

Hardwick Planning Commission - Quorum
Hardwick Conservation Commission
Hardwick Select Board
June 18, 2025
Hybrid – In-Person and Zoom options
Minutes

Link to Video Recording:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jhbdblf6Riopiw5p8GCLZE9lWHXKdQ2P/view?usp=sharing>

HPC Members Present: Dave Gross, Chair; Kole; Gillian D’Acierno (Zoom); and Larry Fliegelman

HPC Members Absent: Ken Davis; Bud Stevens; and Jim Lewis.

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator; Norma Wiesen, Hardwick Conservation Commission; Tyler Buswell, Hardwick Conservation Commission; Erik Remick, Hardwick Select Board, David Upson, Jr., Hardwick Town Manager; Christine Armstrong, Greensboro Planning Commission; Jack S. – Glover; Terresa Perron – Glover.

Presenters: Alison Spasyk from Lake Champlain Sea Grant and Shayne Jaquith, The Nature Conservancy (on Zoom). PDF copy of Presentation Slides is also available.

Summary:

The Presentation focused on the Flood Safety Act (Act 121) and its River Corridor provisions. Alison and Shayne discussed the historical and financial impact of floods in Vermont, noting that 75% of flood damage is due to fluvial erosion. They highlighted the need for River Corridor protections to mitigate flood risks, emphasizing the importance of maintaining natural floodplain areas. The Act mandates a two-year education outreach effort, updates to River Corridor maps, and the development of new permitting processes. Concerns were raised about the impact on development, agricultural exemptions, and the need for local control and incentives for wetland restoration.

The meeting was recorded for documentation purposes.

Overview of Flood Safety Act and River Corridors

Alison explained the Flood Safety Act's components, focusing on the River Corridor piece.

The meeting aimed to document feedback from the community about the Act's impact.

Alison provided context about the geographical location and the watershed's connection to Lake Champlain.

She highlighted the financial impact of floods in Vermont, mentioning significant floods from 1869 to 2023.

Historical Flooding and Flood Maps

Alison discussed the historical flooding in Vermont, noting the frequency and cost of floods.

She presented a map created by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation showing areas affected by flooding from 1973 to 2011.

The map indicates that Vermont experiences frequent, smaller-scale floods that are still costly and damaging.

Alison differentiated between inundation and erosion damage, noting that 75% of flood damage is due to fluvial erosion.

Unique Factors in Vermont's Flooding

Alison explained Vermont's unique topography, which includes steep valleys and narrow river valleys.

She discussed the impact of precipitation trends, noting that Vermont is expected to get even wetter due to climate change.

The state's development patterns, often close to rivers, contribute to flood risks.

Historical River Management Practices

Shayne explained the historical approach to river management, including straightening, dredging, and armoring rivers. He described the physical impact of straightening rivers, making them more erosive.

Shayne presented examples of straightened rivers in Vermont, such as the White River in Granville and the Black Creek in Fairfield.

He discussed the impact of dredging on river channels, making them more erosive and disconnected from their floodplains.

Impact of Channel Straightening and Dredging

Shayne explained the concept of head cutting, where erosion moves upstream due to channel straightening.

He presented a channel evolution model showing the stages of river erosion and stabilization.

The state assessed 5000 miles of river between 2005 and 2011, finding that 75% of the assessed rivers are in unstable states.

Shayne highlighted the combined impact of topography, development patterns, and historical management practices on flood risks.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Limitations

Shayne discussed the limitations of the NFIP, particularly in Vermont, where many flood risks are not identified.

The NFIP does not consider flash flooding or moving stream erosion hazards.

Shane presented an example of a structure not in the NFIP floodplain but vulnerable to erosion hazards.

He noted that many Vermont communities participate in the NFIP but still face significant flood risks.

Introduction of River Corridor Protections

Allison introduced the concept of River Corridor protections, which aim to mitigate flood damage.

The River Corridor is the area on either side of the river where the channel can adjust over time.

DEC has mapped river corridors for the entire state, focusing on rivers with watersheds greater than two square miles.

Allison explained the geometric formula used to determine the width of the River Corridor.

Incentives and Permitting Process

Allison discussed the incentives for towns to adopt River Corridor protections, including the Emergency Relief Assistance Fund.

The state is working on updates to the River Corridor map to identify areas where new developments won't increase erosion hazards.

The Act mandates a two-year education outreach effort, with the state submitting a report to the legislature summarizing public input.

Public Feedback and Concerns

Participants express concerns about the River Corridor metric and its impact on development in towns like Hardwick.

They discuss the need for consistent enforcement of river corridor protections and the importance of local control.

The conversation touches on the role of dams in flood management and the need for financial assistance for emergency projects.

Participants suggest incentives for wetland protection and the use of beaver dams to mitigate flood risks.

Future Steps and Closing Remarks

Allison and Shayne emphasized that the current meeting is part of a two-year education campaign.

They expect DEC to provide more detailed information on the permitting process in the future.

The meeting concluded with a reminder that feedback and questions will be documented and used to develop resources for town-level planning.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA