



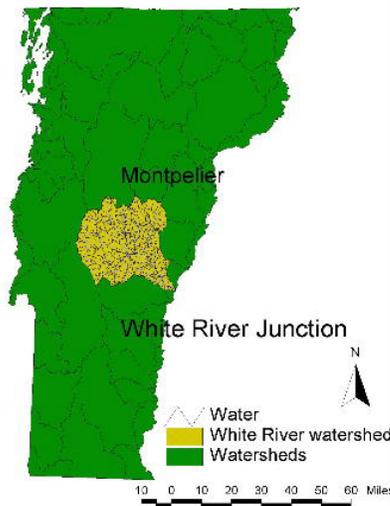
*Helping local communities balance the long-term cultural, economic and environmental health of the watershed through active citizen participation.*

## 2001 Annual Report

### I. Partnership Overview

In 1996 the White River Partnership formed as a locally led, needs driven collaboration between citizens, communities, groups and organizations, and state and federal agencies. Our mission is to help local communities balance the long-term cultural, economic and environmental health of the watershed through *active citizen participation*. Our vision is that in the watershed, citizens, businesses and governments collaborate to make informed, responsible decisions that improve and protect the cultural, economic and environmental qualities of the watershed for present and future generations.

#### State of Vermont White River Watershed



#### The Watershed

The White River Watershed is 454,000 acres covering all or part of 21 towns in central Vermont. Land ownership is 84% private, 5% municipal and state lands, and 10% National Forest. The 56-mile long White River is free flowing, the watershed is 84% forested, 7% in agricultural use, and only 5% developed. The White River Watershed is a Clean Water Action Plan National Showcase Watershed, an important river in the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program, a Special Focus Area of the Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and a major tributary to an American Heritage River, the Connecticut River.

The river has been used for thousands of years as a travel way, first by Native American populations and later by European settlers. The narrow valleys were cleared for agricultural use and timber harvesting which work together today to create the scenic landscape enjoyed by tourists and residents alike.

The White River Watershed has fantastic human, cultural and natural resources, but faces many challenges on the journey to sustainable communities and natural resource use. Large-scale gravel mining was common until 1986. River morphologists have concluded that the White River and its tributaries are still experiencing instability due to decades-old mining. Loss of riparian forest to transportation systems, agriculture and past forest management has left parts of the river in poor habitat condition. At the turn of the century the watershed was only 20% forested leaving lasting impacts. Sedimentation from eroding banks, elevated water temperatures and the loss of other riparian functions has reduced aquatic habitat quality for trout and Atlantic salmon in many reaches of the watershed.

A series of public forums in 1996 provided over 150 people an opportunity to talk about the issues that threaten the health of the watershed and the steps necessary to make change. Topping the list of citizen concerns were:

- Water Quality
- Riparian Habitat
- Streambank Erosion
- Public awareness of problems
- Public access to the river
- Point source & non-point source pollution
- Maintaining a working landscape (agriculture & forest)

The White River Partnership brings together the following partners to work on the issues identified in the public forums.

Our partners:	
Private citizens Two Rivers Ottaquechee Regional Planning Commission Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) National Wildlife Federation Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Trout Unlimited U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Green Mountain National Forest Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge USFS, Northeastern Region State and Private Forestry US Fish and Wildlife Service George D. Aiken Resource Conservation and Development Natural Resource Conservation Service The Towns of: Bethel, Sharon, Randolph, Rochester, Hancock, and Granville

## II. Partnership Goals

The Partnership has developed a five-year business plan to address the seven priority areas identified in the public forums (described above). Our watershed restoration efforts focus on the following five work areas:

- ❑ **Locally Led Watershed Assessment:** Combining the best of professional expertise with local knowledge and volunteer labor (where possible) we are measuring the health of the watershed through GIS analysis and watershed modeling, in-depth physical assessments, establishment of permanent cross sections, and watershed wide water quality monitoring.
- ❑ **Stream Corridor Restoration:** We are using natural channel design to restore stream function and process by completing two designed and constructed projects per year and a number of smaller stabilization projects with volunteer labor and numerous tree planting projects.
- ❑ **Outreach and Education:** We are working with partner organizations and individual schools to develop school programs and to create consistent water-quality monitoring protocols among schools.
- ❑ **Economic Sustainability through the Community Collaborative:** Businesses networking within the watershed to identify local markets and promote the watershed in a sustainable manner.
- ❑ **Capacity Building:** We are building a long lasting, independent organization that facilitates communication between government agencies and their citizens. In five years we will have six stream teams, 19 towns contributing to the Partnership and a contributing membership.



### III. Accomplishments

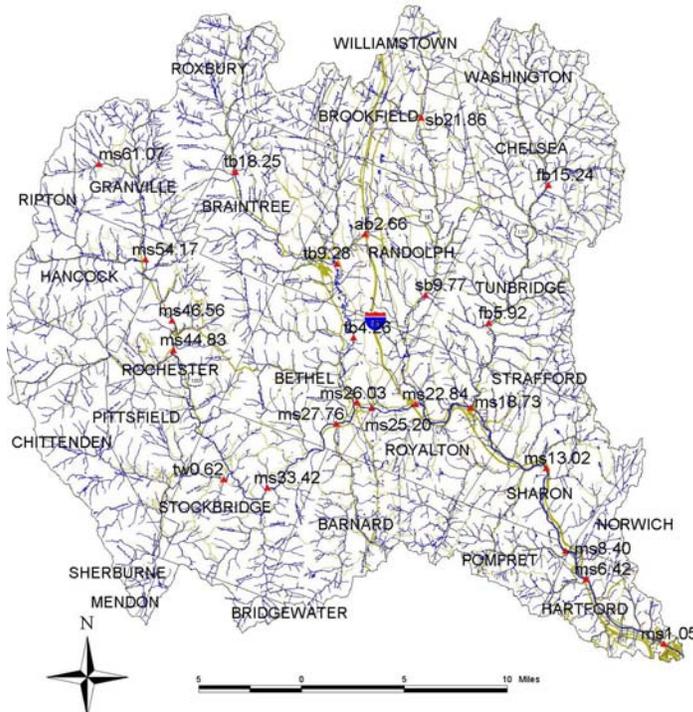
In the past year, the White River Partnership has made the following accomplishments in each of our work areas:



Volunteers practice collecting water samples.

#### Locally Led Watershed Assessment:

- ✓ Thirty volunteers collected water quality data at 20 monitoring stations throughout the watershed on a weekly basis. The *e. coli* data was shared with health officers throughout the watershed and was available to the public via the World Wide Web.
- ✓ Partnered with Vermont Geological Survey to conduct a “Flood Hazard Map” study to identify areas where surficial geology, river morphology and floodplain encroachments create hazards to life and/or property. Twenty volunteers surveyed 70 miles of river;
- ✓ Hired an intern to establish permanent cross sections throughout the watershed that will allow us to quantify sedimentation.



Water-quality monitoring sites in the White River Watershed

#### Water Quality Monitoring

Thirty volunteers monitored water quality along the White River this summer at 23 “River Stations”. Volunteers sampled each Wednesday of the summer for *E. coli*, turbidity, and conductivity. Thermographs were stationed at each of the sites to record water temperature every hour. The information gathered by the volunteers is the start of the Partnership’s baseline watershed monitoring program.



### Stream Corridor Restoration:

- ✓ Completed phase two of an interagency and local partnership to restore a mile of the upper White River (Town of Granville) where a landowner had done illegal dredging after the 1998 flood;
- ✓ Planted 8,300' of buffer;
- ✓ Constructed 5,100' of instream restoration;
- ✓ Over 200 volunteers contributed 575 hours to plant 2,000 trees and willows along the banks of the White River in the past year.

### Outreach and Education:

- ✓ Designed and implemented a “Summer Institute” to work with teachers from area schools to develop uniform water quality data collection methods and share data via the Internet;
- ✓ The DownStream Team hosted a “Landowner Workshop” to teach riverfront property owners to recognize and manage stream bank erosion problems. The workshop was attended by 10 individuals and will be held throughout the watershed in future years.
- ✓ Hosted public forums, attended by 90 people, to ensure wide public participation in the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Basin Planning process for the White River watershed;
- ✓ Two Vermont Law School Interns are using their Schweitzer Fellowship to research different State’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (CREP) for the Partnership so that we may help inform the creation of a CREP program in the Connecticut River Watershed;
- ✓ Green up day competition between stream teams was held in May;
- ✓ Paddlefest brought 20 people out on a rainy Saturday in June;
- ✓ The first ever weekend “Paddle to the Connecticut” event was held in May. Low water forced a downstream put in, but spirits were high and the event is planned for next year;
- ✓ The first annual membership meeting for the Partnership was held October 27, 2001.

### Economic Sustainability through the Community Collaborative:

- ✓ Developed a watershed map focusing on the cultural, economic and environmental points of interest in the watershed. The map describes 170 recreation sites, 47 cultural sites, 22 river corridor restoration projects, and 31 local businesses that support the Partnership’s mission of balanced cultural, economic and environmental health of the watershed;

### Capacity Building:

- ✓ In just one year, 6 communities voted at town meeting to financially support the Partnerships water quality monitoring program;
- ✓ Maintained local Stream Teams in three sub-watersheds. Stream Teams work in their communities, on the local level, to assess stream corridor conditions, make contact with private landowners, identify restoration and protection projects and rally partners and volunteers.

- ✓ Developed a professional informational brochure to promote the Partnership;
- ✓ Over 120 people have joined the Partnership as dues paying members or “Sweat Equity” members in the past two years.

## IV. Challenges and Change

The Partnership was asked to testify in a state level, development review hearing on a proposed riverfront development. The Partnership is committed to being a non-advocacy organization and this request prompted us to more clearly define what “non-advocacy” means and to establish a response protocol for such requests.

## V. Future Actions and Opportunities

### Locally Led Watershed Assessment:

- Working with the State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources, and a private GIS consultant, we will complete the second iteration of the Department of Environmental Conservation’s Rivers Section newly developed Phase I Watershed Assessment. We plan to cover the whole watershed through the first three steps and two sub-watershed through the whole assessment;
- Two sub-watersheds will complete the Phase II Physical Assessment in the Summer of 2002;
- An intern will be hired to oversee the Water Quality Monitoring program for the 2002 field season;
- A site visit protocol/data sheet is being developed for Partnership volunteers and staff to use when visiting with landowners to provide consistency and objectivity to the information we gather. This will allow volunteers from the watershed to be the eyes and ears of the Partnership.

### Stream Corridor Restoration:

- A minimum of two designed and constructed river restoration projects will be completed during the field season. The Partnership is looking to increase our capacity in the area and will be hiring a consultant to assist with two additional large restoration projects;
- 2,000 trees will be planted along 8,000 of stream bank;
- At least two smaller restoration projects will be completed during the 2002 field season.

### Outreach and Education:

- The second summer institute will target schools that are not already collecting water quality data using our protocol. We hope to have one of last year’s teachers take over organizing this effort;
- The second annual landowner workshop will be held in a different part of the watershed next September;
- The second annual membership meeting will be in October 2002.

### Economic Sustainability through the Community Collaborative:

- The CC will renew their effort to link all of the businesses in the watershed by building a resource binder that includes information on all of the products and services available in the watershed.

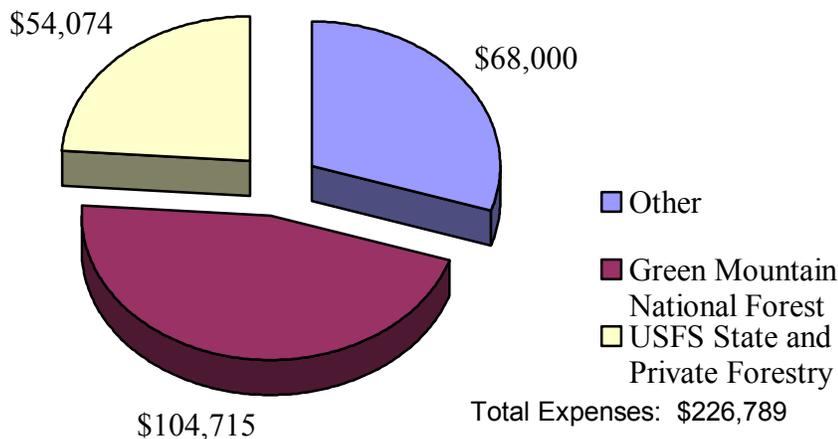
**Capacity Building:**

- Two new stream teams will be created this Fall and Winter;
- The Partnership will have it's first formal membership campaign in September of 2002;
- Six more towns will be asked to contribute to the water quality monitoring efforts of the Partnership.

All of the above goals and activities will not happen without the support of our citizen volunteers and other partners. There are always many places to plug into the White River Partnership!

**VI. Partnership Expenses**

**2001 White River Partnership Expenditures**



<b>Partnership Goal</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
Locally Led Watershed Assessment	\$32,000
Stream Corridor Restoration	\$75,000
Outreach and Education	\$27,000
Economic Sustainability	\$35,789
Capacity Building	\$57,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$226,789.00</b>

**VII. Partnership Contacts**

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