

# 2024 Watershed Update

## Hello again!

The leaves have fallen, along with the temperature of our rivers, meaning we have once again made it to another MRBA Watershed Update! In this 2024 edition, we will walk you through current and upcoming changes such as welcoming our new ECO AmeriCorps member, discussing our project successes throughout the year, and filling you in on some extremely exciting organization wins including updates on our native tree nursery. We were jam-packed this year with tree planting in the spring, a summer full of river clean-ups and water testing, stream assessments through the Stream Wise program, hosting our 2024 high school intern, and more! Read all about this, and get updates on long-standing projects throughout this 2024 edition of our Watershed Update. We hope you enjoy this brief paddle through our 2024 activities, and look forward to seeing you in 2025!



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Follow us on facebook & instagram for updates about what's happening in our watershed!



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# Missisquoi River Basin Association - 2024 Watershed Update

We have once again welcomed an ECO AmeriCorps member at MRBA, after taking a year off from the program. Please join us in welcoming Ruby Bratcher! Ruby will be serving as our Watershed Engagement Coordinator. Originally from Burlington, Vermont, Ruby graduated in May from Southern New Hampshire University with a B.S. in Environmental Science with minors in Biology and Biology and Culture. Ruby was heavily involved with the campus community and really enjoyed her time there. Ruby likes to spend time outside walking in the woods, sitting by the water, hanging out with friends, drinking tea, and listening to music. Be sure to give Ruby a warm welcome when you see her out and about in our watershed!

## Staff Updates



## 2024 LEAP Intern



This summer, MRBA was fortunate enough to host a high school intern to help staff with projects around the Missisquoi watershed. Aine Remmers of Montgomery joined us for a second summer, and we had so much fun with her! It was great to have Aine back and we accomplished projects throughout our watershed including: monitoring tree planting sites, water sampling, planting a pollinator rain garden, performing stream assessments, helping with events. To conclude her program, she planned her own river clean-up along the Trout River with volunteer help. The LEAP internship program is a great opportunity to get local young people involved in conservation and restoration work in Vermont while also providing professional development. We enjoy participating in this program and plan to again in 2025. Thank you to Aine for another fantastic year. We already miss your quick wit, smart ideas, and positive attitude! Good luck with your Senior Year!



The Lake Education & Action Program provides an opportunity to marry facilitating stewardship projects and providing professional development opportunities to high school and college-aged students. Learn more at: [www.uvm.edu/seagrant/programs/lake-education-action-program-leap](http://www.uvm.edu/seagrant/programs/lake-education-action-program-leap)

## Office Open House



This year the MRBA has certainly settled in to our new and amazing office space. It is fantastic to watch our organization grow right in front of our eyes, and enjoy the things that come with that! We enjoy having such a beautiful space to share with our watershed community, and we certainly enjoy the sweet treats and conversation that comes along with our open houses. We will be hosting our next Open House community gathering on **Sunday May 18th, 2025 9-11AM** at our office space in East Berkshire and we hope that you will be able to join us. Be on the look out for more information in the new year, and join our monthly events mailing list on our website for updates. Hope to see you there!

In July 2024, MRBA Staff, our LEAP intern Aine, and volunteer fur mascot Pearl installed a pollinator rain garden at Riverwalk Park in Montgomery. We planted over 100 pollinator friendly plants at the edge of the parking area at the park. These plants will help slow and absorb rain runoff before it enters the Trout River, and provide habitat for our local pollinators! All plants in this garden are native plants and were sourced in Vermont (our thanks for recommendations from our local Conservation Commissions in Montgomery, Richford, Enosburg, and Bakersfield). Thank you to the Montgomery Recreation Board for helping with this project too! Visit our website for more details.

## Pollinator Rain Garden



[mrbavt.com/rain-gardens](http://mrbavt.com/rain-gardens)





# Missisquoi River Basin Association

Our goal is to restore and maintain the ecological integrity of the Missisquoi River system so that the uses and values desired by the community are supported by the river and the quality of its water.

Dear Friend of the MRBA,

We want to take this moment to thank you for your continued support. Without the strong partnerships and dedication of our friends, partners, towns, and community, the MRBA would not be where it is today. As emphasized with several of our 2024 MRBA project accomplishments, the strength and resiliency of our community continues to hold us together. With support of our local community, the MRBA has successfully planted thousands of trees along our rivers banks, provided countless hours of education with our youth, cleaned thousands of pounds from the Missisquoi, and more. Reminders of previous efforts, and the work that is still to be done resonates throughout the waters in our watershed.

As the MRBA has continued to grow, we are continually thankful for the community partnerships we have created. With our increasingly more unpredictable climate, these community relationships are evermore essential to the success our our organization and our future projects. Long-term progress is made by long-term community support, and for our community we are ever grateful for your support.

Please enjoy the 2024 Watershed Update, and let us know if you would like more details about any of the projects we have highlighted in this issue. Looking ahead to 2025, the MRBA is thrilled about our upcoming projects and would love your assistance through any of our volunteer programs. If you have means, we'd also greatly appreciate your support through a financial donation. Your dollars are integral to our successes, and better enable us to pursue, expand, and refine projects that help our communities from the headwaters to Lake Champlain. Together, we can make a difference.

Thank you,

Lindsey Wight, Executive Director  
Missisquoi River Basin Association

- ◆ Donations are tax deductible; donors will receive recognition on our website and in our Annual Report.
- ◆ Corporate sponsor? We appreciate the businesses that support us! If you would like to be recognized as a corporate sponsor, visit our website to select from the corporate sponsorship perks!



Donating Members:

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**Clean water is important to me!  
I want to help protect and improve the Missisquoi Watershed.**

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Donations via PayPal available at: [mrbavt.com/donate](http://mrbavt.com/donate)**

Special project ---- I want to support a special project specifically; please put my donation toward \$ \_\_\_\_\_ the following activity:

- MRBA's Native Plant Nursery & Tree Plantings
- Education programs in watershed schools
- Water sampling

Please make checks payable to:  
Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA)  
2839 VT Route 105, East Berkshire, VT 05447  
Tel: (802) 933-3645 Email: [lindsey@mrbavt.com](mailto:lindsey@mrbavt.com)

## Stream Wise Visits

For a second year, the MRBA participated in the Stream Wise program hosted by the Lake Champlain Basin Program. MRBA staff visited six landowners in Orleans County and surveyed streams which lead into the Missisquoi River. The goal of the Stream Wise program is to enable direct contact with landowners to discuss ways they might improve their relationship with their stream, potential projects to improve stream health, and to learn about how our waterways are connected. If you are interested in learning more about the Stream Wise Program, you can read more on our website. Reach out to Sarah at [sarah@mrbavt.com](mailto:sarah@mrbavt.com) if you have a stream that is in the Missisquoi watershed that you would like MRBA staff to walk with you next year (once trees have leaves again).



## 2024 Lake Lessons

For the fifth year, the MRBA participated in and helped host Lake Lessons. This collaborative experiential education program provided 4th graders from three local schools a half-day learning 'field trip'. Seven local agencies and organizations set up stations for students to learn about our impacts on Lake Champlain. Topics covered included water quality, history, stormwater runoff, and more. These lessons allow students to build watershed knowledge, and introduce how we can create positive change through the ways we interact with the world around us. Lake Lessons took place during Ruby's first week of service, and she led the program so wonderfully - thanks for your hard work Ruby! We are already planning for next year!



## River Clean-Up Round-Up

This summer, the MRBA hosted two river clean-ups along 4 river miles of the Missisquoi in Swanton and the Trout River in East Berkshire. We got **22** people out on our river and collected tires, rusty metal, house siding, broken glass, a baseball hat, and lots more all adding up to approximately **300 lbs** of trash! Thank you to all our volunteers that made this possible. Join our monthly event email list to know when the next one is and we hope to see you there!



## 2024 Tree Plantings

In 2024, MRBA staff and volunteers planted 750 trees during the spring. We were joined by a class from North Country Union High School (NCUHS) and a group of students from the Bronx traveling with CatRock Ventures. We love being able to teach today's youth about the importance of riparian restoration! Tree species planted include sugar maple, silver maple, red maple, white spruce, white pine, balsam fir, box elder, and basswood which will all help withstand future weather events. These trees, and those from previous plantings, will help protect and preserve the banks of the Missisquoi River and watershed streams for years to come. We will be planting again in 2025 and are always welcoming volunteers!

**Thanks NCUHS Students and CatRock Ventures for all your help!**



# Big Changes Flowing Downstream



Since 1996, the MRBA has been heavily invested in protecting and restoring the waters that flow through the Missisquoi watershed. As we flow towards 2025, the MRBA is setting up starting blocks for future success. This year the MRBA established our native tree nursery in the headwaters of the Missisquoi, planting 700 seedlings in a foundational bed along the Jay Branch. Our nursery location, in the town of Jay, is ideal habitat to propagate native species, and is an important community asset - this property also hosts the Catamount Trail and a much enjoyed VAST trail. MRBA has collaborated with community members over the past year, and are ecstatic to announce that we are working with the Town of Jay and the Lake Champlain Basin Program to purchase and conserve the important parcels that make up this floodplain. We are paddling into unexplored waters with land ownership, but we are prepared and ready to learn. Pursuing the purchase of this land has enabled the vision of a community that will pair recreation trails, educational and stewardship programs along the significant and important wetland complex at Jay Branch. The property's conservation will protect the wetlands on the parcel and improve it's functions of flood protection, water purification, wildlife habitat, and provide a space for the community to enjoy.

Learn more and keep up to date on this project as we continue on our website:

[www.mrbavt.com/jay-land-group](http://www.mrbavt.com/jay-land-group)

## Restoring Flows to Mud Creek

For a number of years, the MRBA has working with involved landowners to explore the potential removal of the Sleeper Pond Dam in Newport Center. This dam has not functioned for a long time and is, in fact, at risk of failing. MRBA has secured funding and plans to pursue removal in summer of 2025. Restoration of this natural stream channel will reduce risk and improve the surrounding habitat.



# Knockout Knotweed

During the summer of 2024, MRBA staff continued the Knockout Knotweed project for the fourth season in a row. MRBA staff treated two sites in Montgomery and North Troy, and ended this season with some experimental planting of native species! Once again, we celebrated the season with our ceremonial knotweed bonfire community event. This year's event was cohosted with the Montgomery Conservation Commission, with a fire skills presentation by Elliot Cluba. Thank you to those who joined us this year! You can read more updates on our website at [www.mrbavt.com/knockout-knotweed](http://www.mrbavt.com/knockout-knotweed)



Register for our mailing list and events on our website, and follow us on social media to stay up to date!



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[www.mrbavt.com](http://www.mrbavt.com)



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