

Creating a Flood Resilient Vermont

For Vermont communities to be truly flood safe, we must limit development in our river corridors.

Protecting river corridors from development is the #1 action we can take to safeguard people and communities from the threat of extreme flooding caused by climate change.

In VT, river corridors are not regulated statewide but through a patchwork-style network of regulatory jurisdictions, leading to misinterpretation, permitting inefficiencies, project delays, and inequitable municipal access to state and federal funding opportunities, ultimately leaving Vermonters exposed to increasing flood risks.

Vermont is becoming wetter and experiencing more frequent and severe storm events according to the recent Vermont Climate Assessment (UVM, 2021). Our state is declaring an average of 1.4 major flooding disasters per year, posing significant health, safety, and financial impacts for Vermonters. The lack of river corridor protections is one of the most significant factors contributing to flood damages and their cascading impacts.



In Vermont, 70-80% of all flood-related damage and costs are due to rapidly moving rivers that create powerful erosive forces, rather than slow-rising floodwaters. Protecting river corridors reduces flood damage by, 1. Helping rivers reconnect to their floodplains, thereby holding more water and sediment during flood events, 2. Decreasing the number of flood-vulnerable structures.

We propose a revision of the Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor rule to incorporate statewide jurisdiction and permitting authority for river corridors, as recommended by the Vermont Climate Action Plan.

An effective approach to statewide river corridor protections will:

- Significantly reduce future damages to buildings and infrastructure, saving taxpayers millions of dollars in avoided damages.
- Better safeguard vulnerable people from flood risk.
- Remove administrative burden from municipalities.
- Foster a more equitable reduction of flood risk across the state.
- Substantively advance our statewide water quality goals.
- Protect and promote the biodiversity of our aquatic systems.
- Advance a life safety policy that demands state jurisdiction to avoid inequitable regulation and impacts.
- Appropriately staff the Department of Environmental Conservation’s Rivers Program to effectively implement the expanded rule.

