

January 29, 2020

Memo

Re: Testimony to: Joint Meeting of Senate Natural Resources Committee and Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee; and to House Energy and Technology Committee on the Bettis Autoland buyout in Hancock

From: Kevin Geiger, Senior Planner, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

I have co-led the state's Irene Flood Buyout Program with CDBG-Disaster Recovery and VHC funding since 2012. These funds provided needed match to FEMA funding, and also enabled buyouts that could not be done under FEMA rules. VHC contributed \$2,000,000 to the Irene Flood Buyout Program and these funds were granted to TRORC through ACCD. The VHC funds were critical to the success of the buyout program, which is buying its 155th house today in Pittsfield. VHC funds went directly to 28 properties to date, listed below, but all buyout sites have clauses allowing VHC to exercise an easement on them.

2044 Thayer Brook Road in Braintree
37/51, 419 and 449 Newton Road in Brandon
114 Wheeler Road in Brandon
4416 US4 in Bridgewater
33 North Cove Road in Burlington
895 VT11 in Chester
814 Cold River Road in Clarendon
4463 VT100 in Granville
5099 VT14 in Hartford
86 Waterman Hill in Hartford
275, 289, 309, and 317 Water Street in Jamaica
24 East Hill in Ludlow
191/195 Three Mile Bridge Road in Middlesex
279 Dover Road in Newfane
6 and 11 Parmenter Place in Pittsfield
173 Park Place in Pittsfield
3604 VT 100 in Pittsfield
435 and 465 Water Street in Northfield
40 School Street in Readsboro
106 Bridge Street in Royalton
108 S. Wardsboro Road in Wardsboro

We were glad to partner with the Vermont River Conservancy on a buyout of the Bettis Autoland site, and thank Steve Libby for his steadfast perseverance in this project. We were able to bring over \$250,000 in CDBR-Disaster Recovery funding to the site to help with demolition, testing, and remediation, as well as \$30,000 for acquisition. The Bettis site now provides clean floodplain that filters silt, recreational value, and several hundred feet of conserved riverfront, all while lessening flood pressure on other sites.

Over a dozen additional buyouts are seeking funding at this time, but there are no remaining VHC or CDBG dollars available to provide match to FEMA grants, making the owners of these possible buyouts reticent to participate in the program. Continued funding of VHC is critical for many reasons, including keeping the present buyout program going. The buyout program is one of the main state mitigation strategies to deal with increasing flood risk.

Thank you for your time. If you desire any more information, I can be reached at kgeiger@trorc.org.

