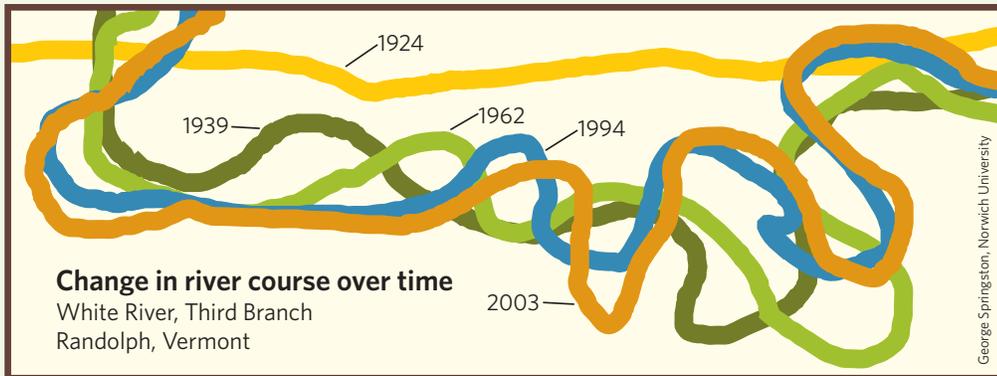


GOING WITH THE FLOW

Our rivers are not static. Rivers are dynamic and move over time.



“Rivers are always moving, especially during floods when their channels have been altered. Building in a river corridor and trying to keep flood waters channeled in place will either fail, at great expense, or send an even more powerful, dynamic river to neighbors downstream.”

Mike Kline, VT DEC River Management Program

Therefore, river corridors must be kept free of development to:

1. Reduce flood exposure
2. Provide clean water
3. Create healthy habitats
4. Prevent public expenditure for buyouts
5. Regulate nutrient and sediments

But we are still developing our river corridors.

SCIENCE BEHIND STRONGER DECISIONS

A 2017 study by The Nature Conservancy in Vermont and Conservation Law Foundation examined river corridor development in 30 Vermont towns from 2011-2016.

These towns represent 47%, nearly half, of the \$9 million paid for Tropical Storm Irene damage in the state of Vermont. But as of today, among towns in the study:

- 15 towns have no river corridor zoning
- 13 towns have only limited river floodway zoning
- 2 towns have river corridor bylaws



And even where there is zoning in place, development has continued in river corridors in the 5 years since Tropical Storm Irene:

- 133 structures were built in towns with no zoning
- 66 structures were built in towns with river corridor zoning



PEOPLE AND NATURE CAN THRIVE

Why are communities still choosing to develop in river corridors?

Economic pressure, compelling development proposals, inadequate enforcement of bylaws, *lack of river corridor knowledge*, and insufficient state incentives were some of the reasons cited by survey respondents.

As extreme weather events increase and Vermont declares an average of 1.6 flooding disasters per year, we have a responsibility to do more to reduce flood risk, increase public safety, and mitigate disaster related costs, while improving the health of our waterways.

Our recommendation:

Vermont needs to protect and fully invest in natural river corridors for our own well-being. This means preventing new development in river corridors, and protecting and restoring floodplain forests, which absorb and slow floodwaters and filter out pollution caused by sediment and nutrients (phosphorous and nitrogen).

Our floodplain forests use the *power of nature* to work for the benefit of society. These natural resources deliver a tremendous return-on-investment.

We recommend **significantly increasing funding for natural resource protection and restoration in river corridors, such as through S.260, and strengthening public policies to improve river corridor protection.**