



Two Rivers-Ottauquechee
REGIONAL COMMISSION



News & Notes
October 2023



TRORC Website

Upcoming Events

Meeting Minutes

Town Pages

PROJECT UPDATES AND REMINDERS



Substantial flood damage to a residence in Rochester following TS Irene. Photo: Toby Talbot, Associated Press

Strong Flood Regulations Can Lead to Safer Communities

All towns in our region have flood hazard regulations. These regulations help to ensure that any development in mapped flood zones is carried out in a way that reduces or eliminates future damage to structures from flood events. In Vermont, we are beginning to see more frequent and severe rain and flood events, such as the flood event this past July. As these events become more common, the risk to development located in flood zones increases, which can lead to loss of life and significant economic impacts for homes and businesses.

Fortunately, towns have an opportunity to take action to mitigate future damages to buildings and infrastructure, as well as lower the safety risks for residents living in mapped flood zones. While FEMA sets the minimum requirements for flood regulations, towns should choose to enforce higher standards that place additional measures on new and substantially improved development. (See [this page](#) for a DEC model flood bylaw, along with some [higher standards](#) that towns can choose to incorporate into their regulations).

As an example, FEMA requires that structures in the floodplain be built to the Base Flood Elevation (BFE). This means that a structure's lowest floor is at the same height as the base flood, essentially the equivalent of having floodwater at your doorstep. Towns can and should require that new and substantially improved structures be built one or (preferably) two feet above the BFE. With the impacts of climate change and the movement of our rivers and streams over time, relying on FEMA's minimum flood standards can put new and existing structures at unnecessary flood risk and can lead to high repair costs or buyouts down the road. If your town is interested in exploring ways to strengthen its flood regulations, reach out to Kyle Katz, kkatz@trorc.org.

MERP Municipal Building Energy Assessments Awarded to 22 Towns

As of September 28th, 22 of TRORC's 30 towns (plus Newbury Village) have been awarded energy assessments for their municipal buildings through the [Municipal Energy Resilience Program \(MERP\)](#). TRORC has been promoting the MERP program and assisting towns with their applications for several months. The assessments will be conducted throughout the fall and into the winter. Applications for the assessments remain open until October 31st, 2023. The state will continue to award assessments until funding is exhausted.

MERP is a multi-phase program that aims to help towns reduce emissions while saving money on their utility bills. The energy assessments will provide towns with valuable information on a given building's energy use and present options for retrofit projects that will help improve the building's energy efficiency. Having an assessment is a prerequisite to apply for a MERP project grant of up to \$500,000 when applications open this winter. Approximately 70 - 80 project grants will be awarded statewide.

Please contact hfalconer@trorc.org for more information.

2023 VTrans HSIP Small Scale Local Safety Grant Awards

Congratulations to the following towns on their successful awards from the first ever round of VTrans Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Small Scale Local Safety Grant program with 100% state share (no local match): Fairlee, Granville, Hartland, Strafford, Wells River, West Fairlee and Woodstock. TRORC is proud to have assisted all of these towns in applying for this exciting new program.

The intent of the Small Scale Local HSIP Grant is to improve safety on local roadways and provide construction funding only. Eligible projects may be combinations of any of the following facilities: signage, striping, clearing hazardous trees in right of way or installing breakaway devices. For more information:

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/hsip>



VT Legal Aid for Disaster Recovery Assistance

Vermont Legal Aid has established a [very helpful website](#) with information and contacts for those seeking disaster assistance, including the handling of appeals.

The website lists benefits, recovery programs, and common legal problems that can arise after flooding. [If you live in Vermont, contact VT Legal Aid with any questions.](#) Tell them if your problem is due to the flooding disaster. If they cannot directly help you, they will refer you to other resources that can.

Deadlines to note:

ASAP — If you have insurance, contact your home/renter/flood/car insurers and file a claim because FEMA will need documentation of what insurance will not cover. Also apply for help from FEMA at the same time.

September 29, 2023 — Apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance by this date — for all affected counties.

October 12, 2023 — Apply for FEMA assistance by this date. This is a new deadline — but don't wait to apply!

October 12, 2023 — If you apply for a SBA loan, apply by this date.

60 days — Appeal any FEMA decision within 60 days of the date on the decision letter.

Cornerstone Creative Community Program Updates

TRORC's [Cornerstone Creative Community \(3CVT\)](#) program closed the summer by collaborating with community organizations to bring the film "Utica: The Last Refuge" to the Upper Valley. The film is about immigration and inclusivity, how refugees positively impact local economies, and all the struggles they face. It directly relates to opportunities in the Upper Valley to be more welcoming and inclusive, through housing, childcare, transportation, food access, and more. Learn more on our [website](#) and the [filmmaker's site](#).

3CVT is supported by a 2.5 year grant from the U.S. Economic Development Association, which TRORC pursued in order to bolster our economic development efforts in the region. In partnership with the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC) and Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC), and the Vermont Arts Council, 3CVT aims to foster a resilient creative economy throughout East-Central Vermont by providing direct support to small businesses and hosting events that promote the creative sector.

While the 3CVT program is due to conclude later this month, it will do so on a sweet note by appearing at the [Vermont Apple Festival and Craft Show](#) on October 7th in Springfield, VT. Come by our table to sign up for the 3CVT Listserv and learn about resources available to artists and creative entrepreneurs in Vermont! Contact masbury@trorc.org for more information.

TRORC at the VT Emergency Preparedness Conference

Kevin Geiger presented a session titled 'Anything Beats Nothing' on September 21 at the Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference, held this year at the Burke Mountain Hotel and Conference Center. Geiger took the class through examples of how even small steps have a big impact and can be done in just a little time, conducting four exercises in 20 minutes. For more information on setting up emergency trainings or exercises, contact [Sydney Steinle](#) at our office or julie.benedict@vermont.gov.

Photo: Mark Bosma, VT Emergency Management



TRORC Hosts Two Public Engagement Events on Renewable Energy

On behalf of the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD), TRORC facilitated two public engagement events during the week of September 25th to solicit feedback on the state's renewable energy policies. The first event was held in Bethel and the second in Windsor, co-sponsored by the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission. Staff heard from local residents about the issues that matter to them most when it comes to electricity, including affordability, carbon emissions, jobs, and land use. Their feedback will be compiled into a report for PSD and used to shape future policy. The events were conducted as part of a comprehensive review of the state's renewable energy programs. For more information on this effort, [visit PSD's website](#).



Photos: Meghan Asbury, TRORC Staff

Working Communities Challenge Updates

TRORC is a partner on the [Working Communities Challenge](#) with the [White River Valley Consortium \(WRVC\)](#).

The Working Communities Challenge advances local collaborative efforts that build strong, healthy economies and communities in northern New England's rural towns, regions, and smaller cities. With a focus on economic opportunity for communities and residents with low incomes, this unique three-year grant competition is supported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, State Government, national and local philanthropy, and private sector employers.

WRVC is a collaboration of 14 towns near the White River in Central-Eastern Vermont, created to address challenges that occur due to limited staff capacity at the town level.

The WRVC's first effort focuses on increasing housing for entry-level workforce and beginning entrepreneurs, which is essential to retaining young people in our communities, providing a high quality of life, stimulating local economies, and attracting new residents.

TRORC is among the collaborators in the WRVC organizing a series of facilitated conversations with people of varying generations within the same community. The goal of these talks is to develop relationships and understanding that participants can later bring to bear on addressing community challenges like housing. The process was developed with the expertise of Beth Tener of New Directions Collaborative, a New England-based consulting firm. The events were piloted in Tunbridge and Royalton, and will continue throughout the consortium.

Read more about these events at the Vital Communities website [here](#).

Bradford Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The Town of Bradford is wrapping up the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) update process. Join members of the Hazard Mitigation Committee at the Bradford Selectboard meeting on October 12th as they present on the draft of the plan, the hazard mitigation plan process, and some of the changes in the 2023 LHMP update. The Bradford Selectboard meeting is scheduled for Thursday October 12 at 6:30 PM at the Bradford Academy building (172 N. Main St. in Bradford). The 2023 draft LHMP will be available to read on the Bradford town website, and a paper copy will be available in the Bradford Town Office.

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 Kyle Katz at kkatz@trorc.org.

WORK WITH US!

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.

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 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.

Finance Manager

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) seeks a highly skilled, self-motivated, full-time (37.5 hrs/wk) Finance Manager to join our team of dedicated professionals in a public service organization. Working directly with the Executive Director, responsibilities include management of TRORC financial accounts (A/P and A/R), organizational budget development, development of indirect cost rate proposals, financial reporting to the Executive Director and Board, grant budgets and contract management, financial aspects of grant reporting, management of payroll and staff benefits, annual audit preparation, general oversight of office operations as well as Board support. Knowledge of QuickBooks accounting software is required. Knowledge of federal or state grants management is a plus. Ability to work well with staff and the public is essential.

Minimum Qualifications

This position requires a bachelor's degree and two to four years of experience in a similar position. A master's degree in accounting, business or financial management is preferred.

Application Instructions

Please email a letter of interest and resume, plus three references, contact information and salary requirements in a single pdf to Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director at pgregory@trorc.org. This position will remain open until filled. No phone calls please. TRORC is an Equal Opportunity Employer. TRORC is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within its service area.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Special BONUS Round of Funding for the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Program!

In January 2024, during this special round of funding, additional state income tax credits will be competitively available to projects that enhance the historic character and improve building safety of older and historic commercial and community buildings in these designated communities. Funding supports general rehabilitation and code compliance work. The program also funds flood mitigation upgrades and exterior façade improvements. In response to the July 2023 floods, projects seeking Flood Mitigation Credits will be prioritized for funding in January.

Applications for the next round of tax credits are due **Monday, January 8, 2024**.

See the attached **program guidelines and application** which are also available to download from our [website](#).

Applications must be submitted electronically to: accd.DowntownVillageCenterTaxCreditProgram@vermont.gov.

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](#).
