



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®
New England District

696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

Public Notice

In Reply Refer to: Janet Cote
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Planning Division

Date: October 21, 2020

Comment Period Closes: November 21, 2020

30 DAY PUBLIC NOTICE

Upper Connecticut River Watershed Storm Risk Reduction Feasibility Study Vermont

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District, has prepared a Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment, under the U.S. Senate Resolution dated 23 May 2001, which authorizes the investigation of flood risk management in the Upper Connecticut River Watershed in Vermont. The project investigated flood risk management solutions within the Connecticut River Watershed in the state of Vermont. The work will be performed in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management and is subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Attachment No. 1 lists pertinent laws, regulations, and directives. The non-Federal Sponsor for this project is the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

Project Description: The Connecticut River is New England’s largest watershed, river, and freshwater ecosystem ~11,000 square-miles, 410 miles, 7.2 million acres respectively. The river flows through four states (New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut), connects 148 tributaries, and is New England’s largest freshwater ecosystem, covering 7.2 million acres (CCRS et al. 2013). This study focuses on Vermont’s portion of the Connecticut River Watershed and economic damage areas, including Passumpsic River (town of Lyndon), North Branch of the Deerfield River (town of Wilmington), Whetstone River (city of Brattleboro), Ottauquechee River and Kedron Brook (town of Woodstock). In addition to Whetstone Brook, the Brattleboro study area also includes Halladay Brook and an unnamed tributary from Pleasant Valley Reservoir.

Residential and commercial properties in the study floodplains are vulnerable to inundation from storms. The study areas include approximately 620 structures, most of which are residential. The total value of the existing residential and commercial inventory is estimated to be worth more than \$150 million. The project area covers the state and towns as a whole, while the study area within this report represents the areas subject to flooding and proposed flood risk reduction solutions when applicable.

This Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) consists of non-structural measures, the elevation of residential structures and floodproofing of nonresidential structures in the towns of Brattleboro, Wilmington, Lyndon, and Woodstock.

Elevation of individual structures will rely on conventional residential construction methods. First, existing structures will be elevated using lifting jacks and supported on temporary cribbing foundations. Temporary utility connections will be put into place to allow occupants to remain in the structure throughout construction. A new or extended foundation would then be constructed. Once ready, the structures will then be lowered onto the new foundations and the permanent utility connections made.

Dry flood proofing consists of sealing all areas from the ground level up to approximately three feet of a structure to reduce the risk of damage from flooding resulting from storms of a certain magnitude by making walls, doors, windows and other openings resistant to penetration by floodwaters. Walls are coated with sealants, waterproofing compounds, or plastic sheeting is placed around the walls and covered.

Purpose and Need of Work: The study area is impacted by recurrent storms and hurricanes that damage residential and commercial structures and public facilities. Some property owners and communities have implemented individual solutions and small scale solutions, but the area continues to experience storm damage, flood inundation, and erosion, and the study area lacks a comprehensive solution to widespread flood risks and related erosion. The feasibility study investigated technically feasible, economically justified, and environmentally compliant recommendations for federal participation in flood risk reduction management for the Upper Connecticut River in Vermont study area.

Alternatives: The following proposals that were part of the alternative analysis process were considered as solutions to provide flood risk management within the project area.

Proposed Action: The TSP, which is also the Locally Preferred Plan, consists of the following components:

- Wilmington: Elevate one residential structure and floodproof 25 nonresidential structures.
- Lyndon: Mobile home park, elevate 43 residential structures and floodproof 32 nonresidential structures.
- Brattleboro: Elevate six residential structures and floodproof 25 nonresidential structures.
- Woodstock: Elevate 20 and floodproof 12 nonresidential structures.

No Action Alternative: The USACE would not take any actions to reduce flooding risk to the properties within the study areas.

Additional Information: Additional information may be obtained from the USACE Project Manager, Janet Cote or from the environmental team member, David Oster, Marine Biologist at the address provided below. These individuals may also be reached by phone or email, Ms. Cote at (978) 318-8205 or email at Janet.Cote@usace.army.mil and for David Oster at 978-318-8621 or email at David.A.Oster@usace.army.mil.

Coordination: The proposed work has, or will be coordinated with the following agencies:

Federal:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Geological Survey
Federal Emergency Management Agency

State of Vermont:

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Tribal Governments:

Elnu Abenaki Tribe

Local:

Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission
Windham Regional Planning Commission
Town of Bethel
Hartford Conservation Commission
Windsor Conservation Commission
Windham Conservation Commission
Brattleboro Conservation Commission

Environmental Impacts: A Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment is available for review upon request. The preliminary determination is that an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed project is not required under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This determination will be reviewed in light of facts submitted in response to this notice.

Other Information:

- a. **Local Sponsor:** Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.
- b. **Floodplain Management:** In accordance with Executive Order 11988, the USACE has determined that the proposed work is located within the floodplain, but will not contribute to negative impacts or damages caused by floods.
- c. **Endangered Species:** It is our preliminary determination that the project would have no effects on threatened or endangered species. The Corps is in consultation with the U.S. Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed activity will not significantly affect any species or

critical habitat designated as endangered or threatened pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq).

d. Cultural Resources: The Corps is in coordination with the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

Please bring this notice to the attention of anyone you know to be interested in this project. Comments are invited from all interested parties and should be directed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751, ATTN: Janet Cote; or emailed to nae-pd-pm@usace.army.mil within 30 days of this notice.

October 21, 2020

Date

John A. Atilano II
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Attachments

1. Pertinent Laws, Regulations, and Directives
2. Study Reach Locations within the state of Vermont

Attachment 1

PERTINENT LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND DIRECTIVES

Clean Water Act, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251 et. seq.)

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.)

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 661 et. seq.)

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.)

Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.)

Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et. seq.)

Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460L-12 et. seq.)

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (54 U.S.C. 200301 et. seq.)

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority
Populations and Low Income Populations, 11 February 1994

Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Health Risks and Safety Risks,
21 April 1997

Attachment 2

Figure 1. Study Reach Locations within the state of Vermont

