



## CVRPC Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) Meeting Minutes – 14 November 2024

**CWAC Members:** ✓

Commissioner Representatives	
	John Brabant
✓	Mitch Osieki
✓	Ron Krauth
✓	Rich Turner
✓	Alice Peal

Municipal Representatives	
	Vacant
✓	Joyce Manchester
✓	Emily Ruff
	Jeff Schulz
✓	Joseph Whelan

**CVRPC Staff:** Brian Voigt, Lincoln Frasca, Will Pitkin, and Keith Cubbon

**Other Attendees:** Ned Swanberg (Department of Environmental Conservation - DEC), Lisa Kolb (Vermont Emergency Management - VEM), Keith Fritschie (DEC), Amanda Garland (Vermont River Conservancy), Lee Cattaneo (CVRPC Board), Dana Allen (FluidState Consulting, LLC & Waterbury Planning Commission), John Kaeding (Worcester Selectboard), Peter Carbee (CVRPC Board), Doug Greason (CVRPC Board), Brandon Garbacik (Town of Barre Zoning Administrator and Town Administrator), Martha Staskus (Waterbury Planning Commission), Harmony Cism (Westford Zoning Administrator), Mel Auffredou (Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District), Jennifer Hughes (Duxbury Planning Commission), Dean Peirce (Northwest Regional Planning Commission), Toni Kaeding (Worcester Planning Commission), and Kari Bradley (Calais Town Administrator).

**Call to Order & Roll Call**

A. Peal called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM.

**Updates to agenda:** The approval of September’s meeting minutes was moved until after the presentation.

**Public Comment:** Go around introductions of all attendees.

## **FEMA mapping, Flood Hazard River Corridor Bylaws, and Hazard Mitigation Funding:**

N. Swanberg, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Flood Hazard Mapping Coordinator and Regional Floodplain Manager for Washington and Orange County (see slides).

N. Swanberg presented on the benefits of natural floodplains, Vermont's history of flooding, and floodplain management tools to enhance resiliency. He emphasized the low percentage of insured structures located in the Special Flood Hazard Area. He also explained the benefits of the FEMA flood studies that are underway. New computer modeling will create a more accurate depiction of Zone A flood hazard areas using 2D base level engineering. Existing elevation information in Zone AE is being redelineated using one-foot contours. The new analysis framework uses a rain on grid model that incorporates new wetland areas and captures fluvial as well as pluvial (stormwater) flooding. New areas with hydrologic features are being identified and preliminary maps can be viewed at [bit.ly/fema-map-update](https://bit.ly/fema-map-update). Stream segments that are getting new detailed studies include the Winooski River from the Bolton Dam to Cabot, a piece of the Little River, the North Branch, the Lower Mad River, and a small segment of the Stevens Branch in Williamstown. The release date of maps keeps changing and FEMA is still finishing their flood analysis which will include discharge data from the July 2023 flood. Draft maps can be expected in the summer of 2025 with effective maps released in the winter of 2028.

N. Swanberg highlighted benefits of the state's [No Adverse Impact Model Bylaws](#). Model bylaws protect river corridors by leaving room for the river to move and preventing net fill in the Special Flood Hazard Area. He shared the story of a successful floodplain reconnection in Northfield along the Dog River. This project significantly reduced flood levels in the village and captures Phosphorus during high flow events.

For more information visit: <https://floodready.vermont.gov/>

Lisa Kolb, Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), Hazard Mitigation Grants Manager

L. Kolb presented on hazard mitigation funding opportunities and how to navigate the current funding landscape. She emphasized the importance of strategic application development in ensuring successful hazard mitigation projects. Competitive applications must consider the implementation of projects. Stephanie Smith, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, has developed a program in which project ideas can be presented to the Emergency Management team and they will match it with the appropriate funding source. The application development team can provide technical assistance for completing an application.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plans are an essential element of community preparedness and an opportunity to prioritize the most important projects. Local Hazard Mitigation Plans are also required for funding and will inform grant application development. Plenty of time should be given for the development of these plans. Annual funding is available for municipalities to complete their Local Hazard

Mitigation Plans. Caroline Paske, [Caroline.Paske@Vermont.gov](mailto:Caroline.Paske@Vermont.gov), State Hazard Mitigation Planner, can support municipalities through the process.

Project Types that have been funded following the 2023 and 2024 flooding include acquisitions and buyouts for flood damaged and flood prone properties. Elevation projects are more complex but some of these are moving forward. Funding for floodplain restoration and dam removal is also available. Hands Mill Dam in Washington was a buyout including dam removal (completed October 2024) with floodplain restoration coming this spring.

#### *Funding Opportunities:*

L. Kolb described the variety of funding available through Vermont Emergency Management. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program from FEMA is available for the July 2023 and 2024 storms. Eighty million is available for the July 2023 storm, most of which has been obligated for acquisitions and buyouts. The Swift Current fund is also available for elevations and buyouts. The Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant is an annual funding source of two million. Local Hazard Mitigation Planning and scoping work are eligible through the BRIC grant. Scoping can include hiring an engineer to develop projects and prepare it for design and implementation applications. The next round of BRIC funding has been delayed until 2025. Flood Resilient Communities Fund uses ARPA dollars to fund projects that can't be funded through FEMA. As of now Flood Resilient Communities Funding is fully obligated. More funding in 2025 is anticipated. The best way to access information for application development is to reach out to VEM staff. Regional Planning Commissions can be a first point of contact for help identifying the correct funding program. Consider which other partners can be included to help with the application development phase. Applications should be developed with VEM staff from the beginning to help make the most competitive application. For general inquiries reach out to, [DPS.HazardMitigation@vermont.gov](mailto:DPS.HazardMitigation@vermont.gov).

For more information on funding visit: <https://vem.vermont.gov/funding/mitigation>

#### **Presenter Q & A (discussion)**

D. Allen asked if the one-foot contours from Lidar were derived from the new Q1 dataset?

N. Swanberg responded, no they are from the new Q2 dataset, Q2.

A. Peal noted the Waitsfield Local Hazard Mitigation Plan was recently approved.

L. Kolb mentioned the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan can be a long process. A. Peal mentioned the Local Hazard Mitigation Process can be a benefit beyond a higher Emergency Relief Assistance Fund (ERAF) rating. It is also a planning tool for communities to help adapt to climate change. Towns need to ensure that their Selectboards and Planning Commissions understand the importance of this process.

A. Peal mentioned that K. Cubbon was instrumental in getting the Waitsfield Local Hazard Mitigation Plan approved.

L. Kolb stressed that FEMA is starting to enforce their rules and projects have been denied because the town didn't have an approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

B. Voigt mentioned the Waitsfield Local Hazard Mitigation Plan process identified several floodplain restoration projects. These projects may be approved next week for development through the Clean Water Service Provider program for their Phosphorus reduction potential.

D. Allen brought up the magnitude of projects needing to be addressed in Waterbury, some of which could cost millions of dollars. The town will likely be relying on Clean Water Service Provider funding to help get some of these projects done.

L. Kolb mentioned in the future they will invite other funding sources to look at the list of VEM projects to try and expedite the implementation of as many priority projects as possible. She also mentioned the limitation of not being able to provide match for federal funding with other federal funding. FEMA looks at project costs, federal share, and match when reviewing project applications. If matching funds are not matching federal dollars but are part of a line item in the application that may be acceptable. It is important to consider all the funding sources and their requirements for match. The Regional Planning Commissions can be a resource. Also, projects may be able to be broken into phases. The Flood Resilience Community Funds has more flexibility in acceptable matching funding sources.

D. Allen mentioned the Lake Champlain Basin Program has funding for similar work but is EPA funding so again using federal dollars for match is not possible.

L. Kolb noted that questions for FEMA can take a while to get answered so the sooner we engage them the better. B. Voigt noted that Clean Water Service Provider funding can be used for federal match. If the other funders are also Phosphorus reporting partners, this may change cost-efficiency of the project. Please reach out to your Regional Planning Commission for help identifying the best available funding sources. L. Kolb mentioned a Project Manager in Brattleboro who has a funding tracker to help steer projects to the correct source.

N. Swanberg mentioned a flood roundtable for municipal officials in the Winooski Watershed on 4 December 2024. This will be a meeting with Moretown, Plainfield, and Berlin representatives. Maybe there is a way to package projects for a regional application?

L. Kolb recommended inviting Steve Libby, a consultant with Vermont Emergency Management, who is an advocate for watershed level solutions.

J. Manchester asked why it will take fifteen years to update the flood maps?

N. Swanberg responded that it shouldn't take that long. Historical maps look backwards in history but today we must be looking forward. New models for how storms develop in today's changing climate are coming.

L. Frasca inquired about the Flood Safety Act 121. N. Swanberg responded that a public process looking at the new law with opportunities for comment is coming. Act

121 will implement a minimum standard for towns that wish to remain in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). A study committee will help towns consider how to administer NFIP program. River corridor protection will be monitored by the state with a permitting process much like the wetlands permit. Towns can still adopt River Corridor Bylaws before the state's permit process is in place. The new state requirement will not include consideration of small streams. Towns will need to manage small streams and may consider using fifty-foot setbacks. A. Peal noted how the mapped river corridor in Hinesburg really predicted where flooding ended up occurring.

L. Kolb noted that hundreds of buyouts are underway. FEMA doesn't have many requirements for the land after a buyout is complete. Ideally buyouts are followed by floodplain restoration. Invasive removal such as Knotweed removal is another option. B. Voigt added that any community partaking in buyouts should be made aware of the Clean Water Service Provider program and the ability to fund riparian buffer and floodplain restoration projects. The Winooski basin has one hundred and twenty buyouts and twenty-seven of those are in Plainfield.

L. Kolb suggested providing Emergency Management with Clean Water Service Provider program information so they can facilitate that handoff. Communities may be inundated with good ideas but need to be guided from one program to the next.

B. Voigt asked if any state has data available that is better than what the maps are built from? Letters of Map Amendment may not be necessary with the accuracy of the new maps. N. Swanberg noted that Lidar can be used now to get a Letter of Map Amendment using Q1 or Q2 Lidar. You don't need a survey, but you do need a credible map. The error bands on new maps will be much tighter. New data will be much more precise but will probably still underrepresent the risk.

### **Approval of September minutes**

*R. Turner moved to approve the minutes of the 12 September 2024 meeting. M. Osieki seconded the motion. All in favor and the motion passed.*

### **Water Quality Restoration Project Updates (see slides)**

L. Frasca presented on the status of the following Clean Water Service Provider projects managed by CVRPC:

- Project Development: Riparian Buffer & Culvert Replacement Project – Berlin
- Final Design: Marshfield Road Stormwater Gully – Calais
- Project Development: Floodplain Restoration Projects – Waitsfield
- Final Design: Recreation Field Riparian Buffer Planting - Plainfield

J. Manchester asked how these projects began? Was it CVRPC going to the town, or the town going to CVRPC?

B. Voigt responded that it has been a mix. For Waitsfield the town approached CVRPC with projects from the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Berlin project came out of a presentation CVRPC gave to the Town about the Clean Water Service Provider program. The Calais project was identified in a previous project development effort. L. Frasca has

been reviewing town plans and the DEC Watershed Project Database for project opportunities.

K. Fritschie shared a link to the [Clean Water Project Explorer](#). Projects in this mapping tool are in various stages of planning. The Clean Water Service Provider can provide funding to explore project status for projects included in the explorer. The [Functioning Floodplain Initiative Tool](#) is used for calculating phosphorus efficiency. Projects identified in the Moretown River Corridor plan will be integrated into the Water Project Explorer soon. CVRPC is available to present to your town on the Clean Water Service Provider program and project opportunities.

### **Upcoming Meetings (see slides)**

A. Peal mentioned an engineering firm may be useful at the January Wastewater meeting. Engineering firms are involved with grant preparation and could provide a unique perspective. B. Voigt responded with the desire to remain relevant to the individual landowner.

K. Fritschie recommended inviting Lynnette Claudon from DEC Village Wastewater Solutions Committee.

B. Voigt mentioned there will be an update in January on an upcoming Municipal Wastewater Workshop in the Mad River Valley.

### **Announcements (see slides)**

The CWAC is seeking an at-large representative. Clark Amandon from Trout Unlimited has applied.

**Adjourn:** *R. Turner moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 PM. M. Osieki seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

The next meeting is scheduled for 9 January 2025.