



For Immediate Release

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Stark Mountain Foundation Kicks Off Summer With Three Exciting, New Projects

This summer, the Stark Mountain Foundation (SMF) is working on three new projects to improve recreational access on Stark Mountain, educate the community, and promote the historical value of the Mad River Glen Ski Area.

For the first project, Stark Mountain Foundation will partner with Arrowwood Environmental to conduct an ecological assessment on a portion of Stark Mountain through the fall. The team will identify and locate the unique and significant habitats, plants, and animals that occupy the landscape and form its ecosystem. AE will also provide maps showing the results and a detailed report documenting the resources, evaluating their condition, and ranking their resource sensitivity. The report will outline specific recommendations to protect and preserve the ecological integrity of the natural communities. The report will also outline the various types and conditions of those habitats. This knowledge will underpin the environmental education and recreation programs on Stark Mountain.

With financial backing from the Stark Mountain Foundation, the Vermont Master Naturalist Program will also be returning to the Mad River Valley for a second time. VMN is now looking for a team of 15 people passionate about natural history and willing to share their knowledge of a related discipline for a program starting in the fall of 2023. VMN will explore the Mad River Valley and Stark Mountain area uncovering its unique natural and cultural history in 5 field days from September to May. The VMN program, led by field ecologists, focuses on geology, glacial history, wildlife ecology, human settlement history, botany, and natural communities. The emphasis is on learning how to read the local landscape.

Katie Sullivan of Waitsfield participated in the 2021 cohort. “As a teacher, I appreciated the inquiry approach to learning. We did not memorize the names of plants and animals. We learned to see the story they tell us. We zoomed in to see the tiny details and zoomed out to see the big picture, all while experiencing joy, laughter, curiosity, and camaraderie.”

As team members gain knowledge, they will begin to give back. VMN will work with local groups like Stark Mountain Foundation, the Warren and Waitsfield Conservation Commissions, and the Vermont Alliance for Half-Earth, to identify projects that fill community needs. VMN also partners around Vermont with conservation commissions, land trusts, river conservancies, schools, and other groups. A few members of the 2023 VMN team will lead nature hikes on Stark Mountain. Included in the list of former VMN student projects are the restoration of a floodplain forest in Waitsfield, the improvement of bird habitat along the Mad River Path, the evaluation of a recently discovered old-growth forest in Warren, and an investigation of the natural history of Boyce Hill Town Forest in Fayston.

“Stark Mountain Foundation is thrilled to support the return of the Vermont Master Naturalist Program to the Mad River Valley for the next two years,” said Jim Elkind, President of SMF. “Enabling VMN participants to visit and learn what makes Stark Mountain unique supports our mission. VMN will encourage more visitors to value Stark Mountain for years to come.” To apply to participate in the 2023 VMN Mad River Valley program, email Alex Lewis at alexajlewis@gmail.com, or visit the VMN website at vermontmasternaturalist.org to learn more.

Lastly, SMF is launching a campaign to support the production of a new film by Rick Moulton Productions. The film will premiere on January 6, 2024, to celebrate and document the most recent 35 years of Mad River Glen’s history. It will include the formation of the cooperative and the notables that have made Mad River Glen one of the most beloved ski areas in the world. Please consider donating to bring this film to life: weblink.donorperfect.com/MRG75thFilm

About the Stark Mountain Foundation

Founded in 2000, The Stark Mountain Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization based in Waitsfield, VT. The mission of the Stark Mountain Foundation is to preserve and protect the environment and ecosystem of General Stark Mountain, including its recreational access and historical value, and to support programs that promote and sustain that environment for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Learn more at www.starkmountain.org



Master Naturalist students, under the tutelage of ecologist Grace Glynn, examine a ground-water seepage that feeds a Red Maple-Black Ash Seepage Swamp near Wu Ledges Town Forest in Waitsfield