



HEALTHY LAND. CLEAN WATER. VIBRANT COMMUNITY.

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Title: A Community Effort for Clean Water

On June 27th and 28th, Friends of the Mad River's (FMR) Mad River Watch volunteers visited field sites across the Valley in order to monitor water quality and make detailed environmental observations for their second field exploration this summer. This article is part of a series highlighting the questions and field work driving volunteers to find answers about the health of the Mad River watershed, as well as the community of supporters that make it possible.

"Mad River Watch, like most of Friends' work, is a community effort," says FMR Director, Corrie Miller. "More than 30 years of volunteer work, partnerships with landowners, and deeply-held commitment from donors have shaped the program as it exists today. This year, we're excited to see returning volunteers as well as more than a dozen new ones, and to celebrate the sponsorship by Lawson's Finest."

Lawson's Finest Liquid's charitable giving, along with other aspects of the business, supports the values of excellence, authenticity, fun, community, and innovation. "At Lawson's Finest, we love to help support thriving communities where people take good care of each other, protect and enjoy the natural world, and bring more fun to life," said Karen Lawson. "We are so happy to support the Mad River Watch 2.0 efforts through our [Social Impact Program](#) to ensure the pristine nature of our beloved waterway."

Lawson's Finest – Green is Grand!

Lawson's [Green is Grand](#) initiative focuses on a commitment to joining innovation, efficiency, and taking steps to "green-up" the beer production process and minimize impact in a resource-intensive manufacturing business. "In the brewery itself, our efforts have led Lawson's Finest to use water as efficiently as possible", said Lawson. "We've exceeded industry benchmarks for gallons of water required for each batch of beer."

Lawson's Finest constructed a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility and implemented extensive side-streaming efforts to remove solids and organic loads from their wastewater stream. "Our side-streamed high-strength waste is then pumped and trucked to an anaerobic digester facility that turns the organic solids into electrical energy," explained Lawson.

The remaining wastewater passes through an on-site aerated biological treatment system that breaks down the remaining organic loads and the treated effluent discharge water is lower in strength than a standard household septic system. Lawson's Finest Liquids received a 2020 Special Project Merit Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies of Vermont for their Wastewater Pre-Treatment system.

“We see supporting Mad River Watch as being in alignment with our efforts to green up our production process,” says Lawson. “Not to mention the fact that great beer needs great water in the first place!”

Mad River Watch – Highlights from the Field

Mad River Watch volunteers closely observe their field sites and sample water quality parameters like temperature, nitrate/nitrite, phosphate, and conductivity in the field. This week saw fifteen teams of volunteers visit seventeen field sites.

While we typically expect a rain to deliver pollutants from the land into the water, a rainy Saturday seemed to be absorbed by the dry landscape with little observed impact showing in the water. A pair of volunteers visiting the Ward Access swimming hole this Sunday noted that the, “recent short duration heavy rains do not seem to have caused substantial fluvial changes. The water is as clear as before.” Another pair of volunteers visiting the Riverside Park on Sunday saw similar conditions of clear water and low flow, in spite of the recent rain. Some elevated phosphate levels were noted across the watershed and Friends’ staff and volunteers are considering them as they calibrate their testing methods and establish baseline information for the new water quality parameters

Volunteers recorded signs and direct observations of wildlife such as water pennies, Cabbage and White Admiral butterflies, minnows, snails, bear scat, frogs, a curious groundhog, and many birds. One volunteer, visiting Shepard Brook this Sunday, noted that, “Meadow rue is blooming as well as purple flowered raspberry. The western bank is covered in virginia creeper, grape and clematis vines.” At Riverside Park this Monday, another volunteer observed, “clover, buttercup, daisies, and white campion.”

Over the summer, FMR will compile data and observations and share key findings and highlights in the Valley Reporter and online at friendsofthemadriver.org/madriverwatch.

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3 Photos:

- 1. Caption:** A young volunteer tests for phosphate at Riverside Park

Credit: Friends of the Mad River



2. Credit: Lawson's Finest Liquids



3. Credit: Lawson's Finest Liquids

