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FEMA

July 26, 2024

Seth Gardner, Chair, Selectboard  
Town of East Montpelier, VT  
Town Hall  
40 Kelton Road  
East Montpelier, Vermont 05651

Subject: Town of East Montpelier, Washington County, Vermont  
Community No.: 500111

Dear Mr. Seth Gardner:

In partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), conducted a Discovery meeting for the Winooski River Watershed as part of FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) program. The Winooski River Watershed is the 8-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) 02010003. During the meeting, the USGS discussed areas of flooding concern and project goals, milestones, and products with a variety of stakeholders, including FEMA officials, state and community officials, and watershed interest groups.

The Discovery process marked the beginning of a Risk MAP project, and it assisted in identifying the scope of the Winooski River Watershed study. The Discovery meetings are part of the Discovery process, and the information exchanged between FEMA and communities within the counties during Discovery improved our understanding of flood hazard mapping and mitigation planning. At the Discovery meetings, we reviewed the flood risk data gathered to date. We also discussed your community's flooding history, flood risk concerns and mitigation. During the Discovery process, officials in your community may have provided information, comments, or questions to the USGS. If this is the case, responses to comments or questions are shown in Table 2.

At the website below, you can download a copy of the Winooski River Watershed Discovery Report, which collates information presented at the Discovery Meetings; information collected from communities prior to, at, and following the Discovery Meetings; and other information collected from other sources. Appendices to the report may be available upon request.

<https://doimsp.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/GS-NEWENG-FEMARiskMAP-outreach/Shared%20Documents/General/Data/Winooski%20River%20Discovery%20Data?csf=1&web=1&e=ENHbq8>

Using this information that we collected during the Discovery process, **the following river in the Winooski River Watershed was selected for detailed study — The Winooski River, Brook No. 1, Mad River, North Branch Winooski River, Stevens Branch, Stevens Branch Bypass, Thatcher Brook, and West Branch Little River.** The scope of the engineering and mapping covered for each river reach in this project is summarized in Table 1. In addition to the reaches selected for detailed study, new approximate studies were conducted on all reaches in the study area (1) that did not have existing or proposed detailed studies and (2) either that had existing approximate studies or that drained a basin of at least 1 square mile.

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As discussed in the Discovery Meetings, FEMA's goal is to offer useful, credible data, and a fair process to help you make informed decisions to continue building a safer and stronger community. As such, we want to notify you of the engineering data models that are being used in FEMA's ongoing flood risk project. These engineering data models will form the basis for the proposed Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) that will be presented on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). An SFHA is an area that is subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood (also called the base flood). Over time, water flow and drainage patterns on the selected reaches (Table 1) may have changed dramatically due to surface erosion, land use, and natural forces. Given these factors, the likelihood of flooding along these reaches may have increased or decreased over time, changing the SFHA designations.

Upon receipt of this notification, the communities affected by the selected reaches will have 30 days to consult with FEMA Regional Office staff (identified in the last paragraph of this letter) regarding the appropriateness of the models selected for the project. Communities will have additional opportunities to comment on and provide feedback about the models and other draft flood hazard information throughout the project. If there are uncertainties about the mapping data that have been collected and analyzed, a formal appeals process and period will be available to help resolve any remaining questions before the flood hazard information becomes effective.

Draft flood hazard information will be developed by FEMA's mapping partner, the USGS. USGS uses the engineering models shown in Table 1, which list the flooding sources under study, along with details regarding the selected models and the rationale for their use. The engineering models were selected based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the type of study performed (e.g., base or enhanced, shallow flooding, coastal, alluvial fan, etc.), the size of the drainage area affecting the flooding source, and the type of terrain present (e.g., flat, hilly, mountainous, etc.).

FEMA wants to ensure that the most up-to-date and accurate technical data are used to develop the flood risk products. FEMA relies on the community's feedback, partnership, and knowledge during this important project to determine the extent of flood risk in the communities affected by the selected reaches in Table 1 and to support efforts to reduce those risks. We look forward to working with community officials and other stakeholders to increase flood risk awareness and reduce the risk to life and property from flooding. Initial feedback will not affect any community's ability to provide feedback later or to formally appeal the flood hazard information during a future appeal period.

If your community is listed in Table 1 and you would like to discuss the modeling, please contact Scott Olson, the project manager, no later than June 14, 2024. We will consider all comments and suggestions received during this period about model selection.

Scott Olson  
U.S. Geological Survey  
331 Commerce Way  
Pembroke, NH 03275  
(603) 226-7815  
solson@usgs.gov

According to the selected models, the USGS is conducting detailed studies involving field surveys to obtain structural geometry and elevation data. Furthermore, new hydrologic and hydraulic analyses will provide new flood elevations. Be aware that you and residents in your communities may see USGS survey crews on the bridges, dams, and rivers. At the following website, you can view or download a copy of the flyer that the surveyors carry to inform the public of the project.

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<https://doimspp.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/GS-NEWENG-FEMARiskMAP-outreach/Shared%20Documents/General/Data/Winooski%20River%20Discovery%20Data?csf=1&web=1&c=rqh7jr>

If you do not have immediate access to the project website, but would like access, please fill out this form.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=urWTBhhLe02TQfMvQApUIAaKIvshS1ZAsgzlc2HwDshUOVcyNVpPWDVVRDM0WUJJNEI4N1AwTTIIVyQIQCN0PWcu>

As this project continues, the USGS will be conducting a number of other meetings with the stakeholders in the Winooski River Watershed to communicate the progress of the project and to solicit comments about draft and preliminary products. After the Discovery meeting, the next meeting to be held will be the work map meetings. In the work map meetings, the USGS and FEMA will be meeting with officials from each community affected by the project scope to discuss the draft flood insurance rate map products – the work maps – for that community. Communities in the project scope can expect to receive an invitation to these meetings at least four weeks before their scheduled dates.

If you have any questions regarding the Discovery process and results, the selected reaches or models, or the planned work map meetings please contact Scott Olson, Project Manager, by e-mail ([solson@usgs.gov](mailto:solson@usgs.gov)) or by calling (603) 226-7815. Colleen Bailey is available to answer any questions at [Colleen.Bailey@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Colleen.Bailey@fema.dhs.gov).

Sincerely,

Kerry Bogdan  
Risk Analysis Branch Chief  
Mitigation Division  
FEMA Region 1

cc:

Scott Olson, Project Manager, U.S. Geological Survey

**Table 1: Detailed study reaches in Winooski River Watershed, Vermont**

River	Communities	Limits of study	Hydrologic model proposed	Hydraulic model proposed	Model rationale
<b>Winooski River</b>	Barre, Berlin, East Montpelier, Marshfield, Middlesex, Montpelier, Moretown, and Plainfield, VT	From Upstream limit of 2012 USGS model, Middlesex and Moretown, VT to Cabot/ Marshfield corporate limits, Marshfield, VT	Streamgage statistics (With ice jam analysis)	HEC-RAS one-dimensional steady	USGS streamgages having at least 20 years of data are acceptable for hydrologic analyses. Regression equations are sufficient for the hydrologic analysis. Ice jams are a frequent form of flooding on this area.  One-dimensional, steady-flow hydraulic models are used where flow is modeled as steady in time, one-dimensional, and generally gradually varied in space, and where channel slope is generally less than 10%.
<b>All base-level engineering (approximate) reaches</b>	Multiple	Multiple	HEC-RAS two-dimensional rain-on-grid	HEC-RAS two-dimensional rain-on-grid	Two-dimensional large-scale automated engineering methods are appropriate for approximate flood studies.

**Table 2: Responses to comments and questions**

Number	Submitted by	Comment or question	Response
1	Town of Bolton, VT	Requesting a Zone AE (floodway) study for Gleason Brook in the Winooski River Tributary from 87 Boulder Wood Lane to the Winooski River. Reason being Flooding/High water has eroded the bank, putting a residential structure in danger, and Town Infrastructure also at risk.	
2	Town of South Burlington, Town of Essex Junction, VT	The area does not have digital HEC-RAS modeling currently available. The 2011 effective hydraulic study for the Winooski River did not contain digital modeling for this section.	

3	Town of Cabot, VT	<p>The Green Mountain Power Dam - Marshfield Reservoir studies were recently conducted if the dam breaks. This is a power generation dam and will control the flooding downstream. Study is available and they have looked at the mapping of the flooding extent.</p>	
4	Village of Marshfield, VT	<p>Town Hall and LOMC is removed from the SFHA. Area is flat and not much inundation. Would like to see detailed study in this area.</p>	
5	Village of Marshfield, VT	<p>Sewer System is in this area is flat and not much inundation on the sewer plant. Survey work in this area would show where the flooding is. This area is near the sewer plant which was raised 6 – 7 feet. The community would like to see a detailed study in this area and is currently scoped for this.</p>	
6	Town of Stowe, VT	<p>West Branch of the Little River, the actual river is out of the flood zone and has moved around and meandered. A detailed study is recommended.</p>	
7	Town of Fayston, VT	<p>Split flow and complication mapping regarding the meandering brook and complex modeling. There is interest in having a detailed work in this area.</p>	
8	Town of Waitsfield, VT	<p>Field near the Waitsfield Telecom Building. More of the field floods and extends further out. May be due to the heavy rainfall or flow of the river. There is interest in residential development for this area even though it floods.</p>	
9	Town of Waitsfield, VT	<p>There is a VTran study that has reoccurred. Discussions whether this area floods or not. Minor flooding and part of the VTran study does include stormwater plans here. Would be interesting to look at the flow of Mill Brook here as the elevation in this area is a shallow bowl.</p>	
10	Town of Fayston, VT	<p>There have been concerns from property owners, community members and Town officials regarding the accuracy of the maps of Mill Brook in the Town of</p>	

			Fayston from the Waitsfield town line to German Flats Road (3.7 miles). A new Zone AE-Detailed study is being requested by the Town of Fayston, VT.	
<b>11</b>	Town of Stowe, VT		There was a floodplain restoration project along the west side of Rt 108 in the area of Thompson Park and Peace Path, approximately 0.2 miles south of Houston Farm Rd. constructed in the summer of 2016.	
<b>12</b>	Town of Huntington, VT		The areas have been highly eroded since last studied. Erosion and sedimentation may have affected the stream centerline and flood hazard areas, especially near the confluence of the tributaries with the Huntington River. A request for areas to be reviewed to ensure map accuracy.	
<b>13</b>	Town of Huntington, VT		Please incorporate the most current NHD/VHD and double-check on current orthography. Specifically, please double check: (1) Huntington River, Huntington, Richmond.	
<b>14</b>	Town of Waitsfield, VT		Mad River, intersection of Meadow Road and Route 100. Buildings along the effective AE have done a preliminary wetland review of this area that have been mapped incorrectly. Building at this location is above the BFE.	
<b>15</b>	Town of Stowe, VT		Please incorporate the most current NHD/VHD and double-check on current orthography. Specifically, please double check: (2) The West Branch of the Little River and Little River in Stowe	
<b>16</b>	Town of Warren, Town of Waitsfield, Town of Moretown		Please incorporate the most current NHD/VHD and double-check on current orthography. Specifically, please double check: (3) The Mad River in Warren, Waitsfield and Moretown	
<b>17</b>	Town of Waitsfield, VT		There is planned development in this area. This is a recreation project with another bike bridge to go over Mill Brook. This area would have a central gathering area.	

<b>18</b>	Town of Williamstown, VT	Updates requested for all of Williamstown. Reason being " Maps have not been updated since 1970's".	
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