

Town of Hardwick – Select Board Meeting on 12/18/25

Flood Risk Reduction & Community Preparedness

Ongoing Work – Snapshot for the Selectboard

Purpose of this handout

This summary provides a factual overview of flood risk reduction, preparedness, and related planning activities currently underway or in progress. Several items will come before the Selectboard at future meetings.

1. Policy & Regulatory Work (In Progress)

River Corridor Overlay (Proposed)

- The Planning Commission is reviewing a River Corridor Overlay for Hardwick.
- It is expected to be presented to the Selectboard for consideration and a another public hearing at a future meeting.
- River corridors are areas mapped by the state that reflect where rivers naturally meander and where erosion and river movement are most likely.
- **Act 121 (the Flood Safety Act)**, enacted statewide in 2024, directs the state to establish river corridor regulations, including a mapped base map and rules that will require state permitting for development in river corridors beginning in 2028. Municipal adoption of local river corridor controls offers *greater local input and control* over how these areas are managed.

2. Technical & Planning Work

Flood Modeling & Technical Analysis

- Supports evaluation of how floods and erosion behave locally
- Used to assess mitigation options and project feasibility

Jackson Dam Feasibility Study

- Evaluates potential upstream actions and downstream impacts
- Informational only; no construction decision at this stage

Downtown & Route 14 South Review

- Examines flood exposure, land use suitability, and access
- Intended to inform future planning and investment decisions

3. Funded Mitigation Projects

Granite Street Historic District

- \$700,000 secured for utility elevation and mechanical relocation
- Designed to reduce repeated flood damage to existing homes

Lamoille River Floodplain Restoration

- Fully funded
- Restores natural floodplain functions and reduces downstream impacts

Sawmill Lane Park – Initial Phase

- Initial steps tied to completed flood buyouts
- No build-out decisions at this stage

4. Preparedness & Capacity Building

Volunteer Training & Winter Classes

- Focused on emergency response, communication, and neighborhood support
- Conducted during winter months to build capacity outside of peak flood season

Key Context for the Selectboard

This work includes both funded projects and planning efforts that will return to the Selectboard over time. The context for several items is shaped by recent state legislation (Act 121) affecting river corridor regulation. The Town's local river corridor overlay would position Hardwick to maintain local control where possible once statewide rules are in place.

River Corridor Overlay & Flood Mitigation

Frequently Asked Questions for the Selectboard

***What is a River Corridor?**

A river corridor is the area a river needs to naturally move over time. These areas are most susceptible to erosion, channel shifts, and infrastructure damage even when they are outside mapped floodplains.

***Why is the Town working on a River Corridor Overlay now?**

The Planning Commission is reviewing a proposed River Corridor Overlay so that the Selectboard has a locally developed option to consider before state requirements take effect.

***How many properties are affected?**

Approximately 60 residential properties are located within the proposed river corridor areas in Hardwick.

All affected property owners received individual notification letters from the Zoning Office explaining:

- Why their property is included
- What the overlay does and does not do
- How questions and feedback could be provided

***What public process has occurred so far?**

The Hardwick Planning Commission (HPC) held a public hearing on December 9, 2025, which was well attended.

- The slide deck used at the hearing
- The recording of the meeting broadcast on HCTV - <https://hctv.us/public-hearing-on-east-hardwick-zoning-bylaws-december-9-2025/>

are included in the Selectboard's materials / files for reference.

***What is changing at the state level?**

Under Act 121, the State of Vermont will introduce river corridor regulation beginning in 2027. This will establish statewide standards affecting development in mapped river corridors.

***Why does local adoption matter?**

Local adoption allows the Town to:

- Maintain greater local control over how river corridors are managed
- Integrate river corridor standards with existing zoning and review processes
- Provide clearer expectations to property owners before state rules take effect

***Does a River Corridor Overlay prohibit development?**

No.

It establishes review standards in areas with high erosion risk. The purpose is to reduce repetitive damage and avoid future public repair costs.

***How does this relate to disaster funding (ERAF)?**

Adoption of river corridor protections improves the Town's Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) reimbursement rate following disasters.

For example:

- On a \$2 million bridge repair project, improved ERAF reimbursement can reduce the Town's local share by up to \$100,000.

This directly affects municipal budgets after flooding events.

***Is this connected to floodplain regulations?**

River corridors and floodplains address different risks:

- Floodplains focus on inundation
- River corridors focus on erosion and channel movement

Both are necessary to reduce long-term damage.

***Is this a spending decision?**

No.

The River Corridor Overlay is a regulatory and planning decision.

***When will the Selectboard see this formally?**

After Planning Commission review of public comments is complete, the River Corridor Overlay will be brought to the Selectboard for consideration at a future meeting.

***What happens if the Town does nothing?**

If the Town does not adopt a local approach, river corridor regulation will still be introduced by the State beginning in 2027, with fewer opportunities for local tailoring.

***Key Point to Keep in Mind**

The River Corridor Overlay is intended to:

- Reduce erosion-related damage
- Limit repeated emergency repair costs
- Improve ERAF reimbursement after disasters
- Preserve local decision-making authority where possible

Additional materials related to the December 9 public hearing, including the slide deck and HCTV recording, are included in the Selectboard's files.