

Montpelier Parks Commission 2012 Annual Report

2012 Staff and Overview

Montpelier Parks are comprised of over 400 acres of land, over 15 miles of trails and over 7 acres of mowed areas. In 2012, Parks Director, Geoff Beyer, Parks and Trees Assistant, David Brunell, AmeriCorps member, Byron Garcia, and VISTA member, Stephanie Olsen, worked with a record number of groups and volunteers to complete a wide variety of projects in Montpelier parks. Of special note this year is that two Department of Labor crews, under Parks Department supervision, provided significant help to the Montpelier parks. One crew was part of a grant to do storm damage repair and the other was through a summer youth job training program. Additionally a Vermont Youth Conservation Crew (VYCC) worked for 7 weeks on the new National Life trail.

Storm Damage Repair

Park staff, a Department of Labor “Storm Crew”, and numerous volunteers and groups worked long and hard to continue park and trail restoration from the two major storms we had in 2011. Major work was done to repair damage done to the Peace Park, North Branch Park and, to a lesser extent, Hubbard Park. Additionally, we did a major project to prevent more river bank damage at the Peace Park by putting in a revetment (rocks to slow down water near the bank to encourage sediment to be “dropped” by the bank, instead of continuing to erode). The river bank has been steadily eroding over the years and the bank eroded significantly during the storms in 2011. When the storms occurred last year, many culverts were plugged or washed away particularly in the North Branch Park, and the water then rushed down trails and washed away trail tread. Crews replaced countless tons of tread this summer; rebuilt numerous “headers and tails” of culverts; and built and rebuilt retaining walls on key sections of trails. This is just a snapshot of the extensive storm repair work that was done in 2012.

Tower Landscaping

In the past, the Hubbard Park Vegetative Management Plan called for periodically removing a percentage of the trees threatening to block the view from the tower. This past year, Geoff Beyer recommended developing a planting plan that included planting lower growing tree and shrub species that would not need to be cut regularly thus greatly reducing the need for a cyclical heavy cut. After an initial public meeting in 2011, several Parks Commission members, some community volunteers and a member of the Apple Corps group formed a committee to draft a landscaping plan that included edible fruit and nut trees and bushes as well as other low-growing native species. The plan was presented at a public meeting in March and with a few final revisions, the plan was approved by the Parks Commission. Now the Tower Landscaping Plan can be seen on the park website, and a substantial number of plants were put in place in the summer of 2012. The plants are a fun mix of fruit, nut and native plants that should eventually beautify the area and help preserve the view from the tower.

National Life Trail

The Parks Department received an AOT Enhancement Grant to continue the work on the National Life Trail. The grant recognizes the potential for the National Life trail to provide

alternate transportation opportunity for many commuters. The Parks Department also had the invaluable help of a VYCC crew that provided seven weeks of help on the trail. We worked on the most challenging section of the trail this year. The section is the farthest from the road and was a difficult place to get the tons of material in place. The VYCC crew set up highline and made strategic use of mechanical advantage to move over 30 tons of material to put in the next sets of steps. This trail is nearly done and will offer a beautiful connection to the south section of town around Northfield Street. Hopefully we can finish this trail with another few weeks of work in the summer of 2013.

Invasive Species Trail and Management

Stephanie Olsen, the Parks and Conservation Americorps/VISTA member, has leveraged her passion to lead what is probably the most successful year the Parks has had yet battling invasive plants. Volunteers and staff pulled out many hundreds of honeysuckle and barberry, root system and all. Because the plants were pulled when the ground was wet, it made it easier to pull the entire plants successfully. She also played a key role in developing a new Invasive Plant Interpretive Trail that is now located in the North Branch River Park along the river. This trail can educate visitors about key invasive plants we are struggling with locally and what strategies may be employed to control them.

Old Shelter picnic area

Park Staff and volunteers made several improvements to the Old Shelter picnic area including replacing the retaining wall around the parking lot being and replacing support posts.

Hubbard Park Dog Survey

Park Staff have noticed fewer people without dogs utilizing the park in the past several years. In addition, the Park Staff and Park Commissioners have heard more formal and informal complaints regarding negative dog interactions in the Park. In response, the Park Staff and the Parks Commission felt the first step in the process of addressing concerns was to receive feedback from people on their experiences with dogs in the park. A survey was released to the public in November. The deadline for the surveys is mid-January and a public meeting is scheduled for February 2013. The Parks Department and Commission's hope is for a collaborative community process in 2013 that will help address concerns raised.

Parks Commission

In March of 2012, Kip Roberts began a 5-year term on the Parks Commission. Leigh Seddon stepped down from the Parks Commission after 15 years of dedication to protecting and improving Montpelier's parks. The Commission would like to thank Leigh for his years of leadership and wonderful service.

Park thanks!

We owe thanks to many people, organizations and groups for a record year of park improvements. We want to give special thanks to the Department of Labor for providing numerous job trainees who have conducted strategic storm damage repair, old shelter area improvements, and a wide variety of park improvement and maintenance. This provides Montpelier Parks with great help while providing the trainees with great work experience. We

also want to deeply thank The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, the Barre Vocational Tech Program, the Alternative School, Spruce Mountain, VHCB AmeriCorps group, the entire 9th grade of MHS, the MHS Community Based Learning Program, Norwich University, and the entire 4th grade of Montpelier Union Elementary. The Park Staff and Commission would also like to thank the many other volunteers who helped us accomplish so much this year. These included a number of classes from local schools, and numerous individual citizens who contributed their time in many valuable ways. Their efforts have been critical for helping make Montpelier Parks the wonderful places they are and the Parks Commission and Park Staff deeply appreciate all their help.

Citizen support for Montpelier Parks is always appreciated and donations help us leverage additional support from a variety of sources and volunteers. If you would like to contribute to the Parks or assist in any way, please contact Geoff Beyer at the Park 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/departments/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.

Lyn Munno, Commission Chair
Emily Boedeker, Commissioner
Aaron Brondyke, Commissioner
Cara Robechek, Commissioner
Kip Roberts, Commissioner