

Parks Commission

2010 Overview

Parks Director, Geoff Beyer, along with Parks and Trees assistant David Brunell, and AmeriCorps member Eric Clifford, completed several major park improvements this year, with the help of numerous volunteers and Department of Labor trainees.

North Branch Riverside Trail

With the help of many AmeriCorps members from around the state, VCHB staff, and Department of Labor trainees, a new trail was built along the North Branch off of Cummings Street. This trail provides a chance not only to access points of the river, but to experience the river close up and really get a “feel” for the North Branch ecosystem. To enhance the trail experience, benches have been built at several view points. Some of these are made from granite slabs that were uncovered on-site.

The trail will also be an educational resource with information about invasive plants. Interpretive signs are planned that will identify invasive plants occurring along the trail and describe ways that people can protect their land from invasive species. We also plan to enlist volunteers and school groups to test various methods of controlling invasive plants along the trail to restore native habitat and improve the experience for visitors.

Composting Toilets

The old “outhouses” in Hubbard Park have been replaced by new composting toilets. Based on Geoff Beyer’s research, these new toilets will require less maintenance and are much more “user friendly.” Located at the Tower, Seven Fireplaces, and the New Shelter, the building of these wooden structures was the handiwork of several organizations and many volunteers. Community Connections, Central Vermont’s alternative education program, found students interested in learning building skills and funded Will Eberle, a skilled timber framer, to teach them how to build timber frames for two of the structures. The third composting toilet, which is located at Seven Fireplaces area, was designed and framed by Yestermorrow School of Building and Design. The class came to the site, discussed the design needs, and then built their unique structure at their shop in Warren.

Many others also contributed to this large undertaking, including NECI students, community volunteers, and the entire 5th grade of Union Elementary School, along with their teachers and numerous parents. All wood for the toilets was milled from hazard and “crowded” trees culled from the park.

Blanchard Park Trail

After a number of years of thinking about how to improve and encourage use of Blanchard Park (behind the Police Station), several improvements were made this year. The trail from Wilder Street to the height of Blanchard Park was improved, and a bench was installed at the top. From this location, there is a beautiful and unique view of downtown Montpelier. Next year, a connecting trail down the northwestern hillside to Pitkin Court will be constructed. The Commission encourages residents to think about the future management and use of Blanchard Park, and send us your comments and suggestions.

Park Commission

Ethan Parke will be stepping down from the Parks Commission in March 2011. The Commission would like to thank Ethan for his years of service to Montpelier's parks and for serving as Chair of the Commission for the last two years.

The Commission would also like to thank the many volunteers who helped us to accomplish so much this year. These included another great group from the International Volunteers for Peace, a VHCB AmeriCorps group, a number of classes from local schools, and numerous individual citizens who contributed their time and expertise. Citizen support for Montpelier's parks is always appreciated, and donations help us leverage additional support and grants from a variety of sources. If you would like to contribute to the Parks or assist in any way, please contact Geoff Beyer at the Parks Office (223-7335) or speak with a Parks Commissioner.

For information on Montpelier's parks, including maps and natural history information, please visit the Park's web site: <http://www.montpelier-vt.org/department/81/Montpelier-Parks.html>.

The Parks Commission appreciates and welcomes comments or suggestions from residents as we continue our work of protecting and improving Montpelier's park and trail system.

ETHAN PARKE, *Chair*
AARON BRONDYKE, *Commissioner*
LYN MUNNO, *Commissioner*
CARA ROBECHER, *Commissioner*
LEIGH SEDDON, *Commissioner*