

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Skiers and Fish Celebrate**

**Fayston, VT** – Skiers and fish are an unlikely pairing but they both have one more reason to be excited this fall – an important piece of snowmaking infrastructure is now fish-friendly! Thanks to a partnership between Sugarbush Resort and a team of local, state and federal partners, Sugarbush’s snowmaking weir (basically a small dam to collect water for making snow) in Slide Brook across from Fayston School now allows trout to move upstream and gives them access to 2.4 miles of additional habitat!

“One of Sugarbush’s core values is being a responsible member of our community. The Mad River Valley is a special place, and we believe it is our responsibility to preserve and improve our wonderful natural surroundings while building a viable and sustainable business” adds Win Smith, President of Sugarbush Resort.

The weir will continue its important snowmaking function during the winter months, while its new windows will allow for fish and sediment movement during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. This modification benefits the economy and the ecosystem; skiers can feel assured that Sugarbush is acting as a good steward of the Mad River Valley’s important natural resources and the fish benefit from additional cold-water habitat that is especially important as they adapt to a changing climate. Furthermore, because the weir’s new windows also allow sediment movement downstream to more closely mimic the natural system, which may prove to require less maintenance work for Sugarbush and less damaging erosion and sedimentation (filled with excessive nutrients) downstream.

Since Hurricane Irene, Friends of the Mad River (FMR) has coordinated municipal, private, state, and federal partners to increase stream connectivity, improve wildlife habitat, and build our community’s flood resilience by repairing infrastructure that negatively impacts the river system. As part of this initiative, partners identified Sugarbush Resort’s weir as problematic from both fish habitat and long-term maintenance perspectives. With these challenges in mind and Sugarbush’s commitment to be involved, this site rose to the top of our watershed’s priorities for replacement.

Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District, District Manager, Corrina Parnapy states: “It is inspiring to see the collaborative work conducted between the public sector, watershed groups, and state and federal agencies for the protection of our natural resources.”

A three year-long effort – through the planning, engineering, permitting, and construction phases – culminated last week when the windows were cut into the Slide Brook weir. It was truly a collaborative effort; Friends of the Mad River, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District, and Sugarbush Resort joined forces to accomplish the project with funding from Sugarbush Resort, a Vermont Watershed grant, a State Wildlife grant as well as cooperative agreements with our federal partners. Thanks to Grover Engineering, Kingsbury Construction, and Canonica Farm and Forest Services for their dedicated work in support of this effort.

Friends of the Mad River’s Executive Director, Corrie Miller, notes: “Seeing Sugarbush’s commitment to careful stewardship of our natural resources reminds me how special the Mad River Valley is. Here, we all understand that the health of the ecosystem is the foundation of our community vitality and our quality of life.”

For more information on partnering with the WNRCD on habitat restoration projects and initiatives please visit the WNRCD website at: [www.winooskinrcd.org](http://www.winooskinrcd.org) or email: [info@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:info@winooskinrcd.org)

The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District is one of 14 conservation districts throughout Vermont. It encompasses all of Chittenden and Washington County as well as parts of Orange County (Orange, Williamstown and Washington). The district relies on grants and individual donations to complete its conservation work. The WNRCD focuses its resources on completing conservation projects within the areas of agricultural assistance, forestland enhancement, urban conservation and watershed stewardship.

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