

NEWS BRIEF

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

January 2012

CVRPC Commissioners

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Barre Town - Byron Atwood
Berlin - Robert Wernecke
Cabot - Richard Payne
Calais - Peter Brough
Duxbury - Vacant
East Montpelier - Tim Carver
Fayston - Vacant
Marshfield - Jon Groveman
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Montpelier - Tina Ruth
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Orange - George Malek
Plainfield - David Strong
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Woodbury - Janet Shatney
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Welcome to CVRPC's new regional planner, Jackie Cassino. Jackie comes to us from Lamoille County with expertise in municipal plan development, citizen participation, and natural resource planning. She is available to assist Central Vermont communities in these efforts, and others. Jackie can be reached at cassino@cvregion.com or 802/229-0389.

Hazard Mitigation Grants Available

On Aug. 30, 2011, the State of Vermont received a Presidential disaster declaration (DR 4022-VT) to provide assistance to communities affected by tropical storm Irene. In addition to Public Assistance and Individual Assistance, there are federal mitigation funds available to all Vermont towns through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) is now accepting HMGP applications from towns and agencies in all Vermont counties in connection with the most recent disaster. The HMGP program is funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is administered by Vermont Emergency Management. Federal funds are available to cover up to 75% of project costs, but there is a 25% local match requirement that is the responsibility of the applicant community.



Major road damage in Roxbury, VT

You are encouraged to identify potential hazard mitigation sites in your community and apply for funds under the HMGP grant program. Typical hazard mitigation projects would include: repair and mitigation of local roads and bridges, home acquisitions (buy-out), structural elevations or relocations, replacement of undersized culverts, remediation of stream

bank erosion, etc. Project proposals need not be directly connected to flooding from the most recent disaster. If you have a larger project (i.e. greater than \$250,000) you may also want to consider applying for funds under the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) or Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) programs which are open to all Vermont communities and which can provide larger funding amounts.

You may download the HMGP application from VEM's website at www.vermont.gov or you may contact the State Hazard Mitigation Officer for an application. On VEM's website, first go to the Mitigation Tab, and then on the Mitigation Forms on the lower right side of the website.

Please note the following FEMA eligibility requirements:

1) Communities must have a FEMA approved and adopted local mitigation plan no later than the date that funds are awarded. If your town lacks an approved plan, contact Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission for assistance. (Jen Mojo at mojo@cvregion.com or 229-0389.)

2) Communities must be participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), if a special flood hazard area has been identified in the community. Please contact the Agency of Natural Resources' State Floodplain Coordinator for additional information on applying for NFIP membership. (Ned Swanberg at Ned.Swanberg@state.vt.us.)

The application must be completed in full, including maps, list of alternative proposals, engineering plans, hydrology studies (if needed) and a full benefit-cost analysis (BCA) in the FEMA approved format. Applications submitted without the BCA are automatically disqualified. If you need help in completing the BCA, you may contact CVRPC. Some BCA assistance is also available from the consultants hired by VEM to assist local officials with the grant applications.

Deadline for HMGP applications: Friday, January 20, 2012. The January deadline has been extended to February 17, 2012. Applications will not be accepted past the deadline.

If you are unable to submit an application for the January (now February) deadline, you may submit an application for consideration for HMGP in the March 2012 round in connection with DR 4001, DR 1995 and DR 4022. The application is due March 16, 2012. However, the only announced letter of intent date was the December 30, 2011 date. If you want to apply for either round and have not submitted a letter of intent (LOI), you are encouraged to do so immediately. The LOI should include a brief description of your proposal and the total estimated cost of your project.

Please submit LOI's and completed applications to: Ray Doherty, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Vermont Emergency Management, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671, by phone at 802/241-5258 or email rdoherty@dps.state.vt.us.

HMGP funds are awarded on a competitive basis and all applications are subject to review and selection by the state mitigation project selection committee and FEMA. Contact Vermont Emergency Management if you have any questions or concerns regarding HMGP or any other FEMA mitigation grant program.

Municipal Planning Grants Awarded

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development recently announced the following awards for 3 towns in Central Vermont: The City of Barre received funding of \$15,000 (which they will match with an additional \$3,500) to prepare phase 2 of the City’s Master Plan. This phase will include completing the demographic profile, land use, housing, and mapping resulting in the adoption of an updated plan. The City of Montpelier also received \$15,000 (and will provide an additional \$3,500) for work on further implementation of their Plan by drafting neighborhood-level development standards fostering smart growth, corridor redevelopment, historic preservation, and rural uses and livelihoods. The Town of Waterbury received \$11,000 in funding (to be matched with an additional \$1,500) to update the data for their Municipal Plan and complete a community survey; all resulting in an updated plan and a community survey report.

Town River Debris Survey



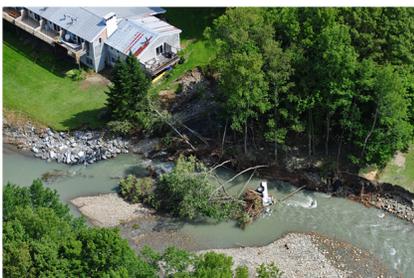
Flooding on Camels Hump Road, Duxbury, VT

CVRPC continues to work with towns that have been impacted by Tropical Storm Irene. We’ve partnered with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources’ River Management Program to document priorities for addressing the vulnerability of municipal infrastructure from flood-related river instability and debris jams.

Staff met with and collected information from 6 of our 23 municipalities. At each meeting the town assists in the completion of a survey and recodes the location on a map to help document the vulnerable locations. The data from these surveys and meetings help the municipalities and State

agencies as they prioritize the critical cleanup work that must be accomplished. These projects will be identified as to those that can be addressed in the spring, and those areas still vulnerable to flood damage in winter thaws and/or spring flooding. The information will also be used to seek funding needed for towns to address the issues.

If your municipality is interested in meeting and completing the survey and mapping information, please contact Dan Carrier at 229-0389 or email currier@cvregion.com.



Moving Forward After Irene

By Richard Tetreault, Guest Columnist

The extensive road and bridge damage caused by Tropical Storm Irene provides us the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on the how, the why, and the where we build roadways throughout the State of Vermont.

Nearly two months after the storm, the toll Irene took on Vermont's transportation infrastructure is now clear. On the combined town and state network, Irene washed out more than 2,000 roadway segments, undermined more than 1,000 culverts and damaged more than 300 bridges. The cost to rebuild everything could push \$1 billion.

Understanding that our climate is changing and that the frequency and intensity of storm activity will likely be greater during the next 100 years than it was during the last 100, it is prudent that as we rebuild we also adapt. But doing so successfully will not be easy.

Limited access roads such as our interstate highways and "super" Route 7 south of Rutland are highly engineered with bridges elevated well above Vermont's waterways. This type of roadway withstood Irene's wrath in most instances and sustained limited or no damage. It is highly unlikely, however, that we could ever afford – nor would Vermonters necessarily want – to build additional limited access roadways throughout Vermont.

Vermont's river valleys are steep and narrow, making it a challenge to successfully engineer state highways. With the river on one side, steep slopes on the other, and villages and homes in between, there is little space left for roads that safely accommodate cars, trucks, bikes and, in some valley locations, a railroad line, as well. Therefore, the long-term need to build more robust roads and bridges must be evaluated in conjunction with our desire to preserve Vermont's historic and archeological resources, as well as environmental resources such as wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Our best opportunity to protect our transportation infrastructure against future flooding in these areas likely lies with our bridges. As we both rebuild from flood damage and replace aging bridges over time, we need to re-think their design. In the past, we built relatively short bridges with concrete abutments very close to, if not in, rushing water. These designs were cost effective and made environmental sense at the time.

The time has now come, however, to consider building longer bridges with foundations that sit outside our river channels, even if these bridges cost more and have a longer footprint. Doing this will accommodate future flood waters, as well as allow river channels to move and not be constrained by the bridge opening and exacerbate flooding up and down stream. Longer bridges also will improve passage for fish that are cut off from their habitat by undersized structures, and allow safe passage for other animal species as they pass through the transportation network.

In many flood-damaged locations, temporary bridges will be erected before new, permanent bridges are built. This will buy us the time needed to reassess the hydraulics of each location with modern storm events in mind, and also will provide communities the opportunity to work with VTrans to best locate these costlier and sometimes larger structures within village centers.

As for town highways, the policy decisions are even greater and the choices more difficult. In areas where roadways along rivers were badly damaged or even destroyed, towns may need to choose whether and where to rebuild. Redundant roadways, or those that serve one or two properties, may not make sense in the future. Communities must also reassess their land use patterns and ask such questions as: How close to the water is too close to build? What kind of businesses or maintenance practices will be allowed where?



Damaged covered bridge, Northfield, VT

or even preventing overflow onto roads and over bridges. When more waterway capacity is required in heavy rain events, rivers need access to their flood plains so that the excess water in the confined channel does not increase in energy and destructive capacity.

Land use planning and zoning, stream-alteration practices, and consideration of future risks are all critical to the landscape of issues that need to Public policy should not focus solely on how to best design and construct our future transportation system; properly maintaining what we already have is just as important. Funding protective measures such as keeping ditches and riprap in good, working condition is vital. Roadway drainage systems such as ditches, catch basins, culverts – and even bridges – need to be kept free of debris and sediment so rushing water during a storm can flow freely and stay channeled within riverbeds, thereby minimizing

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The wake of Irene’s destruction offers us an opportunity to think more broadly across the variety of disciplines that road building now entails. As we rebuild Vermont, VTrans will work together with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources as well as the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and other sister agencies, so that we can build Vermont to be even stronger than Irene found her.

Richard Tetreault is the chief engineer for the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Community Recovery Partnership

Community recovery partnership meetings were held for the Mad River Valley Towns of Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren, Duxbury, and Waterbury. The purpose of these meetings is to bring community leaders and other interested parties together with senior staff from State agencies. Discussion topics included: what went right, what went wrong, and community recovery needs. At the meetings in the Mad River Valley, the following issues and observations were highlighted.

Disaster Response:

Volunteer support was largely successful in addressing immediate problems.

The existence of a well-established, local community fund provided much needed assistance.

The use of multiple media for getting the word out was successful.

Improved pre-disaster notification, training, and planning are needed to prepare people for flooding.

Post-Recovery:

There was continued concern for individuals and businesses that were falling into funding gaps, and those awaiting FEMA or private insurance funding decisions.

Funding, even when it is available, isn't sufficient to fully fix the problems.

Hazard mitigation programs only address those properties that were damaged, but not those that have the potential to be damaged in future floods.

Volunteers are still needed.

Questions about State regulations on debris and gravel removal need to be resolved.

Concerns were expressed about farmers having enough hay, feed and access to fields.

Long Term Response:

Concerns were raised about those who can't or don't participate and how to involve them in long-term decision-making.

How do we rebuild better and more resilient communities?

The historic villages are important and they need to be protected and better prepared for future flood events.

At the meeting in Waterbury the following issues and observations were highlighted.

State Office Complex:

The State will issue RFP's to architects to design potential solutions, including: mixed use with state as an anchor tenant, restore and flood-proof the State complex, and construct a new clean, green building in Montpelier or Barre

Disaster Response:

Waterbury benefited from experienced and assertive leaders.

Committed project champions stepped up to fill the gaps

Thatcher Brook School as a clearly defined physical disaster headquarters was instrumental to the recovery process.

Strong communication networks formed quickly.

Outside expertise from Red Cross and Hope Force International was integral.

Recovery/Future Needs:

Local financial response was fast and effective.

Disaster victims and volunteers need assistance to understand the recovery process better.

The community needs safe affordable housing for people whose homes are destroyed or uninhabitable. Businesses received immediate recovery assistance from VEDA loans.

Oil and other hazard spills need to be better addressed.

Issues were raised regarding State policies and deadlines, including:

- Property tax abatement-thresholds set too low
- Need help applying for Downtown Designation Renewal
- Need help gathering data for hazard mitigation grant application.

The State is developing a list of tasks to address these issues, and will assign State officials to follow through. Future meetings are being planned for the Dog River Valley towns, and the Barre Area. Visit this website, <http://vtstrong.vermont.gov/> or contact Steve Gladczuk for more information.

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Front Porch Forum

CVRPC has recently signed up with Front Porch Forum (FPF) as a way to better connect with the Region’s towns and residents. We are currently using FPF to survey residents about their broadband use and experience. Towns in the Region currently signed up with Front Porch Forum include Moretown, Calais, Worcester and Middlesex. FPF is a moderated weekly digest that can include town government updates, lost and found, meeting schedules, group activity organization etc. More recently, FPF has proved to be a valuable tool for organizing volunteer efforts in towns affected by flooding from Tropical Storm Irene. For more information regarding Front Porch Forum or to learn how to enroll your town, please contact Jennifer at mojo@cvregion.com or visit www.frontporchforum.com.