

THE BEARS NECESSITIES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Bears Crossing Community

Issue #2 / March 2023



The Merits of Mud Season

BY AMY SYRACUSE, EDITOR

Despite my constant craving for post-winter Vitamin D and utter disdain for muddy footprints inside the house, I eagerly await weekends in Bears Crossing during mud season. Maybe the fortitude of Vermonters is rubbing off on me... or maybe I just need to connect with my happy place when the frenzy of springtime activities hits high gear. Either way, as the snow piles melt and the mud pools grow, weekends in Bears Crossing are restorative. There's never that nagging feeling that there's something more important to do than simply relax and soak up the serenity of our community.

If you don't normally visit in spring, this year consider giving yourself the gift of a hike up the Ski Home Trail to catch the last remnants of snow on Fool's Gold, a walk on Bears Den Road while counting bright orange newts in the culverts, a fun-filled tour of local breweries (page 7), or the chance to dust off the puzzles and board games you were too tired for after skiing or snowboarding... all FOMO free. While you're here, also take a moment to notice the incredible work that goes into turning our winter wonderland into a summer paradise. It takes a village, as you'll read on page 6.

In this newsletter, you'll also find:

- Seasonal and recreational tips;
- A history of the Bears Crossing bear;
- News about a Bears Crossing "swag" sale to raise funds for Deerfield Valley Rescue;
- A Board of Directors update; and more.

Of course, winter isn't in the rearview yet. Enjoy the Snowman Contest entries on page 8. And—if you found yourself daydreaming about warmer times while digging out from this week's storm—consider sharing a summer article idea. I'd love to include your top tips in the next newsletter, scheduled for June.

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Spring Ahead: What to Know About Mud Season

BY GEORGE FRIEND, PROPERTY MANAGER

Spring is coming! Here's a summary of what will be happening—and things to be aware of—at Bears Crossing after the snow is gone.

- **Landscaping:** Mud season is when all of the difficult work of spring clean-up and beautification begins. Crews will be busy raking sand, re-seeding, planting, and mulching throughout the community. The process takes several weeks. But, by the end of spring, the gardens will start popping, lawns will be mowed, and the pool will be open.
- **Damaged Trees/Fallen Branches:** Winter storms leave a lot of debris and can damage mature trees. Small branches and sticks will be cleaned out of mowed lawns during the community-wide spring clean-up. It's the homeowner's responsibility to clean up larger branches and to maintain healthy trees. Bears Crossing doesn't offer curbside brush removal. If you have large branches that need to be relocated, please e-mail info@wbmvt.com for instructions. Old Christmas trees must be removed by owners.
- **Wood Rot:** Spring is the ideal time to check for siding rot and damage, and to initiate needed repairs. This year, four townhouse buildings will be painted and necessary rot repairs will be made prior to paint. SFH owners wishing to address rot issues should schedule work as soon as possible, since contractor time books up quickly. In fall and spring, W&B notifies property owners if there are concerns about rot and other exterior issues. It's prudent to promptly address them. Unfortunately, wood rot only worsens with time.
- **Grills/Fire Pits:** Please remember that grills are not allowed on townhome decks. The Fire Safety Code is very clear on this issue and the rule will be enforced. There are two grills at the pool patio for the community's use.
- **Trash/Composting:** Warning! Warmer weather means bears will be out and about before you know it. Please be aware of your surroundings, especially when approaching the trash and composting areas. It is extremely important to ensure the trash compactor door is securely closed. Don't put food scraps or unclean recyclables in the recycling bin. Plastic garbage bags in recycling contaminate the container, causing the entire container to go to a landfill—the opposite of what we're trying to do. If you have questions about trash, recycling, or composting, see our [new community guide on these topics](#). Also, please share this important information with guests and renters.

I look forward to seeing you around the neighborhood. Until then, enjoy the rest of ski season!





Bear in Mind: A History of the Bears Crossing Bear

There are bears in the valley, and there are Bears in the Valley. You may not know that our community's bear statue is one of just 39 examples of the latter.

This work of art was created for the Mount Snow Valley Chamber of Commerce "Bears in the Valley" event, a celebration of community, arts, education, and tourism that ran from 2006 to 2007. The initiative produced 39 life-sized bear statues, each sponsored by an area business and decorated by a local artist. From May to October 2007, the bears were displayed on Routes 9 and 100 in Wilmington and West Dover.

The art installation became a popular visitor attraction, and culminated in a charity gala and auction at the Grand Summit Hotel on Columbus Day weekend 2007. A dedicated contingent of owners (Anthony and Carolyn Famiano, Michael and Judy Goldberg, Mike and Cary Goodman, Joe Lodi, and Bob and Roberta Stone) was there to ensure a Bear in the Valley would find a forever home in Bears Crossing.

Leading up to the auction, Michael Goldberg organized a neighborhood tag sale, raffle, and donation drive to fund the bear's purchase. The group set their sights on the "Onoraigh" bear, sponsored by Honora Winery and painted by Wilmington-based artist Jim McGrath. According to Cary Goodman, the group wanted to purchase a bear with a realistic look and were drawn to the bear's wine motif, which reminded them of happy times spent at owners' parties.

Bidding was aggressive. The auction raised almost \$155,000 to benefit Deerfield Valley Community Cares, Deerfield Valley Food Pantry, Deerfield Valley Healthcare Volunteers, Make-A-Wish of Vermont, local school arts programs, and Chamber of Commerce programs. But the Bears Crossing team secured our bear for \$5,100—just a bit over what the community had raised. Through the generosity of the auction-goers and other owners, the shortfall was covered.



Upon returning to Bears Crossing, Joe Lodi found the perfect plinth for the bear: a large, flat rock residing on his Bears Den Road property. He worked with Rich Werner and John Brunen to transport the rock to the entrance of Polar Bear South, and to attach the bear securely. Years later, when the elements had taken their toll on the bear's coat, Joe, John, and George Friend arranged for its restoration, along with a weather-proof protective clear coat to ensure our bear will continue to stand watch over the Community for years to come. -AS

How many Bears in the Valley have you seen? This summer, we'll have a "bearspotting" contest to locate as many of the local Bears in the Valley as possible. Be sure to check the June edition of The Bears Necessities for details.

Planning Ahead

Mar. 19 - Rotary Club Tube-A-Thon/Mount Snow
 Mar. 24-26 - ReggaeFest/Mount Snow
 Mar. 25 - Sink or Skim/Mount Snow
 Mar. 26 - Duct Tape Derby/Mount Snow
 Mar. 26 - Last Day of Bears Crossing Moover Service for the Season
 Mar. 31 - Vermont Craft Beer & Chili Stroll/ Downtown Wilmington
 Apr. 1 - Bears Crossing Board Meeting
 Apr. 1 - Winterfest/Mount Snow
 May 28 - Scenic Chairlift Rides Open/Mount Snow (tentative)
 May 28 - Bears Crossing Pool Open (tentative)
 June 3 - Bears Crossing Board Meeting
 June 16 - Rotary Club Putt & Pour at Haystack Golf Course

Check the Bears Crossing Facebook Group for announcements about additional community outings (e.g., hikes, pub tours, brewery visits, etc.). For upcoming events in the Deerfield Valley, visit the [Chamber of Commerce Calendar](#).



Great people, great brews, and great times at the Bears Crossing Community Beer Swap on Mar. 4th.

Name the Bear Contest

For years, the Bears Crossing bear has greeted owners and visitors as they enter the Community. The bear has posed for family photos and withstood rain, sleet, and snow. He/She is a heartwarming symbol of our neighborhood and, yet, remains inexplicably unnamed.

To fix that once and for all, we're asking for your help. The Board is hosting a "Name the Bear" contest now through May 31st. E-mail your name suggestions to bearsnecessitiesnews@gmail.com. The winner will be selected by a community vote, which will take place online.

Spring Spruce-Ups

Whether you're installing a fire pit, updating windows and doors, removing trees, or replacing a roof, Bears Crossings' Architectural Review Committee (ARC) is where your next home improvement project begins. This committee, comprising owners and representatives from W&B, is responsible for reviewing and approving exterior home improvement plans and for providing guidelines for said work for both townhomes and single family homes (SFHs).

Before embarking on any projects, owners must submit paperwork, proof of contractors' insurance certification(s), and receive ARC approval. Please allow sufficient time for committee review and plan adjustments, if needed. ARC review procedures and forms can be found on [W&B's Owners' website](#). If you have questions or need additional guidance, contact W&B at info@wbmvt.com.

Pet Peeves

As a winter's worth of snow and ice thaw, we can all look forward to that annual springtime scavenger hunt. In this year's melt-off, will you find the glove you lost on the way home from the Ski Home Trail, or that dreaded pile of dog poop someone left on the wooded path to the clubhouse? With best wishes for the former, we ask all owners to please remember HOA rules about pets to prevent future incidents of the latter.

- Short-term renters aren't permitted to bring pets and will be fined for doing so.
- Long-term renters—those staying more than 30 days—must request HOA permission to bring a pet *before* arriving.
- Dogs must be leashed outdoors.
- Owners must clean up after dogs. That includes yards, common areas, roads, wooded paths, and the Ski Home Trail. There are pet waste bag dispensers on the Brumms Way and Cub Ridge Lane woodsheds, and in the Polar Bear North trash area.
- Wildlife cameras have been installed to ensure pet rules are followed.
- The first pet waste violation receives a \$200 fine. Fines escalate with each subsequent violation. But a poop-free neighborhood... Well, that's priceless.

On the Board: Update from the February Meeting

BY MIKE GOODMAN, BOARD PRESIDENT

The Master Association Board of Directors met at the clubhouse on Feb. 4th. Following is a summary of discussions and developments from that meeting:

The first of several agenda items continued discussions about occupancy limits for single family home (SFH) and townhome rental units. Because all townhomes and all rental SFHs are defined as “public buildings” by the state Fire Code, they are subject to and must comply with the Fire Code.

For all rental units (both SFHs and townhomes), a rule was passed by vote requiring rental owners to submit a Certificate of Occupancy and the accompanying inspection report provided by the Fire Marshal's office to the Community through the Management Company.

For townhomes, a rule was passed by vote establishing the occupancy limit for rental units at “two times the number of bedrooms, plus two.” The loft may only be considered a bedroom if approved by the Fire Marshal as a sleeping space. Specifically, the occupancy limit for rental townhouse units defaults to six ($= 2 \times 2 + 2$). If the Fire Marshal's inspection determines that the loft is a compliant sleeping space per the Fire Code, the occupancy limit increases to eight ($= 2 \times 3 + 2$). Note that even if the loft does not comply with the Fire Code, the Fire Marshal will issue a Certificate of Occupancy for a maximum occupancy of eight. This *does not* mean the owner can rent to eight people. As established by Community rule, in that case, the unit's occupancy limit is six.

For SFH rental properties, the maximum occupancy is determined by the Certificate of Occupancy and the associated inspection report submitted to the Community through the Management Company.

Finally, as it relates to occupancy limits, a rule was passed by vote that rental owners may not advertise their unit for occupancy by more than what is allowed by the above rules.

I am sure there will be many questions: “Do I need to request an inspection?”, “How do I request an inspection?”, “Is there a grace period?”, “But I already have my condo rented to 10 people?”, “How does this only apply to renters?”, etc. An e-mail will soon be sent to owners providing more details.

The next agenda item discussed was the Infraction Notification System implemented on [bearscrossing.com](#), allowing owners to communicate with each other and, hopefully, to resolve rules issues prior to involving the Management Company. A proposal to take the system live was passed by vote. Further details about this system are provided on page 4 of this newsletter.

The last agenda item was a discussion about piggybacking on t-shirt prizes for the Community's Snowman Contest to offer Bears Crossing shirts for purchase as a fundraiser to benefit Deerfield Valley Rescue. The proposal was passed by e-mail vote after the meeting, and is included as an addendum to the meeting minutes. You can read more about this initiative on page 5.



All owners can access Board meeting minutes and agendas by logging in with their user ID and password on the W&B Owners' website. The next Board meeting will be Saturday, April 1st, at 3:30 p.m. at the clubhouse. Owners can attend by Zoom or in person.

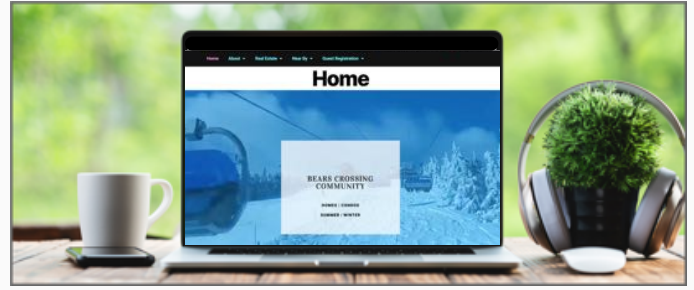
Guest Policy Committee Recommendations Spark New Owner and Visitor Resources

Last June, Bears Crossing owners were asked to share feedback on guest policy issues through a community-wide survey. And share you did... The survey received a whopping 109 responses! During the summer and fall, our Guest Policy Committee—comprising owners representing different perspectives, experiences, and interests—met to discuss results and make recommendations that would address identified concerns.

At the Dec. 3rd Board meeting, Committee Chair Ian Danby presented the group's recommendations. First, the Community should explore easier ways for owners to find rules and other information, and to share information with guests. Second, the Community should create a way for owners to acknowledge that they have read and understand HOA rules and regulations. Last, the committee requested a digital tool for owners and guests to notify neighbors about rules violations at their properties.

At its Dec. 3rd and Feb. 4th meetings, the Board passed several motions to put these recommendations into practice, beginning with an Infraction Notification System on www.bearscrossing.com, as well as an Owner Registration Form.

The Owner Registration Form will ensure W&B has up-to-date contact information and communication preferences for all owners, including third-party contacts responsible for rentals management. It also connects owners to the HOA's bylaws, rules, regulations, and fines information; asks them to acknowledge that they have read and understand these documents; and allows them to opt into the new Infraction Notification System.



The Infraction Notification System offers an easy way to send concerns about parking, noise, pets, and other issues directly to owner(s) of the properties involved. Its goal is to facilitate neighborly communication and problem solving, while empowering owners to address simple problems before they escalate to fines or disputes.

Simultaneously, Board members have been working with W&B to review rules, clarify ambiguities, eliminate redundancies, synchronize rules documents, and to generate an easy-to-read, single-page digital visitors guide that meets the information needs of rentals owners, as well as their guests and tenants.

With these improvements in place, the Board will soon ask for your help to ensure their success. In the coming weeks, all owners will receive an e-mail with instructions on how to access and use the new resources. Please give it your prompt attention. Your support is essential to maintaining a well-run, harmonious community -AS

Fire Marshal Update

BY MIKE GOODMAN,
BOARD PRESIDENT



Several dozen Bears Crossing owners met with Assistant State Fire Marshal Patrick Banks via Zoom on Jan. 19th. The meeting's focus was a springtime inspection of Bears Crossing townhomes. Banks did not discuss inspecting single family homes, since they are not public buildings unless rented.

Banks explained that Vermont's Fire Code has been updated at least twice since Bears Crossing was built. As a result, there have been significant changes. Most non-compliances would need to be brought into compliance, he said.

For reference, owners should understand that the 2015 Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code establishes three occupancy levels based on sleeping arrangements, and sets corresponding fire safety requirements. The levels are: **Single Family/Two Family Dwellings** (up to eight people); **Lodge** (nine to 16 people); and **Hotel** (more than 16 people).

To meet **Single Family/Two Family Dwellings** requirements, Banks expects changes to be straight-forward (e.g., adding smoke/CO detectors and fire extinguishers where specified). Significant safety upgrades, such as a commercial alarm system or sprinkler system, are required for **Lodge and Hotel** occupancies. Meeting requirements for occupancy by more than eight would be difficult, at best, for townhomes, Banks advised.

Banks noted that the Fire Code is written with the safety of short-term renters (less than 30 days) in mind. Accordingly, the Fire Marshal's office recognizes a difference between occupancy by owners and their guests and long-term renters (30 days or more) compared to short-term renters. He explained that owners and long-term renters are more likely to be aware of the unit's layout, location of fire extinguishers, window ladders, etc., while short-term renters are more likely to be confused in an emergency. Specifically, Banks said that the Fire Marshal's office would expect a condo with a **Single/Two Family Dwelling Certificate of Occupancy** (eight-person limit) to be rented, short term, to no more than eight people, while being "flexible" about an owner's family and guests exceeding the eight-person limit.

Using condo lofts as sleeping spaces was also discussed at the meeting. Banks explained that sleeping spaces require two independent egresses. For a loft to be used, it must have an egress skylight and that skylight needs to be accessible by a child. Few Bears Crossing condos are currently compliant in this regard. George Friend is researching skylight replacement costs for interested owners and details will be shared soon.

Community T-Shirt Fundraiser to Benefit Deerfield Valley Rescue Emergency Responders

The Bears Crossing Board is pleased to introduce our first-ever Community T-Shirt Fundraiser. Owners can purchase Bears Crossing t-shirts or hoodies with a newly-designed logo, while making a charitable contribution to Deerfield Valley Rescue (DVR). This 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, based in Wilmington, provides emergency medical care to residents of Wilmington, East and West Dover, Searsburg, Stratton, Marlboro, Whitingham, and Halifax.



Rendering of the fundraiser t-shirts and hoodies; Each item is available in youth and adult sizes and comes in two colors (charcoal heather and forest green heather). Shirt backs feature a small "Bears Crossing, West Dover, VT" insignia below the neckline. Visit the [Custom Ink fundraising site](https://www.customink.com/fundraising/bx-fundraiser-dvr) for additional photos and details.

From now until Mar. 31st, simply visit the fundraiser site at <https://www.customink.com/fundraising/bx-fundraiser-dvr>. Shoppers can choose from a selection of Bears Crossing branded short- and long-sleeve t-shirts, as well as hoodies, for delivery in mid-April. Each purchase comes with a UV-resistant, waterproof Bears Crossing decal for use on skis, snowboards, and helmets, which will be delivered separately from apparel purchases (either by mail or pick-up in Bears Crossing). All funds raised will be donated to Deerfield Valley Rescue.

Donations made through Bears Crossing's T-Shirt Fundraiser can help with many needs, including the purchase of an electronic safe box to securely store and track medications administered by paramedics during calls. The Rotary Club of the Deerfield Valley recently funded the purchase of one box at a cost of \$1,500; two additional boxes are needed for Deerfield Valley Rescue's other ambulances.

According to DVR Business Administrator Heidi Taylor, a recent population boom has increased demand in the area for emergency medical services. Meanwhile, Deerfield Valley Rescue's operations have been strained by rising fuel, supply, and facility costs, as well as supply chain issues. Despite these challenges, the nonprofit works diligently to meet residents' needs. From Oct. 1, 2021, through Sept. 30, 2022, Deerfield Valley Rescue responded to 848 requests for service covering 35,000 miles.

The Bears Crossing Board hopes this fundraiser will generate *at least* \$1,500, and encourages owners to share the link to the sale with interested friends and family. With each fundraiser purchase, the unit cost decreases, allowing us to raise more money for this worthwhile organization.

"Deerfield Valley Rescue is a critical resource for the Valley," said Mike Goodman, Board President. "We're thrilled to support them, and hope our neighbors will be, too." -AS

BRING BACK THE '90s! Speaking of Bears Crossing "swag," there are a few vintage fleeces (adult sizes) "bearing" the original Bears Crossing Community logo that are in search of a new generation of owners. You, too, can dress like a Bears Crossing OG! Simply e-mail bearsnecessitiesnews@gmail.com to enter your name in a raffle to receive one.

Ask Bob!

If I don't know an answer, I'll make one up!



Long-time Bears Crossing owner and year-round Bears Crossing resident Bob Stone answers your questions about life in the Deerfield Valley. Don't delay! Send your questions to Bob Stone today at bearsnecessitiesnews@gmail.com.

Q. Dear Bob, Ski season is ending and I'm already feeling depressed that it will be another eight or nine months until I can hit the slopes. Do you have any suggestions for what I can do during the off-season to fill the void? Signed, Grumpy Bear

A. Dear Grumpy Bear, Don't worry! I have several ideas to keep you busy throughout the spring and summer, and to remind you of the joys of skiing at Mount Snow even when the weather turns warm. Here are some of my favorites:

1. Go to your local butcher shop and ask to sit in their walk-in freezer for an hour. Afterwards, burn three \$100 bills to warm up.
2. Smear glue on your sunglasses and then try to cross the street at rush hour.
3. Buy a new pair of gloves (on clearance... it is off-season, after all) and immediately throw one away.
4. Go to Tony's Pizza on Route 100. Ask for the best pizza in the building, and insist on paying double the cost of the pie... cash only, of course.
5. Fill a blender with ice, hit the pulse button, and let the spray blast your face. Then, let the ice melt and drip on your clothes. Don't forget to dip your fingers and toes in frigid water for good measure.
6. Put on as many clothes as you can and then proceed to take them off because you have to go to the bathroom. Do the same with your kids.
7. Place small angular pebbles in your shoes and fill them with crushed ice. Then tighten a C-Clamp around your toes.
8. Pretend you're looking for your car and sporadically drop things.
9. Slam your thumb into a car door... hard.
10. Throw away three more \$100 bills... NOW!

Finally, repeat all of the above every weekend until it's time for the real thing. You'll be ready for ski season and back on the mountain in no time! -BOB

Behind the Scenes of Bears Crossings' Beautification Work

They say, "April showers bring May flowers." In Bears Crossing, it takes just a bit more than that! Under the guidance of Property Manager George Friend and Beautification Committee Chair Joe Lodi, a small but formidable army of landscapers and gardeners will undertake a thorough beautification effort in the development during the coming months.

Their work starts with assessing and restoring damage to roads, trees, landscaping, and communal structures caused by the winter elements, plows, run-off, seasonal wear and tear, etc. Once temperatures stabilize in late spring, they transition to fertilizing existing plantings, splitting plants when possible to make the most of landscaping investments, meeting with the nursery supplier to select plants and negotiate pricing, replacing lost perennials, adding colorful annuals to flower beds, mulching, pruning, and so much more.

Throughout the summer, the work continues. There's watering to be done.

Plants that die need replacing. And, of course, there is the seemingly endless process of deadheading flowering plants to keep blooms beautiful and bountiful throughout the summer season and into the fall.

So much of Bears Crossing's beautification work takes place on weekdays when the majority of owners are away. The enormous effort that goes into sowing the seeds for our gardens sometimes seems invisible! Without it, though, Bears Crossing wouldn't be the same Green Mountain oasis that we all look forward to coming "home" to.

So this spring, be sure to take a few minutes to stop and smell the flowers. And, if you see George, Joe, Kristen (our head gardener from "Sage it Ain't Sow"), or another member of the gardening and landscaping crew in your travels, let them know how much you appreciate everything they do to make Bears Crossing one of the most beautiful communities in the Deerfield Valley. -AS



Fast Times at Charlie's Chase

For the first time since 2019, the Community hosted the Bears Crossing Fun Race at Charlie's Chase on Feb. 26th. Kudos to Dave Streeter and Mike Goodman for organizing the event, and congrats to the top finishers!

Under 12/Female	Over 12/Female
(1) Avery L. (28.28 sec)	(1) Helene W. (26.50 sec)
(2) Isabella P. (38.70 sec)	(2) Michelle P. (27.16 sec)
	(3) Talia P. (27.74 sec)

Under 12/Male	Over 12/Male
(1) Jacob L. (31.16 sec)	(1) Dustin L. (25.25 sec)
(2) Michael P. (48.33 sec)	(2) Mitch S. (25.95 sec)
	(3) Mike C. (26.62 sec)



Racers enjoyed fresh powder and fun with friends and family.

In a Pickle

When the Bears Crossing tennis court opens this summer, owners and their guests will be able to enjoy a friendly game of pickleball, too. Following a suggestion from owner Doug Mantz last year, Board Member Joe Lodi researched needed court changes to accommodate the rapidly growing sport. Pickleball striping has been scheduled to occur once winter ends, and picklers will soon be welcomed to play. As always, the clay court requires smooth-soled tennis shoes and is BYO equipment.

Spring Survival Guide: Area Resources & Contacts

Painting & Wood Rot Remediation

Wood rot is a constant issue in Vermont and something SFH owners should monitor for the safety and longevity of their property. Ensuring exterior paint is maintained—and repainting it every three years or so, as needed—will go a long way toward protecting exterior wood from the harsh elements. If you notice signs of wood rot (peeling paint, cracks, splintering, shrunken size, discoloration, etc.), please contact an expert. These contractors are always in high demand in southern Vermont. But you can e-mail W&B at info@wbmvt.com for contractor recommendations.

Tree Maintenance

It's essential that SFH owners monitor trees on their properties for decay or damage. There are several local tree services and arborists who can address problems, including [Wimmelman & Sons](#) and [Black Diamond](#). Note: Owners must receive ARC approval before removing trees.

Contractors & Odd Jobs

[W&B Property Management](#) has an extensive network and can make contractor referrals for owners who need assistance. It's also worth noting that W&B offers property repair services. To receive a quote for a job or more information, e-mail info@wbmvt.com.

Pest Control

Townhome associations are already contracted with a pest control company that comes out quarterly. If you see unusual activity, please contact W&B. SFH owners should watch for rodent, carpenter ant, or other pest activity, and may wish to work with a local provider, like Aaron's Pest Control (802-464-2800), for regular check-ups and treatments.

Efficiency Vermont

Planning a home improvement project? Stop by [Efficiency Vermont's website](#) to find rebate information for energy efficiency and weatherization products and services, and other helpful resources.



Find Hidden Gems in Southern Vermont's Growing Beer Scene

BY SCOTT ABRAMS

Vermont is known to have a vibrant and thriving beer culture. It has the most breweries and beer production per capita in the U.S. The most well-known breweries are in the northern part of the state, around Burlington and Stowe. But please don't make the mistake of overlooking southern Vermont's ever-expanding beer scene. It is well worth exploring.

In fact, several good breweries are probably closer than you realize. A few years ago, a Marine Corps veteran opened Snow Republic Brewing Company in West Dover. They serve NE-style IPAs, porters, stouts, and sours. There's indoor and outdoor seating and it's open year-round. For food, there are pub apps, sandwiches, and pizza. Parking in ski season can be tricky, though, when thirsty après crowds take over.

A bit down the road, near downtown Wilmington, is the new Valley Craft Ales. It took over the Old Red Mill Inn last year. It's a cozy spot with plans to expand the dining area. I recommend the High Performance Pontoon Coffee Porter and the Electric Blotter Gose. Cans of their beers are readily available at their bar and in local stores. They also make good pizza.

A little farther away—sitting atop Hogback Mountain with gorgeous 100-mile views—is Beer Naked Brewery in Marlboro. They own 10 acres, including a field where they host concerts and festivals. Inside is a raucous little brewpub that happens to make wonderful brick oven pizza. They have a nice selection of their own beers and guest taps. Definitely check hours before visiting. It's the perfect spot for a break after hiking, snowshoeing, or snowmobiling.

If you're up for a drive, you can head east on Rt. 9 to Brattleboro or west to Bennington. Be sure to bring some empty growlers!

In Bennington, you'll find three brewpubs around the main intersection. Madison Brewing Company has been operating since the '90s. The pub fare is delicious (wings!) and the selection of beer is wide. I recommend any of their Sparq sours, the French Toast Brown or the Chocolate Peanut Butter Stout. There's ample seating and, in good weather, a roof deck to enjoy.

A couple of doors down is Farm Road Brewing, another veteran-owned brewpub. There's a nice bar from which you can admire the brewing equipment in action, and a solid tap list of high-quality ales and lagers to choose from. There are also several outdoor tables in the back. I'd recommend the flagship Bronson NEIPA or the Black Pearl Oatmeal Stout. Food is available from a partner restaurant cooked in house.

On the opposite corner of the intersection and a few doors down, you'll find Harvest Brewing. It's a newer brewpub that makes some fine beer. They mainly do IPAs, but there's always something else available on the tap list, which updates quite often. While you're there, there are plenty of games to play and snacks to enjoy. And there are a couple of tables out in front.

On the other side of the state—but only about 40 miles away—there are two breweries to visit in Brattleboro. Whetstone Beer Co. has one of the finest brewpub locations in the entire state. It straddles the Vermont-New Hampshire border, sitting on the edge of the Connecticut River. They offer a variety of beer styles. I'd recommend the Mojo Workin' Coffee Amber and the excellent Born 2 Run Blood Orange Gose. They also have very good burgers and sandwiches, but the money sandwich is the Chicken Sandman. There's a back porch and covered roof deck that overlooks the river valley. Don't forget to pick up some to-go cans on your way out.

A few blocks away is Hermit Thrush, which is well-known for its sour and wild ale offerings. If you're not into sour beer, you can probably skip this one. If sours are your thing, make a beeline for it! There are tons of different fruity, tart, and aged beers to choose from. Try Supah Phunk, any of their Party Jam offerings, and the 3% Party Guy which is packed with flavor but still crushable. Cans are available, as well.

Whatever your taste, I'm sure southern Vermont's breweries won't disappoint. So get out and explore. Try something new. Cheers to enjoying the area's best brews and to enjoying them responsibly!

'Must Visit' Stops on Southern Vermont's Beer Trail

Snow Republic

33 Vermont Rte 100, West Dover
www.snowrepublicbrewery.com

Valley Craft Ales

18 N. Main St, Wilmington,
www.valleybeer.io

Beer Naked Brewery

7678 VT-9, Marlboro
www.beernakedbrewery.com

Madison Brewing Co.

428 Main Street, Bennington
www.madisonbrewingco.com

Farm Road Brewing

400 Main Street, Bennington
www.farmroadbrewing.com

Harvest Brewing

201 South Street, Bennington
www.harvestbrewing.net

Hermit Thrush Brewery

29 High Street, #110C, Brattleboro
www.hermitthrushbrewery.com

Whetstone Beer Co.

36 Bridge Street, Brattleboro
www.whetstonebeer.com

Visit the [Vermont Brewers Association's website](http://VermontBrewers.com) to learn about other Vermont craft breweries, to view maps and beer trail itineraries around the state, or to take the Vermont Brewery Passport Challenge.



Vermont Brewers Association bumper sticker



Presenting Our 2022-23 Snowman Contest Entries...

Now it's time to vote! Let us know which Bears Crossing snowmen are your favorites using our [Google Forms ballot](#). Contest winners will receive a Bears Crossing t-shirt, courtesy of W&B Property Management. Special thanks to W&B for their support and to all of our snowbuilders for sharing their creativity! Voting will be open until 11:59 p.m. on Friday, Mar. 24th, and winners will be announced shortly thereafter.