

# TRORC

## Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee REGIONAL COMMISSION



### News & Notes July 2023



Fairlee, VT | Photo by: John Knox



## Volunteer to Support Vermonters Affected By Flooding

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## PROJECT UPDATES AND REMINDERS

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*Quechee Dam | Photo by: Rita Seto, staff*

### Heavy Rain and Flooding Strikes

The TRORC region had isolated damages from rain on July 4th and 7th, with Bridgewater and into Bethel getting hit on the 7th, but that was just a warmup.

Rains on Sunday into Monday equivalent to multiple month's precipitation caused significant damage, blowing out roads and bridges and isolating residents on levels not seen since Hurricane Irene. TRORC is assisting towns and the state in response and then recovery. Check out our website for the latest [information](#).

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### Flooding and Substantial Damage Determinations

Every town in our region has adopted flood hazard regulations and a local floodplain official who administers it. Following a flood event, it will be important for the floodplain official (often the town zoning administrator) to assess damage to structures within the floodplain, and to make determinations on whether any structures have been substantially damaged. This is important as work

on buildings may be much more than the owner realizes as they have to bring it into compliance with the flood regulations, not just return it to its previous state.

Substantial damage is defined as “damage of any origin sustained by a structure whereby the cost of restoring the structure to it’s before damaged condition would equal or exceed 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the damage occurred.” That cost is the cost if a contractor did the work, not the owner. It could be determined through a quote from a contractor, or the town official may need to determine it. For homes that are extensively damaged it is relatively easy, but for those with lower value or where the damage is lighter it can be difficult.

When it is safe to do so, local floodplain officers should begin to assess whether there has been damage to structures in the floodplain and to determine whether substantial damage has occurred. The Department of Environmental Conservation has provided a resource guide for assessing substantial damage [here](#). DEC has also published a [Procedure to Determine Substantial Damage or Substantial Improvement](#), which provides instructions for how floodplain administrators can make substantial damage determinations.

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## **Woodstock Commercial E-Lawn Equipment Demo Event a Resounding Success**

On a recent sun-splashed day in late June, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC), Green Mountain Power, Sustainable Woodstock, the Vermont Clean Cities Coalition, and the Mow Electric! Campaign teamed up with Woodstock Union High School to host a highly successful commercial E-lawn equipment demo event.

This event was spurred on through the work of Jeff Grout, TRORC’s Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator. Representatives from many local towns including Woodstock, Norwich, Bradford, and Rutland attended the event. Members of the public, elected officials, lawn maintenance contractors, and representatives from Vermont’s Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS), the Billings Farm & Museum, Dartmouth College, and others took the opportunity to try out an impressive collection of state-of-the-art battery-electric riding mowers, leaf blowers and string trimmers.

As an indication of the growth of the commercial E-lawn equipment industry over the past few years, five manufacturers including Gravely, Toro, Mean Green, Greenworks and EGO, all participated in this event. This event demonstrated that electric equipment is more than capable and ready to handle large, commercial applications.

Many municipalities, colleges, and school districts across the country are switching to electric mowing and maintenance equipment because they have no emissions and their clean quiet operation allows them to be used during business and school hours. According to a recent analysis by the EPA, gasoline powered mowers emit harmful amounts of air and noise pollution while consuming over 5 million gallons of gasoline annually in Vermont alone!

All of Vermont’s electric utilities now offer valuable incentives/rebates for the purchase of both residential and commercial-grade E-lawn equipment.

For more information about E-lawn equipment, visit the Mow Electric! website at [www.mowelectric.org](http://www.mowelectric.org), or contact Jeff Grout [jgrout@trorc.org](mailto:jgrout@trorc.org) or Peggy O’Neill-Vivanco at VT Clean Cities Coalition [Peggy.ONeill-Vivanco@uvm.edu](mailto:Peggy.ONeill-Vivanco@uvm.edu).



Woodstock Electric Mower Demonstration | Photos by: Jeff Grout, staff

## TRORC and Partners Host a Film Screening of *Utica: The Last Refuge*

On Thursday, June 15 in White River Junction, there was a free screening of the documentary [\*Utica: The Last Refuge\*](#) with a reception and discussion following. The event was attended by more than a dozen municipal, nonprofit, and business entities and over 100 community members.

In addition to TRORC, key partners that made the event possible include:

- Junction Arts & Media (JAM)
- Mascoma Bank
- Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC)
- 3CVT (Cornerstone Creative Community)
- Supporting and Helping Asylees and Refugees (SHARe)
- Community Care of Lyme Welcome Fund
- Two-Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
- FUERZA
- Mount Ascutney Regional Commission
- The First Congregational Church of Thetford UCC
- Mountain Grove Coffee

There will be another screening of documentary on **July 18, from 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Playhouse Theater in Randolph, Vermont**. This event includes a pre-film reception and post-film discussion. The event is free and open to the public. Please reach out to Meghan Asbury at [masbury@trorc.org](mailto:masbury@trorc.org) with any questions.

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## Thetford Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Public Forum

**When:** July 17, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

**Where:** Thetford Town Office, 3910 VT-113, Thetford Center, VT 05075

The Town of Thetford with the help of TRORC is finishing the process of updating their 2017 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. They are holding a public forum on the draft updated plan at the regularly scheduled Thetford Selectboard meeting on July 17th at Thetford Town Office. The current draft plan is available for review on the Thetford website, [thetfordvt.gov](http://thetfordvt.gov).

The meeting is open to all interested community members and public comments are welcome. Local Hazard Mitigation Plans are part of an effort by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to reduce damage from foreseeable natural and human-caused hazards. Examples of projects in local plans include increasing culvert sizes, regulating flood hazard areas, stabilizing landslides, and tree trimming near power lines. For more information, please contact Connor Rigney at [crigney@trorc.org](mailto:crigney@trorc.org).

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Taftsville | Photo by: John Vose - Jericho Hills Photography

## Taftsville Village Center Designation

At its meeting on June 26, 2023, the Downtown Development Board approved Taftsville's application for Village Center Designation. This designation opens the village up to several benefits, including tax credits, priority consideration for state grants, priority consideration by state Building and General Services, and Neighborhood Development Area Eligibility. TRORC is proud to have assisted Taftsville and the town of Woodstock in their application for VCD renewal.

If you are interested in pursuing Village Center Designation in your town, please contact TRORC for assistance.

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## West Fairlee Village Center Designation

At its meeting on June 26, 2023, the Downtown Development Board approved West Fairlee's application for Village Center Designation. This designation opens the village up to several benefits, including tax credits, priority consideration for state grants, priority consideration by state Building and General Services, and Neighborhood Development Area Eligibility. TRORC is proud to have assisted West Fairlee in their application for VCD renewal.

If you are interested in pursuing Village Center Designation in your town, please contact TRORC for assistance.





West Fairlee | Photo by: John Knox

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## WORK WITH US!

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### Planner

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) in east-central Vermont is seeking an energetic, multi-faceted Planner as part of our team of professional staff.

The Planner will be responsible for individual projects, as well as assisting other planning staff. General planning duties include writing comprehensive plans, hazard mitigation plans, zoning and subdivision bylaws; grant writing and management; and natural resource planning.

Candidates must have excellent public speaking skills, be adept at written communication, be proficient in Microsoft Office, have a public service-attitude and sense of humor, a high degree of operating independently, and have the ability to grasp technical concepts quickly. A Bachelor's degree is required, preferably in planning, natural sciences, or a related field. A master's degree, AICP or CFM certification, or experience in social media, GIS, grant management, or land use planning is desired. The position requires a reliable vehicle and attendance at night meetings. Partial remote work is possible.

TRORC's service area is comprised of 30 towns in east-central Vermont with a combined population of 56,000. While most of the region is quite rural, we also have excellent recreational assets, very low unemployment and a variety of cultural and educational opportunities. TRORC's offices are beautifully located on a conserved farm on the outskirts of Woodstock, Vermont.

Candidates are encouraged to learn more about TRORC at [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org).

Starting salary is \$48-60k, depending on education and experience, accompanied by an outstanding benefits package. Applicants must submit the following by email to [pgregory@trorc.org](mailto:pgregory@trorc.org) as separate pdfs: a cover letter stating desired salary, three references with phone and email contacts, a resume, and a writing sample.

Cover letter should be addressed to:  
Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director  
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission  
128 King Farm Road  
Woodstock, VT 05091

Position open until filled. TRORC is an equal opportunity employer.

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## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

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**\$4,000 Community Capacity-Building Mini-Grants—applications open now**

The first phase of the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) has officially launched! Towns can now apply for the Community Capacity-Building “Mini-Grants” of up to \$4,000. These funds can be used for a variety of outreach and education activities, such as:

- Starting a local energy committee
- Sending mailers to residents regarding efficiency programs, weatherization programs, and/or rebates
- Hosting a community energy fair or similar public energy event (can be used to provide refreshments, print/distribute materials, etc.)
- Hiring a grant writer, such as TRORC, to apply for other state and federal grants to stack with MERP
- Training for municipal official/town staff on energy efficiency topics (basics of weatherization, heat pumps, etc.)

For more information on the program, please visit TRORC's [MERP webpage](#) or contact TRORC's MERP coordinator Harry Falconer at [hfalconer@trorc.org](mailto:hfalconer@trorc.org).

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## OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

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### Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Survey Request

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is developing the 5-year update of the White River Tactical Basin Plan, a water quality and habitat management plan. The plan identifies surface waters in need of restoration and protection, outlines a list of actions to achieve water quality goals, and identifies partners and funding critical to implementing the actions.

Please take this [15-minute survey](#) to share your knowledge and opinions relating to the health of the basin's rivers, ponds, and wetlands. Through your survey responses, the planning process benefits from a more complete picture of the condition of the watershed and helps ensure strategies will lead to successful restoration and protection through the work of the Agency, its partners, and the community.

For additional information, please see the [White River Basin Story Map](#) and the [2018 White River Tactical Basin Plan](#).

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