



VERMONT STATE HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

November 7 2017 | 2-4 PM
Vermont Public Safety Building, Waterbury

Facilitators

Rebecca Sanborn Stone, Community Workshop

- Bob Costantino, AHHS
- Chris Cochran, ACCD
- Gaye Symington, High Meadows Fund
- Jen Hollar, Vermont Housing & Board
- Jenna Koloski, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- Rick Keane, BGS
- Joe Segale, VTrans
- Mike Kline, ANR
- Tara Kulkarni, Norwich University
- Steve Libby, Vermont River Conservancy
- Rose Paul, The Nature Conservancy
- Tim Schmalz, Agency of Agriculture

Agenda

1. Hazard Mitigation Updates from Steering Committee

- a. The most recent windstorm has caused an estimated 3.1 million so far in damages, mostly from public utilities. VEM has been working on bringing FEMA in for a damage assessment.
- b. VEM (Lauren Oates & Todd Sears) is working with Norwich to bring tabletop exercises to students and train them in the technique
- c. The Woodford Packers site purchase has gone through – process started 15 years ago with a Supreme Court case
- d. Vermont River Conservancy has completed a purchase of the Cersosimo Lumber property in Brattleboro; they should take ownership of the Bettis property in Hancock by the end of the year. VHCB notes that the VRC leadership was essential in making this happen in Brattleboro.
- e. A grad student working with TNC completed a capstone project comparing towns with/without floodplain ordinances and how much development leaks through. The study notes that it does continue, and more research will follow. The report will be done by the end of the month and available.
- f. VCRD held the first National Climate Economy Summit in September. Action teams are now building a platform this year.
- g. VCRD continues to work with towns through technical assistance – they are now working with Middlebury as a Climate Model Economy community and with Newport through Community Visits. An RFP for the next Climate Model communities is now out.
- h. VEM led a review committee meeting last week to look at hazard mitigation grant applications in a competitive round, which included several Brandon buyouts. Several applications will go through, including a bridge project in Plainfield.

- i. VTrans’s Transportation Resilience planning tool is almost complete for the three pilot watersheds. They are now working on the mitigation side, and are still excited about potential to expand to additional watersheds and/or other linear utilities with additional funding
- j. BGS continues to work on the state building inventory tool; GIS has just been added to the department this year. They are now integrating DEM models, USGS gauge info, US Army Corps info and other data to look at infrastructure.
- k. Rick held a “meeting-in-a-box” for the staff, and the engineers and others are very engaged in questions of mitigation.
- l. ACCD is working with the RPCs to apply the Flood Resilience checklist that was developed post-Irene. The process involves reviewing towns’ policies, compiling data and looking at what to do next.
- m. ACCD just held a ribbon cutting on the Barre flood mitigation project, where houses were removed and the floodplain rebuilt.
- n. VCGI has just completed state LIDAR mapping, and expects to have statewide parcel data in the next two years.
- o. Irene awards are still coming in, a Ludlow buyout was just awarded.
- p. One new HMF Watershed Collaboration grantee – Green River – is very interested in participating in SHMP process
- q. About 5 groups are taking advantage of the poster and meeting-in-a-box options, which will result in additional feedback on SHMP actions.

2. SHMP Process Updates: 1 year Check-in

- a. Attendees reviewed progress, challenges and opportunities as we approach the halfway point – 1 year into the process, and 1 year away from FEMA deadline. A summary of comments is below

What’s Working Well	Opportunities, Needs & Improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splitting the SHMP planning group out from the state policy and funding group (SHMPPC) • Cross-pollination between committee members (especially public-private sector) is increasing understanding and connections • Strong buy-in and participation from committee members, resulting in lots of important information and discussion • Significant interest from committee members’ colleagues, working groups and others around the state • Working groups and conversations have been eye-openers • More diverse voices are adding value • Meetings and preparation are organized and working well, making good use of committee members’ time 	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique opportunity to capitalize on energy/interest from extreme weather events, in terms of marketing/political will • This group should be maintained to continue momentum and collaboration around implementation • There’s an opportunity to leverage and combine resources, if we are creative • Critical point to both incorporate new ideas and end up with a succinct, hard-hitting plan • Need to remember that all hazards are different – they will not all be the next Irene. Which actions will help the <i>most</i> hazards?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations about engagement around the state, and democratic process • Making progress on important goals, and continuing to make mitigation progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to identify what we can put in the plan around mitigation that will also help people on the response/recovery side. <p>On the Ground:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to ensure that tools and info from this process are actually applied on the ground • Model tools will need additional funding for expansion and application • Towns continue to rebuild when they shouldn't (such as in Brandon after July floods) • "We can't plan our way out of [climate change]." – Pat Parenteau. In other words, if we aren't also addressing causes, storms will continue to get worse and outpace mitigation efforts.
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3. Hazard Ranking Updates

- a. VEM showed final data and ranking, which included both probability and impact scores. Overall ranking did not significantly change, and closely matches the Steering Committee's "gut" ranking.
- b. Discussion:
 - i. Wildfire and earthquake both came up as significant issues in the BGS meeting-in-a-box discussion - staff members were concerned about both, though they are ranked low.
 - ii. VEM noted that probability is based on past occurrences, not future projections. Expected probability (based on climate and future models) may be different.
 - iii. Committee was interested in incorporating expected probability based on climate change and hearing from experts on these hazards.
 - iv. Committee also requested that "high likelihood" category be expanded to include 75-100% probability, to even out the ranges.
 - v. There is new UVM data on 50-100 year floods, which are predicted to include 1.4-1.6 times today's peak discharges (a dramatic increase).
- c. Decisions:
 - i. VEM staff will reach out to an expert on wildfire and earthquakes to ask about future probability. Committee authorizes VEM staff to adjust probability score and ranking based on that consultation.
 - ii. VEM staff will change "high likelihood" to include 75-100% probability and will adjust ranking accordingly.

4. Action Development & Engagement

- a. After last committee meeting, staff developed a plan for stakeholder engagement in the action development/review phase.

- i. It includes the posters and meeting-in-a-box kits (currently in progress). Any other committee members are encouraged to take the kit to their staff meetings, offices or events
- ii. It will include three focus groups, addressing three of the plan principles: Vulnerable Populations, Climate Change, and Economic Development. The groups will be held at the end of November, with a charge of reviewing all draft actions to ensure they adequately address the principle.
- b. Committee discussed engagement overall and whether any sectors or target groups are missing. Suggestions on additional outreach include:
 - i. Stronger connections to the education sector and universities
 - ii. The media (VPR, current PBS series on water indicate strong potential for increasing public education)
- c. Discussion & Decisions:
 - i. VEM will explore some additional invitees to the focus groups, including:
 1. Economy: Joe Segale, RDCs/RPCs, Consultants, ASCE, Ski Areas, Insurance (John Jamieson)
 2. Vulnerable Populations: VOAD, hospital level (on the ground). (Anne Goodrich removed – no longer at UV Strong)
 - ii. VEM will consider holding several smaller conversations instead of one larger one, if needed.

5. Action Prioritization – 55 min

- a. After discussion of a prioritization process in the last meeting, VEM offered two prioritization options for discussion.
 - i. Simple model: each action scored for impact and feasibility (with no specific definition to each)
 - ii. Criteria model: 1-3 criteria defined for impact and for feasibility; actions scored for each criteria, and then summary scores given for impact and feasibility.
- b. Steering Committee discussed each option and a prioritization process, then broke out into small groups to try scoring actions using the simple method.
- c. Discussion and decisions:
 - i. Committee preferred the simple model, which would allow for people to consider their own criteria. Committee recognizes that neither method is scientific.
 - ii. Committee requested moving to a “low-medium-high” ranking system to give more room for nuance.
 - iii. Committee members felt that they didn’t all have enough knowledge to score all actions; in practice, it works better for members to work on a goal where they have subject matter expertise.
 - iv. In practice, committee members found that the actions still need significant revision:
 1. Some contain multiple actions or unclear wording, or need more information.
 2. Some are overly specific, or can’t truly be considered in isolation (i.e. they are sequential parts of an overall idea)
 3. Language in some is about an overall idea, while others have language about simply taking a first step. The variation makes it hard to score the idea.



- v. VEM staff will rework the actions again, based on more incoming feedback, and will attempt to make more consistent and clear. Staff will also work to make them higher level, so that committee can score the core ideas more easily across the board.
- vi. VEM staff will lay out a suggested process (potentially include a survey and pre-work and a structure for the next meeting) and ask for Committee feedback over email before January.

6. Next Steps – 10 min

- a. Steering Committee will meet again in January. Committee should watch for information and feedback opportunities on final prioritization process before the meeting.
- b. Next Working Group meeting is in December; all invited to attend and help develop action concepts and implementation ideas further.