

## **Town of Jamaica, Vermont – Three FEMA Flood Events Later**

### **Introduction**

**FEMA** – it was not until early September before Jamaica met a local representative to help us catalogue damages incurred from the July Storm.

- Jamaica had 77 recorded damages. Roadways (gravel and pavement), culvert failures, wash-outs, embankment failures, bridge approach losses, and property damages.
- Documentation of Damage Inventory Projects – challenges in coordination with municipal departments, volunteer groups, emergency response, contractors, DEC, etc. in pulling data together for the damages. No assistance available to the towns in the fall helping with the documentation effort, even if FEMA paid 100%.
- Jamaica is still completing close-out documentation with VEM on damages incurred from the 2021 FEMA Storm.

**State of Vermont** - Response from Vermont Emergency Management and Department of Environmental Conservation was tremendous during the July Storm event. Senior staff and field professionals have been professional, engaged, and very responsive in assisting town efforts in reaching out to impacted property owners and damaged infrastructure issues.

### **Climate Change Weather Events in Mountainous VT Towns**

- Infrastructure Addressing these high run-off volume locations – large box culverts
- Opting Out of River Corridor Buffers at the Municipal Level
- Steep Slopes Exposed for Future Streambank Erosion
- Can the state influence the US Army Corps of Engineers to assist Vermont towns on flood resiliency and potentially earmark federal funding for these planning activities?

### **VEM Regional Headquarters in Rutland, Brattleboro, or Bennington?**

- Addressing issues like flooding, hazard mitigation, and related natural threats locally while also serving as a southern regional EMA location in a time of a natural disaster.
- Does only one Emergency Management location statewide make sense?

### **Buy-Out Program in Vermont - Do they have to leave?**

- All or Nothing Approach to Land Acquisition – Loss of tax revenues in municipal ownership.
- Allowing property owners to remain in the communities – impacts of Short-Term Rental property acquisitions in Southern Vermont and availability of Workforce Housing statewide.
- Technology allows residential structures to be relocated from existing to new, safer foundation locations relatively easily.

**Regional Planning Commissions (RPC)** – Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) in flood-prone areas of the state have a dedicated funding source to better oversee climate change/resiliency and hazard mitigation programming.

More Collaboration with UVM or other state college engineering or sustainability programs.

- Obtaining a Scientific Perspective where the stormwater flows are more concentrated. Need baseline understanding for any potential mitigation techniques to be contemplated. Modeling the watershed under both a forested and current development situation, analyzing the existing stormwater controls at the parcel-level as part of an overall stormwater system design perspective.

### **Partnerships: Who Should be at the Table?**

Regional Planning Commissions

VLCT - Legal

State Agencies – Vermont Emergency Management, ANR Department of Environmental Conservation

Army Corps of Engineers

Flood Mitigation-Resiliency Planning Firms – Consultants

Northern Borders

### **Leadership and Legislation**

Mandating River Corridors or 50' Stream Buffers Statewide

On-Site Detention for 5-Lot Subdivisions or greater

Stormwater Utility with a Dedicated Source for Resiliency Projects/Infrastructure

Fuel Tax/Hotel-Motel Tax Increase, or Short-Term Rental Fee for state program oversight and flood resiliency.

Green Infrastructure Design Options

Stormwater Management Best Management Practices Improved – Industry-Specific Guidelines

Resorts, Agriculture, Commercial, Residential, Industrial uses

Funding for Flood Impacted VT Communities to assist with Major Infrastructure Investments

Regionalism in Stormwater Management

### **Legal**

Small towns have budgetary challenges taking people/companies to court, in addition to the public perception and attention legal action presents by challenging a neighboring town or major employer regarding stormwater run-off compliance.

What other towns in Vermont were impacted by stormwater run-off from a ski resort area in the July Storm? Ludlow/Okemo Mountain and Killington Mountain were also referenced as being in a similar situation with run-off impacting downstream properties.

In Jamaica's situation, we are receiving flood run-off impacts from two separate VT towns and one of the largest employers in Southern Vermont. State policy does not provide municipalities like Jamaica with many opportunities to rectify the situation, without help from the state and regional partners.