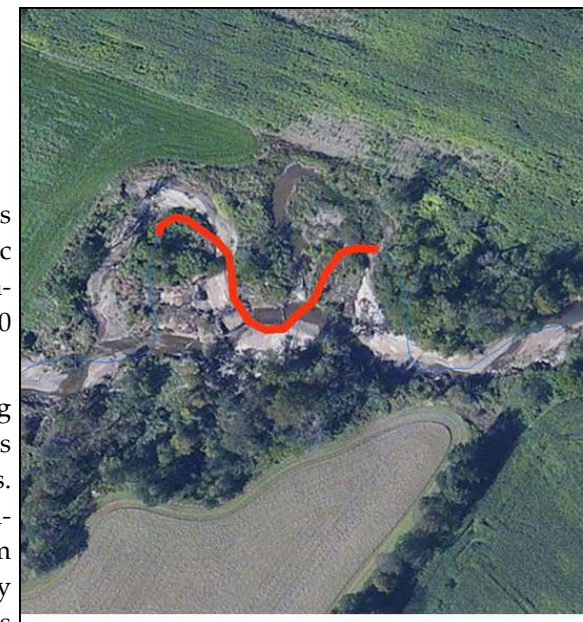


Figure 5: Example of apparent stream channel instability at a former restoration site. The red line indicates the location of the stream channel circa 1999.

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New Faces at LCPC



Taylor Foster, Regional Planner, will focus on emergency management, land use, and agricultural and food systems planning. Taylor has a MS in Urban and Regional Planning from UW-Madison and a BS in Political Science from Edgewood College in Madison. While pursuing her MS, Taylor was involved in community development as a US Peace Corps Volunteer. She moved from her home state of Wisconsin to Vermont last year to work for the Town of Colchester Department of Planning and Zoning but is happy to be in beautiful Lamoille County. You can reach Taylor at Taylor@lpcvt.org

Erik Phillips-Nania, Intern (Aug. to Dec. 2012) is finishing a Masters of Environmental Law and Policy (MELP) from Vermont Law School, where he also graduated *cum laude* with a JD in June 2012. Erik grew up in New England and graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Colorado at Boulder in Environmental Policy and Political Science. Erik is fascinated by the phenomenon of climate, emergency planning, and the awesome potential of Lamoille County. Erik can be contacted at Erik@lpcvt.org.

