TOWN OF WAITSFIELD

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Waitsfield Selectboard**
FROM: **Randy Brittingham, Town Treasurer**
DATE: **June 26, 2023**
SUBJECT: **FY2024 MUNICIPAL TAX RATE RECOMMENDATION**

Below is the calculation of the FY2024 municipal tax rate based on the passed budget, the local agreement, and the 2023 Grand List (up .98%).

Recommendation: Set a Municipal Tax Rate of $0.5759 plus a Local Agreement Tax Rate $0.0035 for a Total Tax Rate of $0.5794.

MUNICIPAL TAX RATE CALCULATION:

Municipal Budget (12-month budget)	$ 2,673,901	
Less Non-tax Revenue	$ (431,325)	
NET TO BE RAISED BY TAXES	$ 2,242,576	
Divided by Grand List value of $3,894,205 =	**.5759**	**Municipal Tax Rate**

LOCAL AGREEMENT RATE CALCULATION:

Homestead (Veterans' Exemption over 10K)	$1,200.00	X	$1.7109 (est)	=	$2,053.08
Non-Homestead	$6,855.83	X	$1.6463 (est)	=	$11,287.00
Total Local Contracts					$13,340.00

Divided by Grand List value of $3,894,205 = ... = **0.0035** **Local Agreement Rate**

	FY22 Tax Rate	FY22 Tax Rate	FY23 Tax Rate	Annual Δ
Municipal Tax Rate	0.4545	0.5288	0.5759	+ 8.9%
Local Agreement	0.0036	0.0035	0.0035	- 0.0%
Total Municipal Tax Rate	0.4581	0.5323	0.5794	+8.9%

Note: The estimated tax increase proposed in March was +9.6%

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

TARDY PARCEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by the Waitsfield Conservation Commission
with assistance from the Vermont Land Trust

June, 2023

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

TARDY PARCEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

June 2023

Prepared by the Waitsfield Conservation Commission:

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TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

TARDY PARCEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

June 2023

Prepared by the Waitsfield Conservation Commission
with assistance from the Vermont Land Trust

Signed:
Town of Waitsfield

By: _____ _____
Its Duly Authorized Agent Date

Approved:
Vermont Land Trust [1]

By: _____ _____
Its Duly Authorized Agent Date

[1] Having the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) as a signatory of this management plan is not formally required under the guiding legal document for the property, the Tardy Grant of Conservation Covenants, but it is appropriate since VLT holds those covenants and their approval of this plan indicates they have found it in keeping with that document.

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TARDY PARCEL MANAGEMENT PLAN
June 2023

I. Introduction and Background

This document lays out the Town of Waitsfield's vision and intended actions in the coming years to guide its ownership and stewardship, as well as public use, of the so-called "Tardy Parcel", an approximately 6.9-acre property that the Town purchased in 2003 from Astrid Tardy for $60,000.[2] The property is located on the floor of the Mad River Valley between the river and Vermont Route 100 at the southern gateway to the commercial centers of Irasville and Waitsfield Village, immediately upstream of the Route 100 bridge and the Town's Lareau Swimhole property. (See Map A.)

II. Property Description, Landscape Context, and Recent Use

The Tardy Parcel is undeveloped, low-lying land that has been significantly altered by human activity and the dynamics of the Mad River over the years. Historically the land likely was covered with a native hardwood floodplain forest, but today most of the property is unforested, covered with grasses, and increasingly infested with Japanese knotweed and other non-native invasive plant species. The property includes areas of river cobble shore on both sides of the Mad River and a shallow emergent marsh near the southwest corner on the eastern shoreline, with substantial side channels and sloughs with beaver activity. Beavers also have become active in recent years near the northern end of the property and adjacent banks of the river. There also is a small forest patch in the southeastern corner of the property adjacent to Route 100 and the neighboring farm field. (See Map B.)

Vehicular access to the property is via a short, unmaintained gravel access drive (largely overgrown by grass in recent years) that enters the southern end of the property across from Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church and then bends to the north paralleling the river. The neighboring farmer accesses the northern end of his agricultural field via a south-leading spur off the gravel drive.

The parcel includes approximately 1,265 feet of shoreline along the Mad River. Portions of the shoreline on the western side of the river are currently within the mapped boundary of the parcel, but with lateral movement of the river channel this may change over time. A section of the eastern shoreline in the central part of the property was rip-rapped to stabilize the river bank at some point prior to the Town's acquisition, but some of this stone work has failed due to continued erosion of the bank behind it.

[2] In addition to the $60,000 purchase price, $13,000 went to project closing and other expenses for a total cost of $73,000. Funding to cover these costs included $15,000 from the Town of Waitsfield, $25,075 from the Freeman Foundation, $20,000 from the Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership, and $13,000 from private donations.

Since the Town's acquisition in 2003, the property has been largely unmanaged and has not received a great deal of attention. In many years, the areas covered by grasses have been mowed or hayed by the neighboring farmer through an informal agreement with the Town. In 2011, the Town used the site for temporary storage of a significant amount of gravel that had been removed from the river immediately after Tropical Storm Irene. The gravel was later moved to the Town gravel pit and the topography of the affected portion of the property was reconfigured to more or less its current condition. In 2016, the Vermont Agency of Transportation temporarily used the site, with the Selectboard's approval, for a field office and storage of vehicles, heavy equipment, and earthen material during its reconstruction of the adjacent Route 100 bridge. Outside of those times, the property has been available for public access and recreation but has not received substantial use.

Although relatively small in size, the Tardy Parcel is important for a number of reasons:

- The property is a key part of the scenic southern approach to Irasville and Waitsfield Village, forming the foreground of the broad panorama that encompasses Lareau Farm, forested hillsides to the east and west, and Knoll Farm and the forests of Bragg Hill rising in the background in Fayston.
- As shown in Map C, the property is the southern/upstream-most of a string of undeveloped Town-owned parcels along the Mad River, including the Lareau Swimhole, Austin Parcel, and Wu Ledges Town Forest. All of these are permanently protected from development through conservation restrictions held by third parties (Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board). In addition, a private parcel across the river upstream from Lareau Farm has a river corridor easement on it, ensuring permanent protection of the riparian area to enable the river to move freely over time. And the 110-acre former Lee property, which includes significant frontage on the eastern shoreline of the Mad River immediately downstream of the Tardy Parcel as well as extensive uplands, has recently been purchased by a community-minded entity, Fair Grounds LLC. The LLC is intent on collaborating with the Town to ensure strong conservation of the property's ecological values, along with providing other benefits to the Mad River Valley community.
- Together, these adjoining parcels form an invaluable corridor of undeveloped valley floor lands that provide important habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species; outdoor recreation opportunities such as swimming, fishing, walking, and wildlife watching for residents and visitors; scenic vistas that are central to the Valley's rural character and sense of place; and room for the Mad River to function in a relatively natural way.

- The Town's ownership provides opportunities to enhance the parcel's ecological condition and function, as well as its contributions in other ways as a community asset. These opportunities are described further in subsequent parts of this management plan.

III. Summary of Guiding Documents (Legal, Scientific, and Management)

There are a number of important documents that inform and direct the Town's management and stewardship of the Tardy Parcel and have provided a key foundation in developing this management plan. Links to these documents are included in the appendices to this plan. They include the following:

- ***Tardy Grant of Conservation Covenants*** between the Town of Waitsfield and Vermont Land Trust (VLT), 2003: This document, granted by the Town to VLT and signed when the Town acquired the property, provides permanent legally binding sideboards for management and use of the property. Its Purposes section establishes that the property will be used in perpetuity "primarily as open lands for agriculture, ecological riparian protection and enhancement, scenic protection, and low impact public recreational use." The "Covenants and Conservation Restrictions" section lays out more specifically the public and management uses and activities that are allowed, restricted, or prohibited. These are described further in Section VI of this plan. The remainder of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants* document describes procedures to be used by the Town and VLT in their interactions related to the property and other provisions related to implementation of the covenants.

- ***Tardy Property Baseline Documentation Report (BDR)***, Vermont Land Trust, 2003: Prepared by VLT in conjunction with the Town's acquisition of the property and its conveyance of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*, this document provides a brief description of the property and current uses at the time, along with several maps and photos. Preparation of a BDR is standard practice for transactions such as this with the conveyance of conservation restrictions to a third party like VLT.

- ***Natural Community Inventory of the Waldron, Austin, and Tardy Tracts of the Town of Waitsfield***, Brett Engstrom, 2006: This field inventory and report was commissioned by the Waitsfield Conservation Commission and prepared by one of Vermont's leading ecologists. The modest cost was paid for with a combination of Town funds and a grant from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. The inventory includes written descriptions and a mapped delineation of the various natural communities found on these three Town-owned properties.

  For the Tardy Parcel, the inventory documented that most of the property would naturally be a sugar maple-ostrich fern riverine floodplain forest, but had been converted in the past to a field. It also noted the shallow emergent marsh natural community with substantial beaver activity in the southwestern corner of the parcel,

along with short linear patches of the river cobble shore natural community both along the shoreline and mid-channel. The cobble shore patches are subject to frequent flooding and their locations shift over time as a result of related river dynamics.

- ***Fluvial Geomorphology Assessment of the Mad River Watershed, Vermont***, Field Geology Services, 2007: This "Phase 2" field assessment and report "to determine stream channel response to human land uses and natural watershed conditions" was commissioned by the Friends of the Mad River as a targeted follow-on to an earlier "Phase 1" watershed-wide assessment. The Phase 2 assessment focused on a subset of reaches within the Mad River mainstem and tributaries, including the reach encompassing the Tardy Parcel and adjacent areas (Reach M13). The project also included a more detailed Phase 3 assessment of this reach "in order to select restoration strategies that will return the stream channel to equilibrium conditions at the selected sites and downstream." Reach M13 was one of only two reaches in the watershed to receive the additional Phase 3 attention.

  The results of the Phase 3 assessment are described on p.34-40 of the report, with accompanying visuals in Figures 27-40 toward the end of the document. Five potential stand-alone restoration options were identified for promoting channel stability and equilibrium in Reach M13, along with a preferred option that would combine river corridor protection (Option 1) and riparian buffer plantings (Option 2) on portions of the Tardy Parcel and other areas in the Reach. The discussion of preferred options also noted that increasing floodplain storage (Option 4) by lowering portions of the former floodplain on the Tardy Parcel would be the preferred option for achieving a more rapid return to equilibrium conditions and providing more flood relief and energy attenuation to protect downstream areas. However, this would be a significant undertaking requiring removal of an estimated 882,000 cubic feet of soil (more than 3,000 truckloads) and would require detailed hydraulic analysis and risk assessment to determine potential impacts on Route 100 and other infrastructure.

  In considering the information and options presented in this report, it is important to bear in mind that it was prepared prior to Tropical Storm Irene – a significant event that had substantial impacts on the Mad River corridor. As a result, the assessment's findings and recommendations should be re-evaluated by qualified parties to determine if any revisions are warranted based on post-Irene conditions.

- ***Upper Mad River Corridor Plan***, Fitzgerald Environmental Associates, LLC and Lisa C. Godfrey, LLC, 2008: This document was commissioned by the Friends of the Mad River to build on the earlier geomorphic assessment studies. The goal of the Corridor Plan was "to facilitate restoration and protection activities with the following objectives: (a) to improve the long-term stability of the Mad River; (b) to reduce sediment and nutrient pollution loading to the Mad River and therefore Lake Champlain; (c) to over time reduce landowner vulnerability and infrastructure damage from flood and erosion hazards."

The parts of the Corridor Plan related to Reach M13 and the Tardy Parcel (see p. 42, 55-57, and 71) reinforce the preferred option in the 2007 geomorphic assessment described above of river corridor protection "to allow for passive floodplain and meander redevelopment" and possible inexpensive buffer planting to improve poor corridor vegetation.

- ***Invasive Plant Management Plan for the Town of Waitsfield – Austin and Tardy Properties,*** Julia Gulka, Vermont Land Trust, 2016: This plan was provided *pro bono* by VLT to the Town as a resource to help inform its stewardship of the Austin and Tardy parcels. It was based on a field inventory that identified the presence and extent of invasive plant species on the properties, and offered guidance for a prioritized approach to managing them.

  Shrub honeysuckle (*Lonerica* sp.) and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) were identified as the primary species present on the Tardy Parcel in the report.[3] The plan recommended management of Japanese knotweed as "a higher priority due to the risk of continued spread, particularly with recently disturbed areas from the [Route 100 bridge] construction and [post-Irene] gravel storage," and identified the opportunity for native floodplain forest restoration over time with proper knotweed management. Although honeysuckle was identified as a lower priority it was still noted as important, and with a relatively small population could be managed effectively. The plan also noted the following: the potential to manage both knotweed and honeysuckle concurrently with parallel efforts on the Austin parcel; the need to monitor both properties annually for other invasive plants that could begin to establish themselves – such as Japanese barberry (*Berberis thungergii*), Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), and Wild chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*); and the importance of responding rapidly to eliminate any new outbreaks of these or other invasive species and not letting them take hold.

- ***Vermont Land Trust–Town of Waitsfield Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Tardy Parcel–Farley Riverside Park,*** 2023: In 2022, the Conservation Commission, the Selectboard, VLT, and a group of family and friends of Virginia Farley collaboratively developed and agreed to a proposal to designate the Tardy Parcel as the Farley Riverside Park in remembrance of her conservation legacy in the Mad River Valley and beyond. The MOA lays out the understanding between the Town and VLT on how nearly $49,000 of private charitable donations raised through VLT for the establishment and stewardship of the Park will be managed by the Town, and eligible uses for which those funds can be employed. In the MOA the Town agrees to hold the funds in a new "Farley Riverside Park Stewardship Reserve Fund" that will be overseen by the Selectboard in consultation with the Conservation Commission. Eligible costs for use of the Reserve Fund include planning, design, construction, installation, and maintenance of memorial elements and site improvements to

[3] The Waitsfield Conservation Commission recently has noted buckthorn, Japanese barberry, and winged euonymous on the property.

enhance public access to and public experience of the property; ecological restoration activities; and other activities related to the Town's stewardship of natural resources and provision of public recreational opportunities on the property in keeping with the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*. The document is binding on both parties.

IV. Management Roles, Responsibilities, Partnerships, and Funding

Town Government: As is true for the Town's other properties that are owned and stewarded primarily for environmental conservation purposes, the Conservation Commission will have lead responsibility for management and stewardship of the Tardy Parcel, and the Selectboard will have final decision-making authority on significant matters (for instance, changes in management direction, contracts for implementation projects, legal issues, management of public use and safety).

In carrying out these responsibilities, the Conservation Commission will keep the Selectboard and Town Administrator abreast of its work, and will communicate with other Town boards such as the Planning Commission when necessary. The Conservation Commission will strive to keep townspeople and the broader Mad River Valley community informed about, and engaged in, its management and stewardship of the property through various means, such as discussion at the Commission's publicly-noticed meetings, press releases in the Valley Reporter, and publicizing volunteer opportunities to help with on-the-ground stewardship activities (e.g., invasive plant removal, planting of native species).

In keeping with practice for other Town-owned conservation lands, the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer will support the Conservation Commission's and Selectboard's management of the Tardy Parcel as part of their overall job responsibilities. Other Town staff may assist with on-the-ground management activities as needed and appropriate, at the direction of the Town Administrator and/or Selectboard in consultation with the Conservation Commission. For instance, the road crew may help with maintenance of the access road and parking area, and mowing. Primary responsibility for advancing management and stewardship activities will reside with the Conservation Commission, though.

The overall management structure – with the Conservation Commission in the lead on behalf of the Town – may be reassessed by the Commission and Selectboard and modified if circumstances dictate. For instance, if public use of the property grows significantly and becomes a management challenge, it could be appropriate for the Selectboard to take lead responsibility with the Commission playing a supporting role and continuing to lead on ecological stewardship activities. In any case, a collaborative relationship with good communication, support, and trouble-shooting between the Commission and the Selectboard will be essential for successful management over time.

Key partners: As is the case for Waitsfield's other Town-owned conservation lands, there are a number of entities and individuals who will or may play important roles in assisting with stewardship of the Tardy Parcel and helping achieve its intended purposes. These include the following:

- *Vermont Land Trust:* As holder of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*, VLT has a legal responsibility to ensure the provisions of the Covenants are upheld over time. As a result, VLT will monitor the property periodically and communicate with the Town – primarily through the Conservation Commission – about any management issues, concerns, or opportunities it may identify. Any disputes between VLT and the Town would be handled through the guiding provisions of the Covenants. The Commission considers VLT a vital partner for the property, and will strive to keep it fully abreast of its work and maintain a close collaborative relationship.
- *Friends of Farley Riverside Park:* This is an informal group of family members, close friends, and colleagues of Virginia Farley who came together after her death in 2022 to find an appropriate way to honor her conservation legacy in the Mad River Valley and beyond. The group worked closely with the Conservation Commission and Selectboard, through liaisons on both boards, on the proposal that each officially approved in 2022 to redesignate the Tardy Parcel as the Farley Riverside Park. The group then led the private fundraising effort in collaboration with VLT that secured nearly $49,000 in donations for the establishment of the Park. These funds are being transferred to the Town in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement described earlier. The group is now leading efforts to engage a professional landscape architect to assist with site design, procure a memorial stone bench and plaque to be installed in a mutually agreeable location on the property, and assist with other aspects of establishing the Park. Looking ahead, the group could evolve into a broader, more formal/official "Friends" entity for the property like those in place for public lands in many other locations, engaging a wider circle of Valley residents and others who are interested in assisting the Town with its ongoing stewardship of the property. This could include helping with on-the-ground activities like invasive plant control and planting native vegetation, additional fundraising, and other efforts.
- *Friends of the Mad River (FMR):* As the leading Valley-wide proponent of thoughtful stewardship of the Mad River watershed, an important partner with the Town on many efforts over time, and with its expertise and long-standing interest in the Tardy Parcel, FMR will be a key sounding board and collaborator on management efforts going forward. In particular, dialogue with FMR will be important on river corridor management and restoration, invasive plant control, planting of native vegetation, and potentially management of public use of the shoreline.
- *Vermont River Corridor and Floodplain Protection Section, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC):* DEC's river corridor and floodplain protection team works with municipalities and others to "protect and restor[e] natural and beneficial river and floodplain functions." They will be an important partner, along

with FMR, for a fresh assessment of options and opportunities for river corridor restoration on the Tardy Parcel to promote channel stability and equilibrium, enhance instream and riparian ecological values, and reduce downstream risk of flooding, erosion, and sedimentation.

Other potential partners:

- *StewardMRV:* Launched in 2021, this collaborative initiative among many local organizations and volunteers is working "to foster an ethos of stewardship in the Mad River Valley community and to implement sustainable solutions of taking care of our vital outdoor recreation assets for people of today, and generations to come." A potential collaboration with StewardMRV could be helpful as another way of engaging volunteers to help with on-the-ground stewardship at the Tardy Parcel, particularly those related to public use of the property like management of trash and dog waste and potentially assisting with ecological restoration (e.g., invasive plant control and planting native vegetation).
- Mad River Path Association (MRPA): MRPA builds, maintains, and conserves a network of public pathways and trails throughout the Mad River Valley that fosters community well-being and vitality. They are an important partner with the Town on various efforts, including an ongoing collaboration to maintain a footpath and manage Japanese knotweed on the Austin Parcel downstream of Lareau Swimhole. Although opportunities for trails on the Tardy Parcel are limited by the property's size, configuration, and location between Route 100, the Mad River, and adjacent private land, there may be value in collaboration with MRPA on the design, establishment, and maintenance of a short interpretive trail that is planned as part of the transition of the property to the Farley Riverside Park.

Funding: As described earlier, the Town is in the unusual and fortunate position of having nearly $49,000 of dedicated private funding in the Farley Riverside Park Stewardship Reserve Fund. These funds are available to cover costs associated with the transition of the Tardy Parcel to the Farley Riverside Park including establishment of memorial elements, enhancements to public access and visitor experience, ecological restoration, and other aspects of stewardship of the property in the coming years.

When those funds are depleted, the Town may cover ongoing costs of management of the property with funds from the Conservation Commission's annual operating budget (currently $5,000 per year), the long-standing Town Forest Stewardship Reserve Fund, or other municipal appropriations. Also, additional fundraising could be done to secure funding from other sources including private donations, foundation grants, and state or federal government grants. Such an effort could be led by the Friends of Farley Riverside Park in collaboration with the Town if the group continues and includes fundraising in its purview.

V. Management Vision and Goals

The Town is committed to long-term ownership and management of the Tardy Parcel in a manner consistent with the legal requirements of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*, with "continued use primarily as open lands for agriculture, ecological riparian protection and enhancement, scenic protection, and low impact public recreational use." Within that overarching context, the Town envisions transforming the property to thoughtful, forward-looking stewardship that will enhance its ecological condition and provide a public amenity worthy of community pride.

Specific goals include the following:

- → Protect and enhance the property's value and contribution as part of the Mad River corridor to natural river function, water quality, flood resilience, and habitat for native species.
- → Control invasive plant species to the extent possible.
- → Restore native floodplain vegetation in areas not used primarily for public access or reserved for agricultural use (haying).
- → Conserve the property's scenic beauty and open space values.
- → Provide enhanced opportunities for low impact, environmentally sensitive public access and recreational use, including limited infrastructure (e.g., gravel access drive, small parking area, directional and interpretive signage, short footpath) and space for quiet enjoyment and contemplation.
- → Transition the naming and management of the property, and establish modest on-site memorial elements, to honor the conservation legacy of Virginia Farley.
- → Monitor and respond to changes.

VI. Requirements and Guidelines for Management Activities and Public Use

Future management activities and public use of the Tardy Parcel must be consistent with the provisions of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*, federal and state laws, and Waitsfield's municipal ordinances, regulations, and Town Plan. In addition, the Town intends for management and use to reflect the property's setting, features, constraints, and opportunities, and be in keeping with the Town's stewardship of other municipally owned conservation lands.

In the "Covenants and Conservation Restrictions" section of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*, the Town agreed to the following binding provisions for management and use:

- The property shall be used and maintained for agriculture, low impact recreation, outdoor education, stream bank stabilization, riparian habitat improvement, scenic enjoyment, and erosion control.
- The Town has the right to limit, control, or otherwise manage public access as necessary to accomplish the Purposes of the Grant and ensure public health and safety.
- The Town may erect and maintain "reasonable signs", including but not limited to ones indicating the name and ownership of the land and its protection by VLT as holder of the Grant, boundary markers, directional signs, memorial plaques, informational and interpretive signs, and signs limiting access or use. No other signs, billboards, or outdoor advertising of any kind can be erected or maintained on the property.
- The Town may construct, install, maintain, repair, and replace a gravel access drive, and a parking area for not more than eight cars. Those improvements must be at least 100 feet from the bank of the Mad River. The Town also can authorize temporary parking in other locations at least 100 feet from the riverbank for up to four public events annually.
- The Town may install, maintain, repair, and replace municipal sewer and/or water lines on the property adjacent and parallel to Route 100, along with a pumping station.
- The Town may have and maintain one temporary privy, at least 100 feet from the riverbank.
- No dumping or storage of waste or refuse on the property is allowed, nor disturbance of the land surface (i.e., filling, excavation, removal of topsoil, sand, gravel, rocks, or minerals) or change in its topography other than to restore its original, natural contours.
- No residential, commercial, industrial, or mining activities are allowed, nor any buildings, structures, or appurtenant facilities.
- The Town is required to periodically inspect the property and "take all reasonable steps to assure compliance" with the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*.
- The Town is not allowed to sell, transfer or encumber the property without prior written approval from VLT, and the property may only be transferred to a public or non-profit entity that is qualified and willing to take on ownership and management in keeping with the purposes and requirements of the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*.

Based on these provisions and the other key directives described at the beginning of this section of the Plan, the Town is hereby establishing the following requirements and guidelines for public use of the property:

→ Respect the land, river, wildlife, vegetation, other visitors, and neighboring landowners.

→ The property is intended for pedestrian use. Motorized vehicles and bicycles are allowed only on the gravel driveway and parking area that will be established, or to access and park in other designated areas for approved public events (see below). Horseback riding is prohibited.

→ Carry in and carry out trash and waste.

→ The property is open from dawn to dusk. No public visitation is allowed after dark.

→ No open fires are allowed.

→ Dogs must be leashed or under clear voice control of the owner, in accordance with Town ordinance. Dog waste must be removed by its owner.

→ Accessing the Mad River is permitted but is not a priority use due to limited good access points and the potential for riverbank and shoreline erosion.

→ Fishing is permitted in accordance with State regulations.

→ Hunting, shooting, and trapping are prohibited for safety reasons given the parcel's size, configuration, location, and other public uses.

→ No vegetation or other species (e.g., mushrooms) may be cut, harvested, or planted without permission of the Conservation Commission.

→ The parcel may be closed temporarily, with associated signage and other public notice, as appropriate based on site conditions (e.g., during mud season or other very wet periods).

→ Public events (e.g., community celebrations, organized work parties for site stewardship) may be held with prior written approval from the Conservation Commission (or the Selectboard if the Selectboard assumes primary responsibility for the property in the future). As noted above, parking for up to four such events annually may occur in designated locations other than the parking area that will established, provided those locations are at least 100 feet from the bank of the Mad River.

These requirements and guidelines may be modified if needed to address circumstances on the ground or other activities and uses that have not been contemplated.

VII. Near-term Management Actions (2023-2025)

The following management actions are intended to be achieved within the next three years, with the first several and potentially others expected to be undertaken before the end of 2023.

Many of the actions are interrelated and synergistic, and are expected to be pursued simultaneously to the extent feasible rather than in a more linear sequence.

- *Selectboard/Town Administrator:* Implement any administrative actions needed to officially rename the property the Farley Riverside Park.
- *Conservation Commission:* Inform and engage the community on the Town's plans for enhancements to the property and permitted and restricted uses of the site.
- *Conservation Commission:* By Fall 2023, develop a brief supplement to this plan that includes (1) a map dividing the property into management areas based on similar physical and vegetative characteristics, and (2) a written summary of specific actions that are anticipated in each management area. This supplement is intended to provide interested parties with an easily digestible, detailed distillation of actions that are planned for various parts of the property. The map will include a 100-foot buffer from the Mad River as a guide to siting improvements to the gravel access drive on the property and the creation of a small new parking area. In delineating management areas, consult with potentially interested farmers on whether and where to maintain any agricultural use (e.g., haying) on a portion of the property.
- *Conservation Commission:* Collaborate with the Friends of Farley Riverside Park group and the landscape architect they have enlisted on planning, design, procurement, and implementation of a modest, site-appropriate memorial in Virginia Farley's honor (including a stone bench, plaque, and adjacent small area of lupine planting) and targeted improvements to facilitate public access and enhanced user experience of the property (e.g., entry signage, upgrade to the existing gravel access drive if needed, creation of a small parking area, and a short interpretive trail that reflects Farley's vision of environmental stewardship). Coordinate with the Friends group and the Vermont Land Trust on ensuring these actions are done in a way that is consistent with the *Grant of Conservation Covenants*.
- *Conservation Commission:* Advance efforts to control Japanese knotweed and woody invasive plant species such as shrub honeysuckle, buckthorn, Japanese barberry, and winged euonymous on the property, building on the 2016 invasive plant management plan prepared by VLT and as part of the Commission's broader invasives management efforts with the Warren and Fayston Conservation Commissions, Friends of the Mad River, interns, and volunteers.
- *Conservation Commission:* Collaborate with the Friends of the Mad River to develop and begin implementing a plan for reestablishing native floodplain vegetation on portions of the property that are not anticipated to be used primarily for public access or haying. Assess opportunities and constraints for advancing this work, including site conditions, other potential partners, possible funding sources beyond Farley Riverside Park Stewardship Reserve Fund, and potential assistance from volunteers (e.g., through the Friends of Farley Riverside Park or StewardMRV).

- *Conservation Commission:* Collaborate with the Friends of the Mad River and DEC's River Corridor and Floodplain Protection Section on a possible fresh assessment of options, opportunities, and constraints for river corridor protection and restoration on the property – and potentially other Town-owned and conservation-oriented parcels immediately downstream – to promote river channel stability and equilibrium, enhance instream and riparian corridor ecological and habitat values, reduce downstream risk of flooding, erosion, and sedimentation, and improve water quality.
- *Selectboard/Town Administrator:* Identify the best approach for getting regular mowing done on portions of the property that are identified through site design for grass cover, and make the necessary arrangements (e.g., directing Town staff or establishing a 3rd party contract).
- *Selectboard/Town Administrator:* If any portions of the property are identified for haying, establish a clear agreement with a local farmer on where and when it will be done.
- *Selectboard and Conservation Commission:* Determine if the gravel access drive and parking area will be plowed during the wintertime. If so, the Selectboard and Town Administrator will make the necessary arrangements with the Road Department.
- *Conservation Commission:* Initiate a dialogue with StewardMRV about having the Tardy Parcel included as a site for volunteer efforts to help address any challenges that may arise from public use at the property (e.g., trash removal, river access, management of dogs and dog waste) and/or to assist with ecological restoration activities (invasives management, planting native vegetation).
- *Conservation Commission:* Monitor progress on the implementation of this Plan, conditions on the ground, and public use of the property. Make adjustments if needed, in consultation with the Selectboard and others as appropriate.
- *Conservation Commission:* Develop a plan for longer-term management actions (beyond 2025), in consultation with the Selectboard, Town staff, and key partners, and with appropriate public involvement.

VIII. Plan Review and Revision

The Town will review this Plan and update it as needed every 10-15 years, or sooner if circumstances dictate. Unless the Selectboard takes over lead responsibility for the property, the Conservation Commission will lead the plan review and update process in consultation with the Selectboard and Town staff, and with appropriate public involvement.

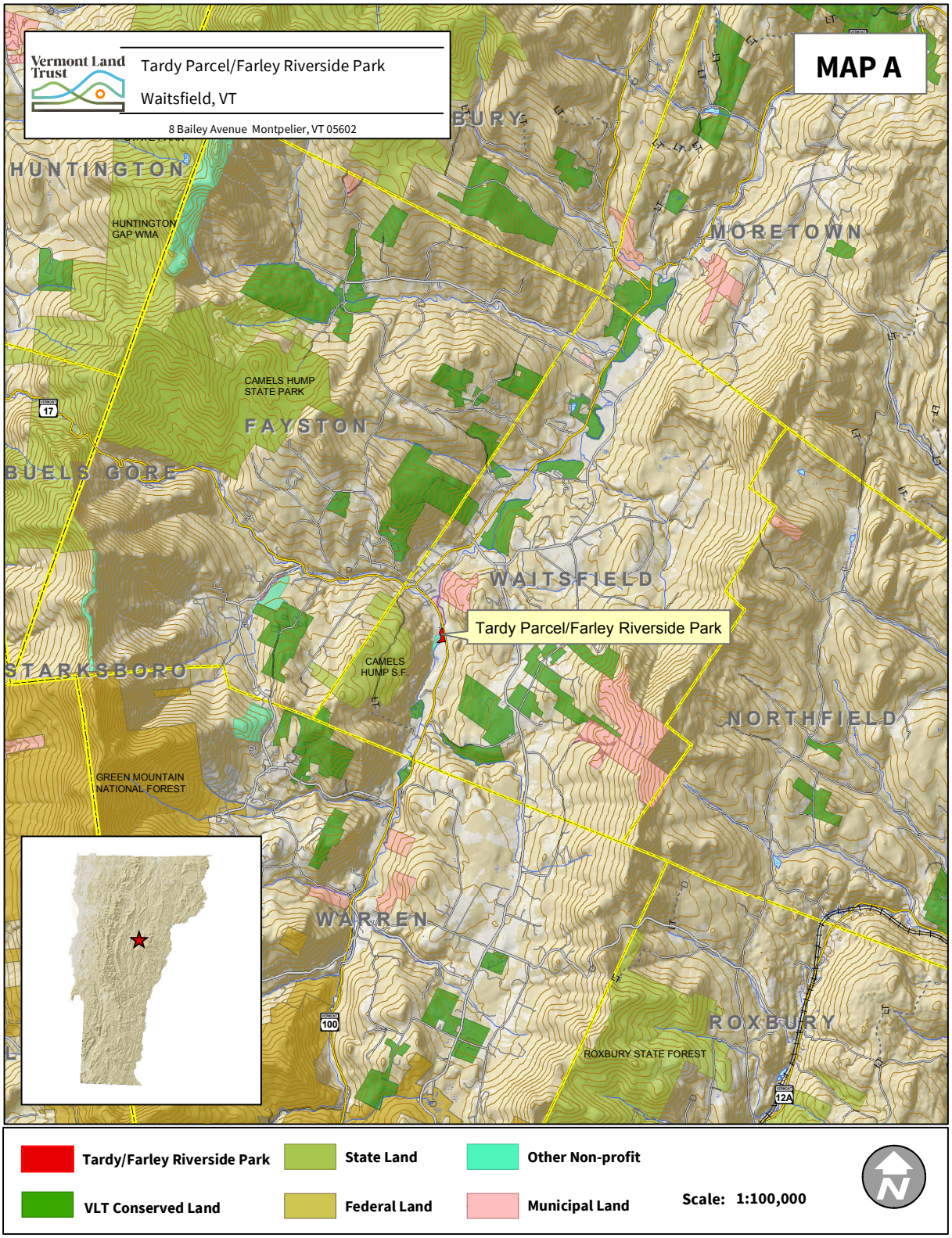
IX. Appendices:

A. *Tardy Grant of Conservation Covenants* between the Town of Waitsfield (Grantor) and Vermont Land Trust (Grantee), signed and recorded June 5, 2003

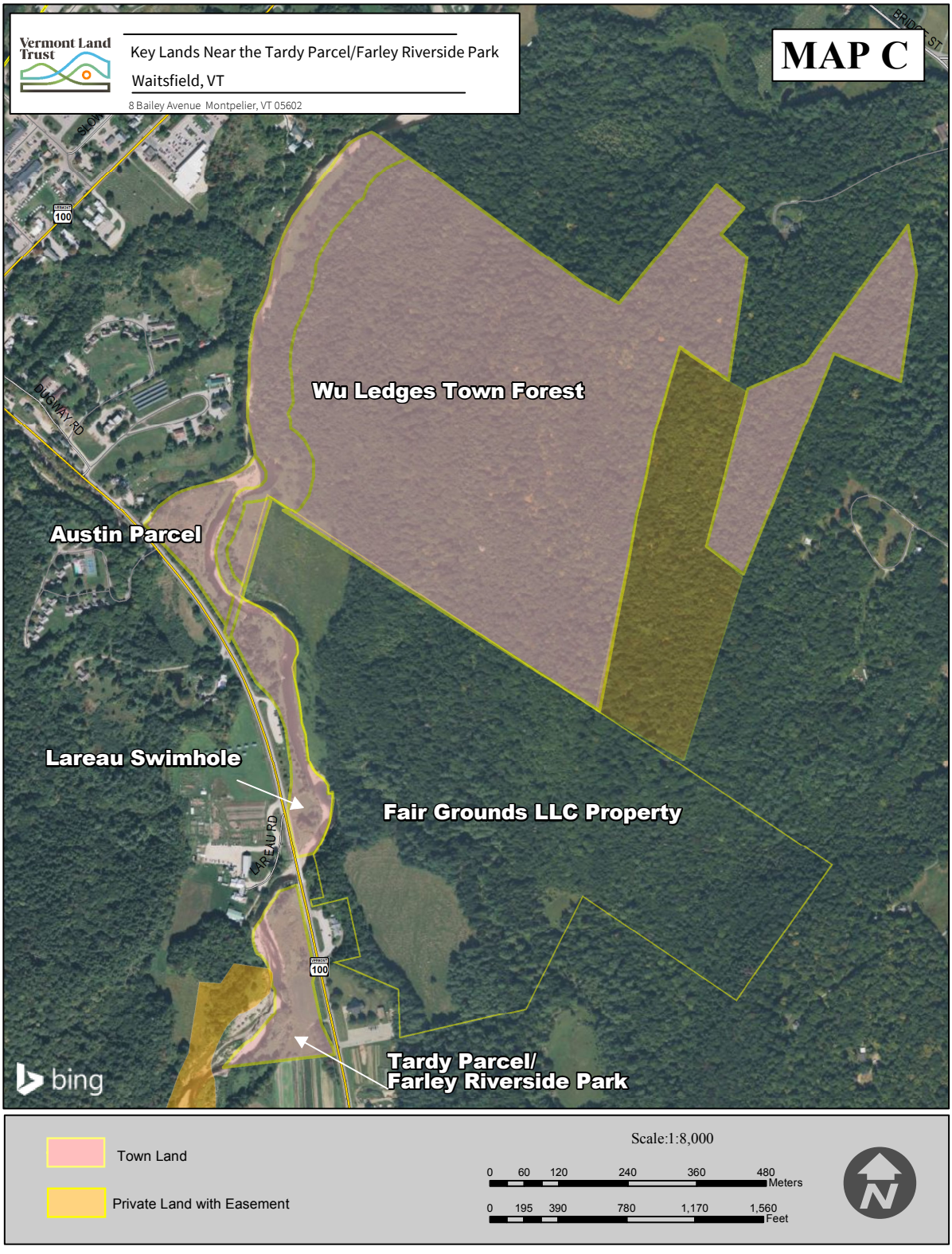
B. *Tardy Property Baseline Documentation Report*, Vermont Land Trust (Project No. 130035), 2003
C. *Natural Community Inventory of the Waldron, Austin, and Tardy Tracts of the Town of Waitsfield*, Brett Engstrom, 24 January, 2006
D. *Fluvial Geomorphology Assessment of the Mad River Watershed, Vermont* (2007)
E. *Upper Mad River Corridor Plan* (2008)
F. *Invasive Plant Management Plan for the Town of Waitsfield – Austin and Tardy Properties*, Julia Gulka, Vermont Land Trust, August 11, 2016
G. *VLT-Town of Waitsfield Memorandum of Agreement, Tardy Parcel-Farley Riverside Park*, 2023

X. Maps

Map A: Locator Map
Map B: Tardy Parcel/Farley Riverside Park
Map C: Key Lands Near the Tardy Parcel/Farley Riverside Park


Vermont Land Trust
Tardy Parcel/Farley Riverside Park
Waitsfield, VT
8 Bailey Avenue Montpelier, VT 05602
MAP A
HUNTINGTON
BURY
MORETOWN
HUNTINGTON GAP WMA
CAMELS HUMP STATE PARK
FAYSTON
BUELS GORE
WAITSFIELD
Tardy Parcel/Farley Riverside Park
CAMELS HUMP S.F.
STARKSBORO
NORTHFIELD
GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST
WARREN
ROXBURY
ROXBURY STATE FOREST
17
100
12A
Tardy/Farley Riverside Park
State Land
Other Non-profit
VLT Conserved Land
Federal Land
Municipal Land
Scale: 1:100,000
N

Vermont Land Trust
Tardy Parcel/Farley Riverside Park
Waitsfield, VT
8 Bailey Avenue Montpelier, VT 05602
MAP B
100
bing
Parcel Boundary
100 ft Riparian Buffer
Contours-1 ft.
0 55 110 220 330 440
Feet
Scale:1:1,613
N


Vermont Land Trust
Key Lands Near the Tardy Parcel/Farley Riverside Park
Waitsfield, VT
8 Bailey Avenue Montpelier, VT 05602
MAP C
Wu Ledges Town Forest
Austin Parcel
Lareau Swimhole
Fair Grounds LLC Property
Tardy Parcel/
Farley Riverside Park
DUGWAY RD
LAREAU RD
BRIDGE ST
100
bing
Town Land
Private Land with Easement
Scale:1:8,000
0 60 120 240 360 480 Meters
0 195 390 780 1,170 1,560 Feet
N

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

Regional Project Refinement Report

FOR

Waitsfield STP 013-4(55)

VT Route 100 / VT 17 / Bragg Hill Road Intersection in Waitsfield

June 16, 2023

Prepared for:

Vermont Agency of Transportation

Prepared by:

McFarland Johnson

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I. Existing Conditions

The VT Route 100, VT Route 17 and Bragg Hill Road (TH-24) intersections are located on the Mad River Byway. The intersection is located at MM 2.648 on VT Route 100 and MM 0.214 on VT Route 17. See Appendix B for the Location Map.

The existing conditions were gathered from a combination of site visits, the town's website and the Route Logs. See Appendix C for the Route Logs.

	VT-100	VT-17	Bragg Hill Road
Roadway Classification	Minor Arterial	Major Collector	Class III Road
Year Built	1700s	1965	Unknown
Ownership	State of Vermont	State of Vermont	Town of Waitsfield

Purpose

McFarland Johnson, Inc. (MJ) has prepared this project refinement report for the Waitsfield STP 013-4(55) project located in the Town of Waitsfield. The report was developed to support the Vermont Project Selection and Prioritization (VPSP2) process. As stated on the Agency's website, the VPSP2 is a mechanism to identify, prioritize, and select state transportation capital improvement projects on the federal aid system. The focus of this report is to evaluate and document the potential needs, data, and stakeholder information necessary for the project as a part of that mechanism. The project is in the Town of Waitsfield and encompasses improvements at the intersection of VT Route 100, VT Route 17 and Bragg Hill Road.

Need

The VT 100, VT 17 and Bragg Hill Road intersections are considered deficient based on antiquated geometry, designation as a high crash location, stormwater runoff onto abutter properties and lack of multi-model amenities.

- Substandard Geometry: The intersection of VT 100 and VT 17 is a stop controlled "Y" intersection with VT 100 as the uncontrolled leg. The intersection is located on a steep grade and VT 17 intersects VT 100 at significant skew angles. The grade and large skew angles reduce driver visibility of approach traffic on VT 100. There are no pedestrian/bicycle accommodations within the intersection.

- Safety for all users: In the last few decades, the Town of Waitsfield has focused on improving active transportation along the VT Route 100 corridor and improving pedestrian and cyclist access through the Mad River Byway. The intersection of VT 100 and VT 17 is located in the middle of this connectivity initiative. The Town desires to make improvements at this intersection to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Mad River Recreation Hub project is focused on trail connectivity and accessibility in the Mad River Valley and beyond, including the trails surrounding this intersection. The MRV Chamber of Commerce relocated their new welcome center in November 2022 to a property adjacent to this intersection on VT 17, that will likely attract bicyclists and pedestrians. Improvements at the intersection should address the current intersection safety and operation deficiencies and include geometric modifications, shoulder treatment/modifications, intersection identification/treatment, bicyclist considerations/