



Friends of the Winooski River

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Wood for Cleaner Water

Friends of the Winooski River is working to create cleaner water with large wood. Strategic Wood Additions (SWAs)— the process of adding and securing large pieces of wood into our streams— has been occurring across Vermont for about a decade. These efforts were pioneered by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department to improve habitat for fish, who need trees for refuge. Although FWR's newest project will provide the co-benefit of improving fish habitat, this work is funded using State [Clean Water Funds](#) with the primary intention of capturing phosphorus: a mineral nutrient that, in high concentrations, pollutes our rivers and can cause toxic algae blooms on Lake Champlain.

Vermont streams used to have a lot more wood in them than they do today. Many rivers were, and often still are, intentionally cleared of wood to reduce conflicts with infrastructure and nearly all forests around our streams have historically been logged. This means that for generations there has been a lack of large trees available to naturally fall into streams. The size (and therefore age) of the tree matters, as large wood is more likely to lock into place and not wash downstream during high-flow events.

This all relates back to clean water and phosphorus because wood in our rivers reestablishes important natural processes. FWR aims to use wood to raise stream beds, allowing streams to spread into the floodplain more often. This way, streams will drop the sediment they carry (which contains phosphorus) on land rather than moving it at high velocity downstream and ultimately into our lakes.

Adding trees aids in this process because large objects slow water and force the sediment it is carrying to settle. If this happens for long enough the entire elevation of the stream can rise.

Friends of the Winooski hired Redstart Resource Management, of Corinth, to design SWA's along 4 streams across the Winooski watershed. Redstart has been a leader in this type of work across Vermont. They have surveyed every stream and found the most beneficial areas to create these wood additions. All streams being worked on are high up in forested areas; far away from any potential conflicts with roads and buildings.

This work was funded by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Clean Water Initiative through the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission in its role as the Clean Water Service Provider for the Winooski Basin.

Friends of the Winooski River is a non-profit working with communities toward a clean, healthy, resilient Winooski watershed. To learn more about our work visit <https://winooskiriver.org>.