



# IRENE

*Reflections on  
Weathering the Storm*

## **This Irene Recovery Status Report serves as the fourth and**

final written testimony from the Irene Recovery Office, since its creation following Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011. It builds on previous reports submitted under the leadership of Irene Recovery Officers Neale Lunderville, Sue Minter and Dave Rapaport. Within these pages, you may find evidence of the agility, strength, generosity and courage of Vermonters to recover from the state's most devastating disaster since the Great Flood of 1927.

We are fortunate to have collaborated with numerous authors, photographers, colleagues and community partners to create this report. A full list of contributors can be found at the end of the document.

We wish to acknowledge ALL of Irene's survivors, volunteers, emergency management personnel and all of the community leaders who have contributed to recovery. There are thousands who helped their neighbors and their communities. Our intent here is to acknowledge ALL the heroes and heroines of Tropical Storm Irene. You know who you are, and Vermonters will be forever grateful.

Sincerely,



Ben Rose  
Recovery & Mitigation Chief  
Division of Emergency Management  
& Homeland Security



Katherine Ash  
Interagency Liaison  
Irene Recovery Office

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## **The view from the National Guard helicopter the morning after**

Tropical Storm Irene had roared across Vermont was devastating. Then-Adjutant General Michael Dubie and I looked down on more than 500 miles of state roads destroyed, 200 bridges damaged or ripped off foundations, more than 60,000 homes and businesses without power, 1,000 homes destroyed. Families were grieving lost property and, in some cases, lost loved ones. Entire towns were cut off from the rest of state.

It was an historic moment, one of the most damaging storms in the state's history. Rather than bringing Vermont to its knees, however, the storm actually presented our state with an opportunity—a chance to rebuild stronger, more resilient, and less vulnerable to the wild weather that climate change has wreaked upon our world.

Today those 500 miles of roads are not only open, but in most cases built to better withstand future flooding. Fewer homes remain in flood zones. Culverts are wider and bridges are reinforced. State agencies, local officials, and emergency responders now work together in crisis. We know our neighbors, and we know we can count on them in an emergency.

This report contains the words, numbers, and charts that quantify our recovery, but it is the photographs that display the true lessons left in Irene's wake.

What we also saw from that helicopter two years ago were neighbors helping neighbors, and strangers helping strangers, pick up the pieces of their lives amidst total destruction. We saw National Guard and transportation crews working long hours to reach those stranded by flood waters, deliver medical supplies, food and water. We saw small communities gathering on town greens for meals, children walking unimaginable distances to attend school, and those in areas of the state not impacted by the storm assisting those who were devastated by the storm's passing.

I take great personal pride in the progress documented in this second anniversary report. While I recognize that there is still work to be done, and some Vermonters are still recovering, I know that today our state is stronger and our future brighter than it was when Tropical Storm Irene found us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, looped initial followed by a long horizontal line that tapers to a point.

Peter Shumlin, Governor





GORDON MILLER

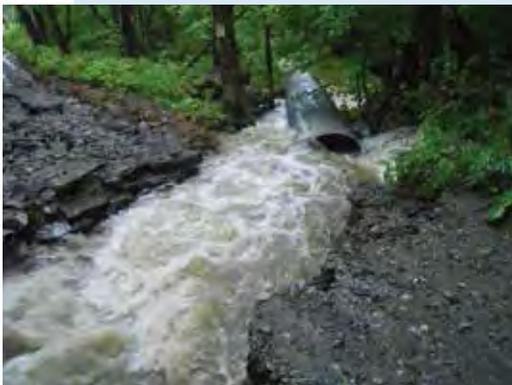
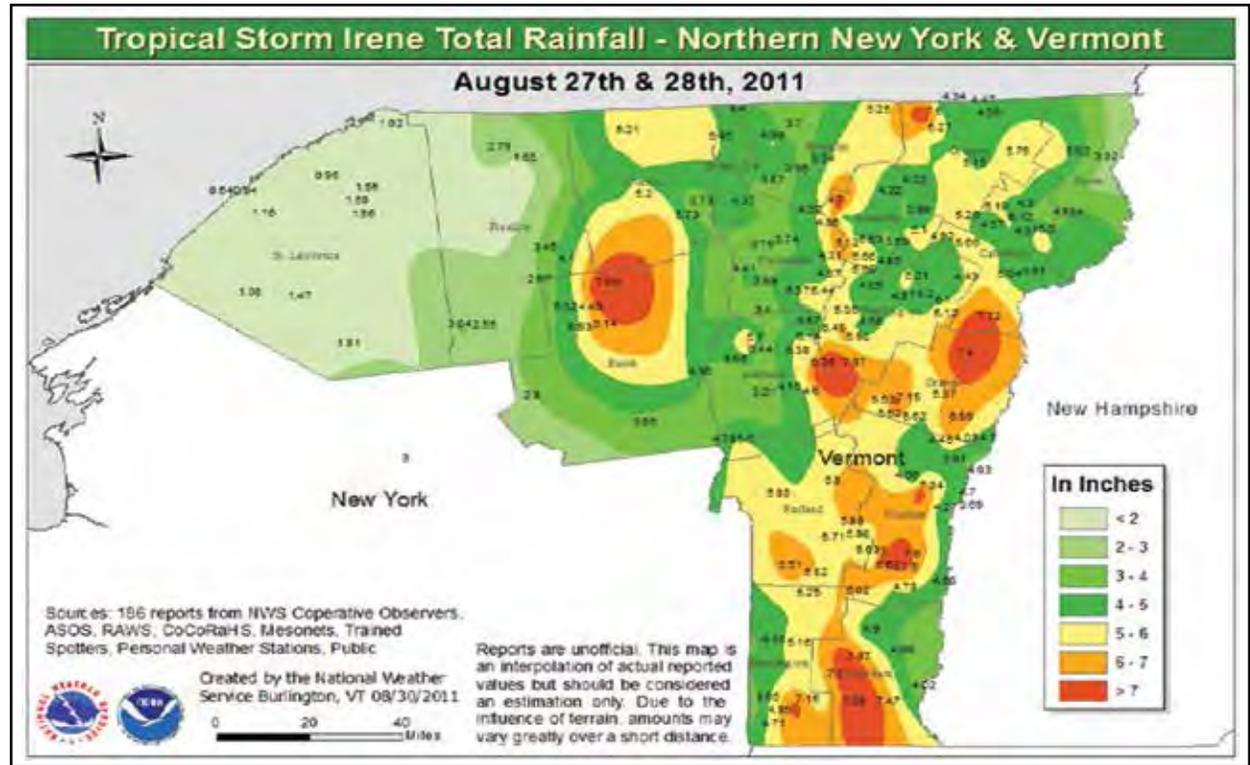
CHAPTER ONE

*August 28, 2011*

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## Hurricane Irene tracked

from New York City north-northeast across the states of New York and Massachusetts before entering Vermont as a Tropical Storm during the evening of August 28, 2011. Throughout the early morning, winds gusted to nearly 60 mph over Vermont, creating waves of four to six feet on Lake Champlain. The National Weather Service reported record-setting rainfall ranging from four to eleven inches throughout the state.





JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



GORDON MILLER



[Opposite, Far Left] Water overwhelms a **Stockbridge** culvert. ■ [Opposite, Top] During Irene, parts of Vermont received more than 7 inches of rainfall in a 2-day period. ■ [Opposite, Center] A propane tank slams into the Taftsville Bridge between **Quechee** and **Woodstock**. ■ [Opposite, Right] A **Strafford** resident captures the rising water at Alger Brook Road.

[Top] One of **Quechee's** best known destinations, Simon Pearce, is flooded by rushing water at the Gorge. ■ [Above] **Waterbury** residents wade through high water at Elm Street towards safety. ■ [Far Left] Flooding on Winooski Street in **Waterbury**; this heavily damaged home was later destroyed. ■ [Left] Water and debris fill the streets of **West Woodstock** at the site of the local Farmer's Market.

## When the sun came up

on August 29th, Vermonters emerged from their safe havens, and gathered to marvel at scenes of epic destruction.

The storm had passed, but 13 communities had been completely cut off. 3,500 homes and businesses were damaged, including 500 mobile homes.

20,000 acres of farmland were under water, 500 miles of state roadway and some 200 bridges were damaged across the state, while nearly 1,000 culverts had been washed away or damaged.

Most tragically, 6 lives had been lost and Irene had become the worst natural disaster to strike Vermont since the Great Flood of 1927.



[Far Left] Along Route 7 in **Brandon**, businesses were destroyed by rushing water and debris. ■ [Top] This home on Water Street in **Bethel** withstood the Flood of 1927, but not Irene. ■ [Left] One of the many railways left damaged from Irene. ■ [Above] **Granville** residents were isolated when normal routes became impassable. Here, a view of Route 100.



LARS GANGE

**[Top Right]** A road sign in **Roxbury** marks the location of an intersection underwater ■ **[Top]** **Rochester** community members were left on “The Island”, after being cut off from Route 100. ■ **[Above]** Major bridge washout on Route 100/30 in front of the **Jamaica** Volunteer Fire Department. ■ **[Right]** A mobile home lies along Route 100 in **Pittsfield**.



TOWN OF ROXBURY

### **SERGIO PEDRINI, Roxbury Resident**

“No one was able to reach our house from the main roads, and it was only after several hours of severe crashing floodwater rushing down Tracy Hill Road that we could reach our closest neighbor’s property. By then, our elderly neighbors had been rescued by a bucket loader tractor that brought them to safety. I got my camera to take pictures, knowing people would not believe the devastation without seeing it for themselves.”

**Throughout Vermont,** homes and cherished contents that had been in families for generations literally drifted away.

In Wilmington, Dot's Restaurant, a community landmark, had been lifted into the air and set down in a nearby parking lot.

In Rockingham, the obliteration of one of Vermont's treasured covered bridges, the Bartonsville Bridge, was captured on video and shown in national media for weeks afterwards.

The West Hartford General Store, home to years of community events and a favorite stop of Appalachian Trail hikers, had been torn to pieces.

Just north, in Rochester, horrified residents watched as human remains floated away from the Woodlawn Cemetery when raging waters cut into the banks of the Nason Brook.



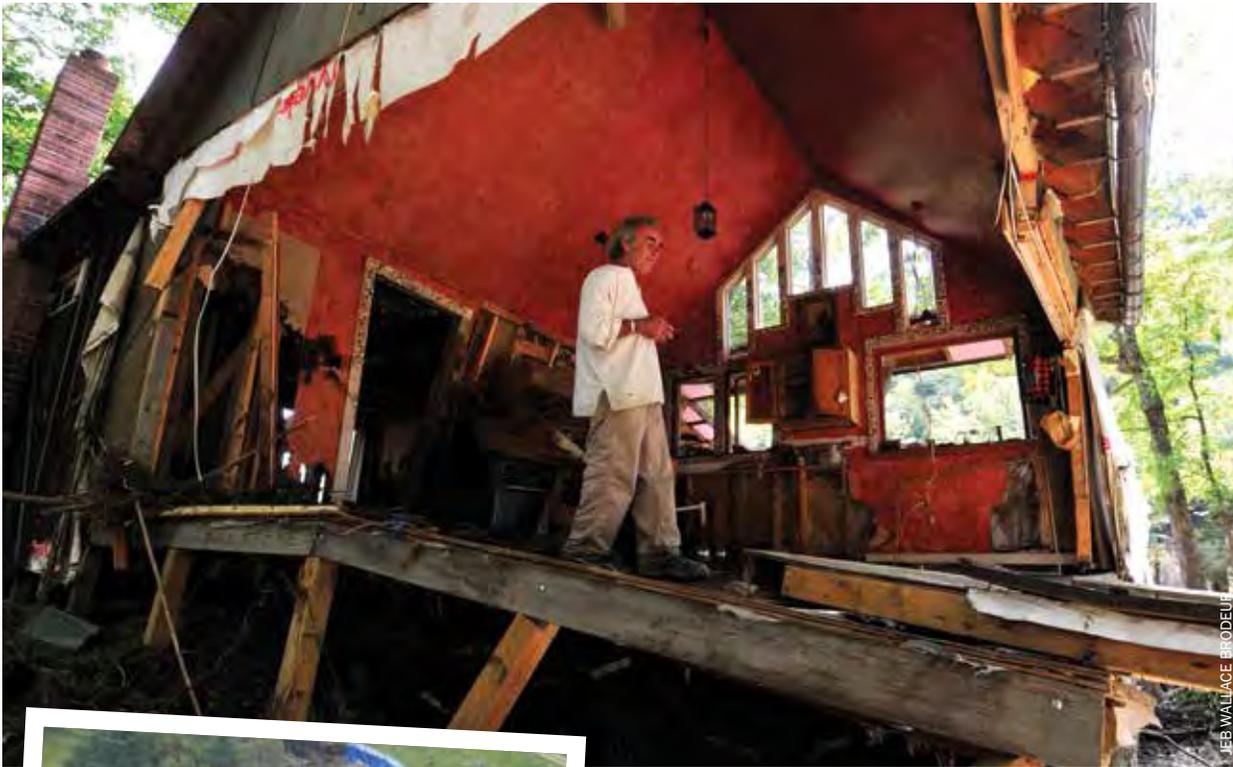
JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



LARS GANGE



[Top] Family photos found among the rubble in Middlesex. ■ [Left] An aerial view of homes along Route 100 after the raging White River tore through Rochester. ■ [Above] The remains of a mobile home in Danby rests on stilts.



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



(SERIES) SUE HAMMOND

### SUSAN HAMMOND, Resident, Chester

“When we heard the awful sound of the metal roof twisting we knew our bridge had lost its battle against the storm. When she went, she went so gracefully, the southwest side of the bank collapsed and the far end of the bridge dipped into the raging river. A second later the bridge pulled away from the bank and the covered bridge that had been the gateway to Bartonsville for more than 140 years floated down the river, collapsing into a pile a half mile downstream.”



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[Top] A **Stockbridge** resident scans the remains of his home. ■ [Top Right] Sue Hammond captured these remarkable images of the **Bartonsville** Bridge as it became overwhelmed by rushing water and buckled into the river below. ■ [Above] **Rochester's** Woodlawn Cemetery is guarded against further destruction. ■ [Right] Residents look over a destroyed bridge in **Moretown**.

## Ultimately, over 60,000

homes and businesses in Vermont were left without electric power all across the state, with the highest concentration of damage in southeastern Vermont. Water shortages also occurred in some communities, as public water supplies were contaminated from oil and propane tanks washed downstream. There were new islands of debris, containing uprooted trees, mobile homes, cars, and red barn doors. As town officials struggled to comprehend the extent of the damage, Governor Peter Shumlin directed town officials to do whatever was necessary to protect lives.



[Far Left] A survivor stands outside one of the many flood distribution centers established around the state. ■ [Top] Damage done to Route 14 near Welch's Hardware closed the road between **Royalton Village** and **South Royalton**. Downed trees and power lines left many without power and roads impassable. ■ [Left] Collapsed Base Lodge at Killington Ski Resort in **Killington**. ■ [Above] Roads were unable to withstand the pressure of water and debris. Here, a section of Route 7 is washed out in **Rutland**.



THE HERALD/BOB EDDY



**JOE FLYNN,**  
**Director, Division of Emergency**  
**Management & Homeland Security**

“When I finally left the Incident Command Center on Saturday, September 3rd with two colleagues and drove into Newfane, I frankly could not believe what I was seeing. Piles of debris towered over our vehicle... and outside this house was a woman with a small card table. Every couple of minutes an arm would extend from the second floor window and hand her something. She would wipe it off, look at it and place it on the little table. I sat and watched this person take stock in the few recognizable pieces she had left. After the pace of our work and the shell shock of what we were seeing, it simply brought you to tears.”



LARS GANGE

**[Top Right]** A home in **Pittsfield** rests at a tilt along Route 100. ■ **[Top]** Standing where his kitchen used to be, David Atkinson sorts through the wreckage of his Riford Brook home in **Braintree**. ■ **[Above]** Devastation along Route 11 between **Chester** and **Reedville**, as seen on September 12, 2011. ■ **[Right]** Roads and river silt await cleanup and reconstruction.



## The Waterbury State

Office Complex (WSOC), home to the Vermont State Hospital, workplace hub of many state agencies, and a vital part of the central Vermont economy, was under water.

State Hospital officials had watched the Winooski River surge, and with help from members of the State Police and National Guard, braved the rising water to relocate 51 hospital patients from the ground floor of the building to other state facilities.

Meanwhile, the state agencies displaced from their offices adapted quickly to challenging new working conditions and maintained day to day operations. The State Emergency Operations Center had to be evacuated, and federal and state emergency personnel worked frantically to relocate the state command center to Burlington.



[Top] The Waterbury State Office Complex is still underwater the day after the storm. ■ [Left] Downtown Waterbury lies still waiting for the water to recede. ■ [Above] Governor Shumlin and other officials provide situation updates at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).



**ROSS NAGY,  
State Coordinating Officer**

“We always say ‘You need to prepare for the Big One.’ Well, this certainly was the Big One! During the initial Irene response, it was an added challenge to maintain the necessary response and recovery support for Vermonters while displaced from our Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Learning from that, we are taking advantage of Hazard Mitigation funding from Irene to flood-proof the EOC and other critical public safety functions.”



**[Top Right]** FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate (right) reviews the damage to **Ludlow** with Governor Peter Shumlin and General Dick Harris, Brigadier General, Vermont National Guard. ■ **[Top]** State and volunteer organizations active at the Emergency Operations Center. ■ **[Above]** A kayaker floats on Route 2 in **Bolton** on Monday morning. ■ **[Right]** Standing water remains in **East Pittsford** on Wednesday, three days after the storm.

## The Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA), which had been wrapping up its recovery efforts from May 2011 flooding, reactivated for Irene and deployed nearly 500 reservists to Vermont within days. The Vermont Air National Guard positioned 300 of its members to deliver commodities, including food, water, and supplies, to communities that had been cut off, and helped to repair damaged roads.

In all, 225 of Vermont's 251 towns reported damage to public infrastructure.



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



LARS GANGE

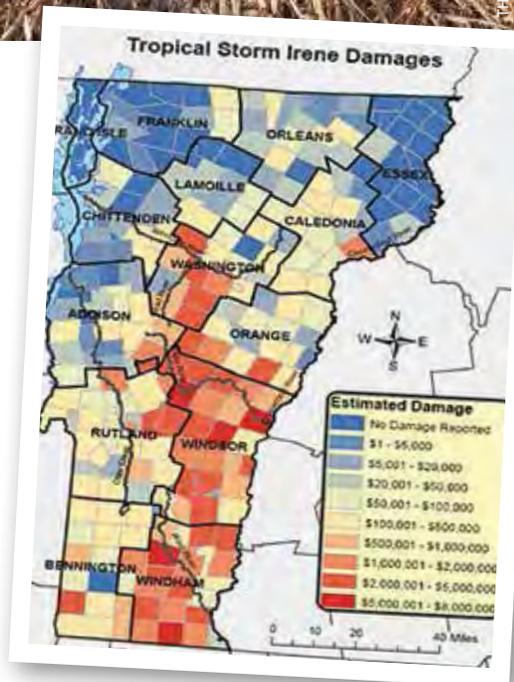


LARS GANGE



MARK COSMA

[Far Left] In **Cavendish**, National Guard soldiers arrive on the scene of a massive hole on Route 131. ■ [Top] Silt deposited across fields and public roads, as seen here in **Stockbridge**, left a heavy burden on locals for the massive cost of cleanup. ■ [Left] This farm on Middle Road in **North Clarendon** was one of many damaged as a result of washout and silt deposit. ■ [Above] Volunteers help unload supplies delivered by the Air National Guard to isolated communities.



**[Top Right]** A car is filled with sediment after Irene ravages River Road in **Stockbridge**. Beyond the car, the home was also destroyed. ■ **[Top]** Farmers and friends comfort one another as they walk across some of the 135 acres of feed corn destroyed at Liberty Hill Farm in **Rochester**. ■ **[Above]** The morning after the storm, a woman walks in **West Braintree**, listening to the sound of water spilling over broken asphalt and across littered front yards. ■ **[Right]** A map shows the most severely damaged communities.

**FATHER CALEB ABETTI,  
Pastor of St. Jacob’s of Alaska  
Orthodox Church in Northfield Falls**

“I toured the river front; uprooted trees and reformed landscape is all there is, sad to say. Strange huge objects here and there. Then there were two doves, two white doves, fluttering around.

Did they belong to the owners? What were they doing out?... What are these white doves? In the flood aftermath what has been the most alive is the piercing quality (the white of a bird against this dark backdrop) of the human spirit... the presence of this grace is abundant here today and probably will be for a while.”

*Father Abetti gave permission to share his flood journal with Voices in the Flood, which was kind enough to share this submission with us.*

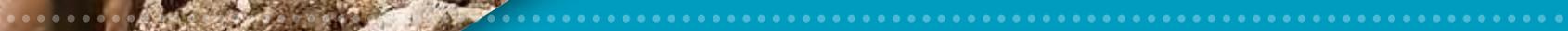




THE HERALD/TIM CALABRO

CHAPTER TWO

## *How Vermonters Responded*



## Here, we invite Sue

Minter to pick up the narrative. “The day after Irene swept through Vermont, the weather was warm, sunny and still. All at once, Vermonters came to rescue each other. Volunteers showed up in towns by the thousands. And they kept coming.

“Over the next year, Vermonters housed, clothed and fed their neighbors; they raised money, organized response and recovery missions, mucked basements, and rebuilt homes, businesses, farms, rivers and roadways. These volunteers—and many of you were among them—not only gave help to those in need, they gave hope. Hope that we would get through this disaster. Hope that tomorrow would come, and that no one would be left alone.”

*Sue Minter was Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Transportation when Irene hit. In January 2012, Governor Shumlin appointed her to lead the Irene Recovery effort. Minter returned to her position at VTrans in January 2013.*



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



GORDON MILLER

[Top] Volunteers arrived by the thousands, from near and far, to help in any way possible. ■ [Left] University of Vermont students participating in a course on disaster recovery assist a homeowner in the Mad River Valley. ■ [Above] Volunteers came in all shapes and sizes, as seen here at St. Leo's Hall in Waterbury, where volunteers served meals for weeks following the flood.



[Top Right] Residents comfort one another amidst the rubble. ■ [Top] Norwich Cadets spent their first weeks of the fall semester helping Northfield and surrounding communities cope with the aftermath of Irene. ■ [Above] At the Dog River Farm in Berlin, volunteers help to salvage remaining crops for the fall harvest. ■ [Right] Volunteers take a break from cleanup in Mendon.

**ANDREA VARNEY,  
Volunteer Coordinator,  
Rutland County Long Term  
Recovery Committee**

“From chainsawing debris, to carrying buckets of mud, moving belongings, and making lunches, I have witnessed such caring and compassion. It has not only been about the work that these volunteers have done for Irene survivors, it has also been about these survivors feeling cared for. In many cases, the volunteers and survivors share similar experiences and have found healing in reaching out to one another.”

**To coordinate the**

massive recovery effort, Governor Peter Shumlin appointed Neale Lunderville, Green Mountain Power executive and leader within the Douglas administration, to act as Irene Recovery Officer.

In this position, Lunderville helped mobilize the recovery, ensuring that funding flowed and government responded effectively; from the heroic VTrans emergency road crews that managed to restore more than 500 miles of damaged road in less than four months, to the emergency housing task force that ensured no Irene survivors were left without shelter.

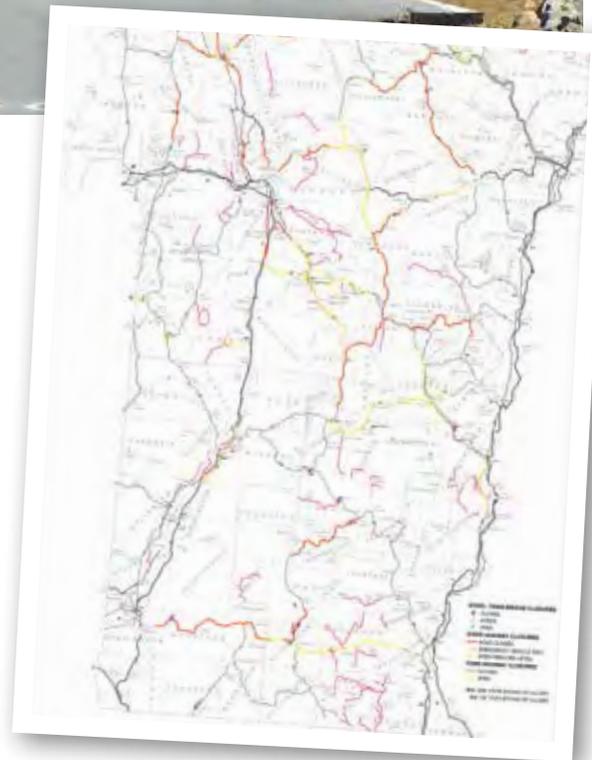


LARS GANGE

**[Far Left]** An ambulance makes its way across a recently repaired road near **Hancock**. ■ **[Top]** An aerial view captures the challenge faced by repair crews to restore access to isolated communities. ■ **[Left]** Repair and flight crews collaborate to assess the reconstruction needs near **Clarendon**. ■ **[Above]** This structure, known as “Bridge 11,” was one of hundreds of infrastructure projects that relied on extraordinary engineering to repair and rebuild.



**[Top Right]** Repair crews begin the process of rebuilding public infrastructure upon the altered landscape. ■ **[Top]** VTrans crews arrive on scene to repair a significant washout on Route 131 in **Cavendish** Canyon. ■ **[Above]** Another washout in **Weathersfield** leaves only the shoulder of the road intact. ■ **[Right]** A map displays the status of damaged roads (in red) as of September 1, 2011.



**SUE MINTER,  
Deputy Secretary,  
Agency of Transportation**

“VTrans’ ability to rebuild over 500 miles of damaged roadways required continuous innovations and extraordinary effort: swift action from Agency staff; a strong organization utilizing the incident command system; unprecedented coordination with partners, and a never-say-die determination that typifies the VTrans’ Operations motto ‘service beyond self.’”

## Lunderville's team

coordinated with state agencies and congressional representatives to obtain and implement a vast array of federal and state resources. The alphabet soup contained the dedicated work of hundreds; hats off to the following state and federal agencies:

- A of A Agency of Administration
- ACCD Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- AOT Agency of Transportation
- AHS Agency of Human Services
- ANR Agency of Natural Resources
- ARNG Army National Guard
- BGS Buildings and General Services
- DOL Department of Labor
- EPA Environmental Protection Agency
- ESFs Emergency Support Functions
- FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency
- NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
- SBA Small Business Administration
- USACE US Army Corps of Engineers
- USDA US Department of Agriculture
- VEM Vermont Emergency Management

and many more.



**[Top]** Governor Shumlin addresses members of the Irene Coordination Team, made up of senior state agency officials and voluntary agency partners, on long term recovery goals. ■ **[Left]** Members of the VTrans District 2 Office in **Dummerston** gather after the reopening of critical infrastructure in southern Vermont. ■ **[Above]** Recovery requires assistance from all partners, as seen here in September 2012 when the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) Moose 5 Team was deployed to Vermont to assist in repair and rebuild projects.



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



THE HERALD/BOB EDDY



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



[Top Right] Members of the Riford Brook community in Braintree gather for an emergency meeting on August 30. ■ [Top] Rochester residents listen to town and state officials discussing the many steps that lie ahead to address their recovery. ■ [Above] The American Red Cross was one of many volunteer agencies active in the Irene response and recovery; here, ARC volunteers work with town officials to assess damage and establish shelters for displaced residents. ■ [Right] Deputy Transportation Secretary Sue Minter thanks members of the Vermont National Guard for their assistance in restoring public infrastructure with a presentation of their troop numbers on Vermont route signs.

**NOELLE MACKAY,  
Commissioner,  
Department of Housing &  
Community Development**

“The Community Recovery Partnership (CRP) was designed to bring local, regional, state and federal partners together to better understand the issues facing survivors and begin to lay the building blocks for recovery. The thirteen meetings provided a venue to hear directly from those impacted and involved. The stories, ideas and suggested improvements shared by over 500 participants helped to shape and mold the ways state agencies and partners approach recovery.”

## To provide long term

support for survivors, nine Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRCs), as well as many other community organizations, spontaneously developed in the hardest hit areas of Vermont. The philanthropic community led the way for supplemental assistance, with the Vermont Community Foundation serving as the nucleus of dozens of fundraising efforts aimed at bridging the gaps between recovery dollars.



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



GORDON MILLER



THE HERALD/TIM CALABRO



[Far Left] A map shows the service areas of the nine Long Term Recovery Committees that continue to assist survivors. ■ [Top] Nearby towns worked together to set up donation centers to distribute life-sustaining supplies to isolated communities, such as the one seen here in **Rochester**. ■ [Left] General managers from three Major League Baseball teams came together at the VTC campus in **Randolph Center** for a fundraising event benefiting Vermont farms that were flooded during Irene. ■ [Above] Even the youngest Vermonters pitched in. This lemonade stand raised money for the **Waterbury Good Neighbor Fund**.



## Repairing & Rebuilding Vermont's Homes

Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRCs) were created following Irene to enable survivors to access a network of available resources, including funding, disaster case management, and volunteer and construction coordination for disaster-caused unmet needs. In February 2012, Vermont became one of the first states to receive a FEMA Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) Grant—which provided funds to local Community Action Agencies to hire case managers for the local LTRCs to assist individuals with long term recovery.

In Fall 2012, the need for more Construction and Volunteer Coordinators to support the rebuilding effort became evident; and thus, the DCMP collaborated with the Central Vermont Community Action Council and FEMA to hire 10 additional coordinators with state funds. In collaboration with LTRCs and the Vermont Disaster Relief Fund, disaster case managers made enormous progress in serving affected families; though, it is expected that up to 100 cases will remain after August 2013 as a result of complexities including intricate grant programs, home buyouts, and overall lack of resources.

### SANDRA DALY, Chair, Southeastern Vermont Long Term Recovery Committee

“The ‘behind the scenes’ organizational aspects of disaster recovery provided quite a learning curve for many in Windham County. Blessed with social service agencies, 27 dedicated town governments, active faith communities and generous citizens, we experienced the power of working together, and will do so again more easily.”

*Chart reflects data reported as of 7/29/13 and does not include case management activities conducted outside of the Disaster Case Management Program.*

<b>\$23.3M</b>	Awarded by FEMA Individual & Households Program (IHP)
<b>\$17.6M</b>	Loaned by Small Business Assistance to Individuals and Families
<b>\$3.4M</b>	Allocated by Vermont Disaster Relief Fund (VDRF)
<b>\$2.4M</b>	Awarded by FEMA Disaster Case Management Program
<b>\$1.6M</b>	Provided by Department of Labor for Disaster Recovery Coordinators
<b>\$400,000</b>	Provided by Agency of Human Services for Disaster Case Management
<b>\$250,000</b>	Provided by Budget Adjustment Act for Disaster Recovery Coordinators
<b>3642/7252</b>	Eligible Individuals/Households Registered with FEMA for Individual Assistance
<b>522/705</b>	Individual Cases Closed/Opened by Disaster Case Managers
<b>88/513</b>	Remaining Home Repair Projects/Total Repair Projects

**Simultaneously, in**

partnership with Vermont's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the Vermont Disaster Relief Fund (VDRF) was established – the region's first private nonprofit fund for disaster recovery. With a \$1 million leadership gift from Tony Pomerleau to assist residents of mobile homes, VDRF successfully raised over \$8 million to aid families and individuals. Meanwhile, unique programs were developed to serve Vermont's most vulnerable residents, such as the mobile home condemnation program that allowed nearly \$1 million in supplemental funds to be made available to residents of destroyed mobile homes.



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LARS GANGE



JEB WALLACE BRODEUR



LARS GANGE

[Far Left] In **Plymouth** on 100A a mobile home was all but consumed by the raging river. ■ [Top] Norwich Cadet Benjamin Kroll beholds the power of the Dog River as he stands in the flooded basement of this home in **Northfield Falls**. ■ [Left] Residents begin to dig out from the floodwaters in **West Bridgewater**. ■ [Above] Local and faith-based volunteers help clean out the remains of a **Duxbury** mobile home.



**[Top]** Lt. Governor Phil Scott kicks off demolition and removal of flood-destroyed mobile homes in Weston’s Mobile Home Park in **Berlin**. ■ **[Bottom]** Shortly after Irene, the Stratton Foundation began receiving contributions from generous donors. The Foundation took on case management for many affected residents in hard-hit communities such as **Jamaica**, and continues to work with the state and local communities to assist with the financial match for the buyout of destroyed properties. Shown here is the Miller Family after having moved into their new home with help from the Foundation.

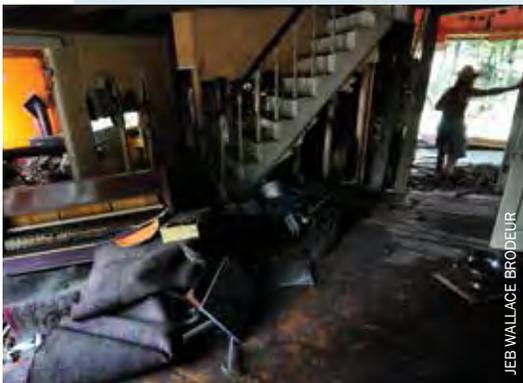
## Vermont Witnesses the Vulnerability of Mobile Home Parks

While mobile homes provide an affordable homeownership option for tens of thousands of Vermonters, their location and relatively low resistance to water damage meant mobile home residents were disproportionately impacted by Irene. Further, the fact that mobile home owners own the structures they live in, but not the land those structures sit on, presented a unique set of challenges in terms of recovery—challenges that were largely overcome through creative collaboration. In coordination with the Governor’s Office, the Department of Public Safety, the Vermont Disaster Relief Fund and FEMA, the Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD) implemented a program to condemn destroyed mobile homes, thereby opening up an additional \$1 million in FEMA Individual Assistance benefits for mobile home residents. Lt. Governor Phil Scott assembled a team of public and private sector partners to dispose of 83 flood-destroyed mobile homes—an expense not covered by FEMA or insurance—at no cost to homeowners and without using any taxpayer dollars. Looking ahead to the future, ACCD worked closely with lawmakers, the University of Vermont, and the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity’s Mobile Home Program to make funds available for new financing programs and to improve the disaster resiliency of homes in mobile home parks. To learn more, visit <http://www.cvceo.org/htm/housing/mobilehome/>

7%	Vermont housing stock in mobile homes
15%	Irene-damage homes that were mobile homes
17	Mobile home parks flooded
14	Mobile home parks that had homes destroyed
226	Mobile homes flooded
133	Mobile homes destroyed
525	Mobile homes that received FEMA assistance

## The disaster damage

was so severe that President Obama authorized a 90 percent federal cost share, reducing the financial burden on small communities. For only the third time in its history, FEMA implemented the Disaster Case Management Program, which provided \$2.4 million to Vermont for staff resources to work with Long Term Recovery Committees in support of survivors. Additionally, Vermont's congressional delegation helped to secure over \$38 million in Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds to resolve a variety of unmet community needs.



[Far Left] After the storm, many survivors, including this [Stockbridge](#) homeowner, found it challenging and frustrating to navigate the complex network of assistance programs available to them. ■ [Top] Sandy's Restaurant owner Chandra Aldrich inspects the damage to her business in [Sharon](#). Businesses like Chandra's received robust volunteer support to clean up the mess, and relied on local business development programs and federal funds to help them rebuild. ■ [Left] Life did not stop when the roads washed out; here, [Rochester](#) resident Janni Jacobs gets creative in her commute to her job as a school teacher in Braintree. ■ [Above] In [Waitsfield](#), a living room is uprooted, displaying the damage to its contents.



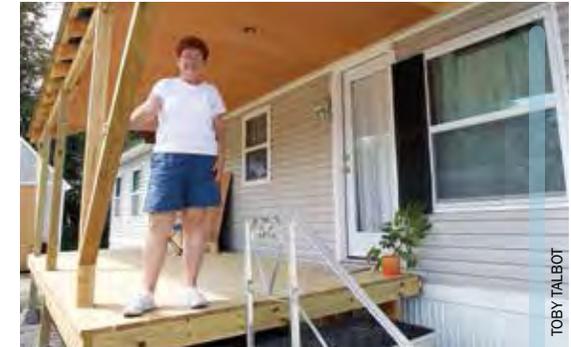
CVOEO MOBILE HOME PROJECT



**[Top Right]** Sandy Gaffney stands proudly on the porch of her new mobile home in [Berlin](#). ■ **[Top]** Damaged and destroyed mobile homes stand waiting to be demolished at Whalley Trailer Park in [Waterbury](#). ■ **[Above]** Officials stand in a new mobile home prototype, designed for increased efficiency and resiliency against the elements. ■ **[Right]** Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) Construction Coordinators Chris Eaton and Tyler Maas, members of the Central Vermont LTRC and Southeastern Vermont LTRC, at work rebuilding a home in [Marlboro](#).



PETER EDLUND



TOBY TALBOT

**JEN HOLLAR,**  
**Deputy Commissioner,**  
**Department of Housing &**  
**Community Development**

“None of the countless inspiring stories of Irene has touched me more than that of Sandra Gaffney. Sandy lost her home and neighborhood when Weston’s Mobile Home Park was washed away. As she traveled her road to recovery, she became an advocate for not only herself but for other survivors as well. From the sodden ground outside her destroyed home to the halls of the State House, Sandy spoke on behalf of and helped direct help to mobile homeowners across the state. Now, Sandy not only has a new home she likes more than the one she lost, but she has also found her voice.”

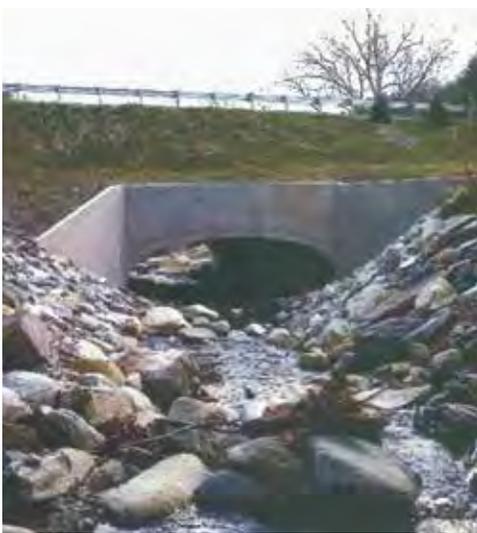
**In January of 2012,**

when the Legislature returned to Montpelier, Neale Lunderville and his team presented the comprehensive “Irene Recovery Report, A Stronger Future.” The publication was organized around six distinct areas of focus for long term recovery:

- Support Vermonters Affected by Irene;
- Ensure Economic Recovery & Resiliency;
- Foster Community Recovery;
- Rebuild Our Roads, Bridges and Rails;
- Manage Environmental Impact; and,
- Prepare for Future Disasters.



[Far Left] Pictured here is evidence of Irene's effects on our environment, as seen in the dead vegetation from high water at the Ball Mountain Dam in Jamaica. ■ [Top] Governor Shumlin walks atop an exposed culvert. Enlarging the size and capacity of road culverts was one of the many strategies outlined by the state to ensure greater resiliency in future precipitation and flooding events. ■ [Left] Engineering crews in Bennington survey local streambeds. ■ [Above] The 1836 Country Store in Wilmington, heavily damaged in Irene, reopened in less than two months. The store's swift comeback was an important milestone in the town's recovery.



**[Top]** The remains of a bridge in **Townshend**, after immense water pressure washed away the road and retaining walls after the culvert failed. ■ **[Bottom]** The same bridge and roadway a year later, with an upsized box culvert completed with Hazard Mitigation funding. Initially, FEMA denied full funding for this culvert upgrade, but the town appealed, and the decision was reversed. As a result, additional federal funding became available to reimburse towns throughout the state for approximately two dozen other box culvert upgrades.

## Towns Rebuild Roads & Bridges While Mitigating Future Damage

The majority of damage from Tropical Storm Irene was to transportation infrastructure, including culverts and bridges. Approximately two-thirds of the repairs to these structures included upgrades to make the damaged elements more resilient in the future. Some upgrades were made possible by Federal Hazard Mitigation funding, while others were done to comply with local codes and standards.

To date, state and local communities have received over \$575 million in federal assistance to properly rebuild infrastructure. Together, the Agency of Transportation, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, regional planning commissions, and local leaders are seizing opportunities created by Irene to make damaged infrastructure elements better able to withstand future flood events.

These Vermont towns incurred the highest costs from public infrastructure damage:

<b>\$5.1M</b>	BETHEL	<b>\$3.2M</b>	CAVENDISH
<b>\$4.9M</b>	JAMAICA	<b>\$2.9M</b>	GRAFTON
<b>\$4.3M</b>	STOCKBRIDGE	<b>\$2.7M</b>	ROCHESTER
<b>\$4.2M</b>	WOODSTOCK	<b>\$2.4M</b>	WINDSOR
<b>\$4.0M</b>	HALIFAX	<b>\$2.3M</b>	NEWFANE
<b>\$3.3M</b>	SHREWSBURY	<b>\$2.1M</b>	KILLINGTON

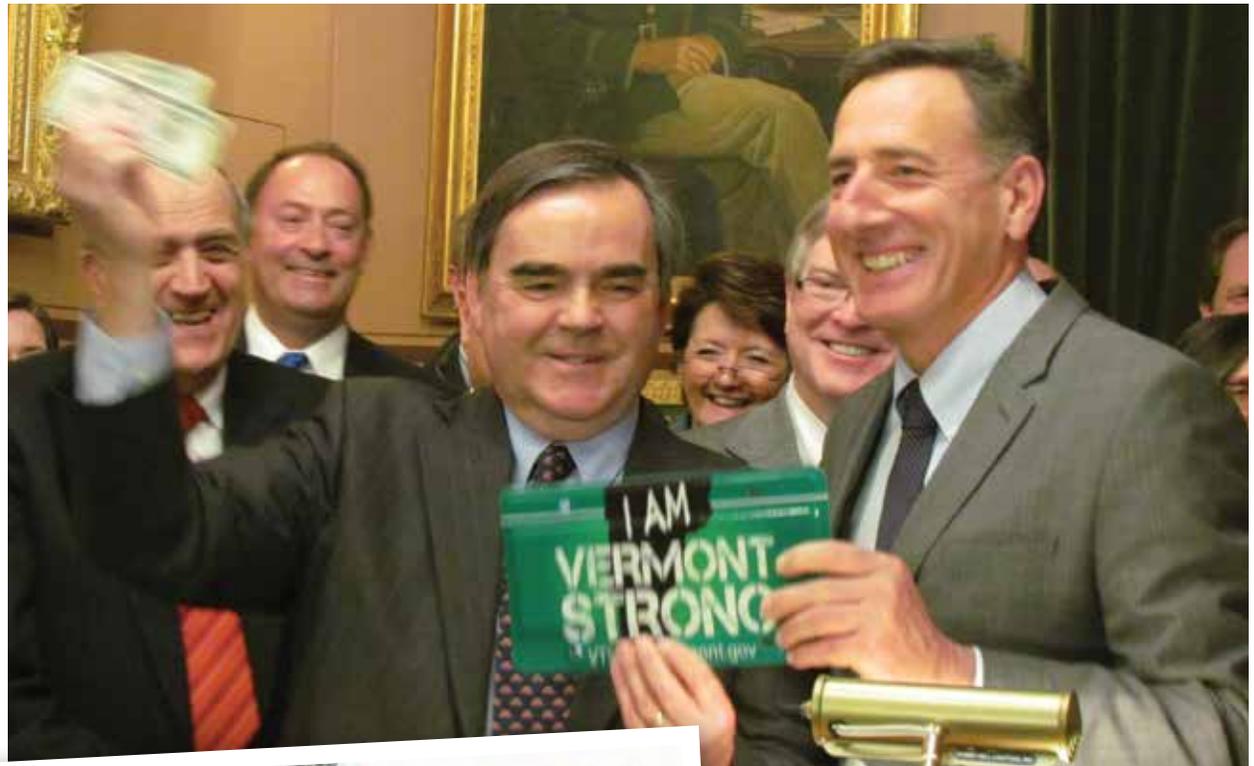
### PETER GREGORY, Executive Director, Two-Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission

“TRORC has been working with 28 towns over a 3 year period, to update their Hazard Mitigation Plans... plans which are critical in identifying hazards and areas of potential danger. The lessons learned from Tropical Storm Irene are being integrated by town planners and emergency responders into these plans to help prevent and mitigate future disasters.”

## During the ensuing

months, a symbol emerged to represent the Vermont spirit. Rutland natives, Eric Mallette and Lyz Tomsuden, created the “I Am Vermont Strong” image with the simple intention of producing good energies out of the disaster. Shortly thereafter, the Legislature enacted various new laws to address issues related to Irene, including a bill authorizing the display of their symbol in commemorative “I Am Vermont Strong” license plates on private and commercial vehicles, with proceeds to benefit recovery.

Structural changes were made within state government to ensure a fluid approach to managing complex programs, including moving the Public Assistance program from the Agency of Transportation to the Department of Public Safety’s Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.



[Top] Governor Shumlin and DMV Commissioner Robert Ide showcase the VT Strong license plates after the Legislature enacted a bill to allow their commemorative display on vehicles for two years after Irene. ■ [Left] State and local transportation and public safety officials celebrate the reopening of Route 4 in Killington. ■ [Above] Bennington Police Chief Paul Doucette stands with members of the Vermont State Police and Bennington Police Department to recognize the heroic efforts of the community in responding to the disaster.



GORDON MILLER



MARK BOSMA



FEMA

[Top Right] Business recovery programs were created to help small businesses, such as Miller Machine in [Bethel](#) (pictured here, with owners Terri and John Hodgdon). ■ [Top] [Waterbury](#) residents meet with representatives from the town, Salvation Army, and Hope International shortly after the flood. ■ [Above] Emergency Management personnel review recovery plans. ■ [Right] Collaboration between agencies generated innovative projects, such as this FEMA Multi-Family Rental Repair Program, which restored this building in [Barre](#) to create affordable housing for displaced survivors.



THE HERALD/BOB EDDY

**JOSH HANFORD,  
Director, Vermont Community  
Development Program**

“From the very beginning constant communication was essential. It is a very complicated process and working harder and faster doesn’t necessarily speed it up! Finally, families are beginning to close this chapter in their lives, but everyone involved has learned that disaster recovery is an endurance sport!”



yet it will always remain a graceful and  
presence in our town.  
-Cristina Pellechio

RECOGNITION  
VOLUNTEER

RECORDING  
CREW  
2012

CHAPTER THREE

*What We Have Learned...*

## Rivers need their space.

## We must inventory and better understand our vulnerabilities.

## Out of crisis, comes opportunity.

Vermonters have accomplished a great deal together in the past two years, and we have learned. Above all else, however, we have remained committed to the goal of building back stronger than we were before the storm.



**[Far Left]** The **Waterbury** community worked with the Rozalia Project on Green Up Day in 2012 to finish riverside cleanup. ■ **[Top]** Route 4 in **Mendon** displays the destructive power of roadside rivers. ■ **[Left]** A small convoy of ATVs manages to navigate a route out of their isolated community. The community then elected to seek, build, and blaze a safer ATV route for the future. ■ **[Above]** Reflections from the Floodgates Project displays the opportunity Irene provided for Vermonters to make new connections.

REBUILD WATERBURY

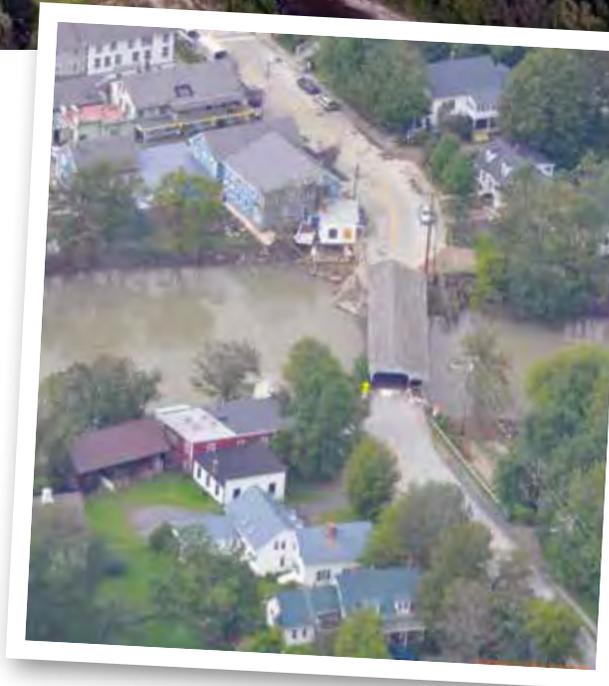
THE HERALD/BOB EDDY



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



**[Top Right]** In August 2013, community members in Londonderry gathered to discuss the re-visioning, reuse, and redesign of buyout properties in the floodplain in the Village of Londonderry. ■ **[Top]** 40 acres of land is being acquired and conserved by the Town of Bristol to allow for overflow from nearby rivers. ■ **[Above]** In Waitsfield, stream bank stabilization and tree planting along the Mad River will allow the area to better withstand future flooding events. ■ **[Right]** The Mad River crested at over 19 feet in the Village Center, a mark just shy of the 1927 flood. The Waitsfield Covered Bridge was not destroyed, but did suffer damage to its abutments, and many village businesses were heavily damaged.



WINDHAM REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

**DAVID MEARS,  
Commissioner, Department of  
Environmental Conservation**

“Irene reminded us that rivers flowing through Vermont communities have tremendous power to wreak havoc. At the same time, we saw that when we give rivers room to spill out over fields, forests and wetlands, the immense power of a flooding river can be substantially tempered before it inflicts costly damage to homes and businesses in town centers. Vermont’s state agencies are working with communities, regional planning commissions, federal agencies, businesses, land trusts and others in a partnership to target conservation efforts so that we protect these critical natural assets.”

**In January 2013, the** state broke ground on a new psychiatric facility in Berlin, as part of a new regionally based mental health system to replace the old Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury. The state and FEMA have worked closely together to maximize federal funding eligibility. That partnership has continued with planning for the return of the Waterbury State Office Complex (WSOC), expected to reopen to state employees in 2015.

The Agency of Administration made a commitment to ongoing preparedness, supporting a General Fund allocation to the Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security for more robust emergency response capacity within state government in the future.



**[Top]** The future Waterbury State Office Complex, designed with resilience in mind, moves the Complex's critical facilities out of the floodway. ■ **[Left]** Construction at the new State Hospital in Berlin provides the opportunity for a more modern approach to caring for individuals with mental illness. ■ **[Above]** Federal and state officials break ground at the site in Berlin in 2013.



**[Top]** A schematic of the future State Hospital in **Berlin** highlights outdoor spaces, recreation facilities, and the feeling of community created by a central courtyard. The new hospital is one of many opportunities for improvement created by Irene's destruction. ■ **[Bottom]** Construction continues at Berlin. The crew broke ground for the new facility on January 8, 2013. Officials expect the structures will be mostly completed by May 2014, with anticipated occupancy by staff and patients in June 2014.

## Waterbury State Office Complex & Vermont State Hospital

The repair and improvement of the Waterbury State Office Complex will be the largest construction project ever undertaken by the state. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been a strong and invaluable financial partner, supporting relocation of the Vermont State Hospital. The Complex has been re-designed with resilience in mind, maintaining the historical integrity of the core buildings, but adding and remodeling in anticipation of future flooding. In January 2013, the state broke ground on a new 25-bed psychiatric hospital located in Berlin, one component of the new regionally based mental-health system that also includes facilities in Rutland, Middlesex, Morrisville and Brattleboro. As we proceed with construction, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Mark Landry acknowledges that "Tropical Storm Irene was the 'perfect storm' event for Waterbury and the State Office Complex. To avoid having this same problem in the future, a lot of puzzle pieces needed to come together...through teamwork we have put those pieces together."

**\$198,000,000**

Estimated total project cost including: stabilization, reconstruction and renovation of Complex; new State Hospital in Berlin, upgrades to regional mental health facilities, and renovations to house ANR at National Life

**1,500**

State employees who worked at the Waterbury complex, pre-Irene

**1,200**

State employees capacity at the reconstructed complex

**Aug-2013/Dec-2015**

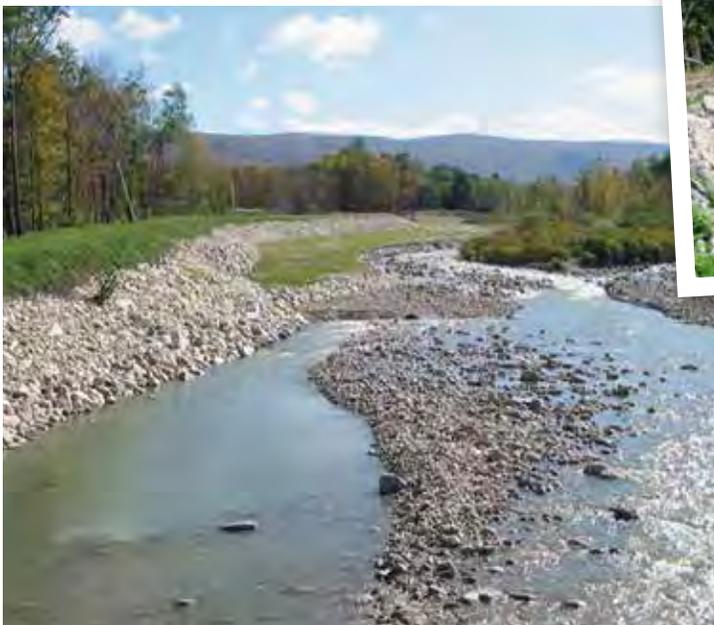
Deconstruction begun / Expected completion of the Waterbury State Office Complex

## FAUNA HURLEY AND MK MONLEY, Revitalize Waterbury

"Waterbury businesses such as restaurants, gift shops, hair salons, car repair shops and drug stores were heavily impacted by the loss of workers at the Complex. On average, businesses lost between 20-50% of their customer base and many are still struggling. However, these business owners continue to remain open and many are hopeful that if they can get by for the next few years, the influx of the expected 900 workers to the rebuilt State Complex will revive their hopes and increase their sales. It is a test of our strength and resilience as a community."

## Vermont has displayed

leadership in hazard mitigation on the national stage. Our congressional delegation worked tirelessly on legislation following Hurricane Sandy in October 2012, which revised federal policies to allow for modern hazard mitigation techniques. A revision of the state's Stream Alteration permit program establishes new state codes and standards for bridges and culverts, and emergency preparedness and training programs are now underway.



**[Far Left]** Greg Russ of the White River Partnership, based in **Royalton**, is making use of a grant from the Department of Fish & Wildlife to help make long-term repairs to culverts that blew out during Irene. ■ **[Top]** Construction on a bridge in **Jamaica** displays new engineering techniques. ■ **[Left]** The Roaring Branch in **Bennington** was inundated with gravel and debris in the flood. ■ **[Above]** The town adopted a River Corridor Protection Plan for the Roaring Branch to protect Bennington from future flooding.



[Top Right] Downtown **Wilmington** has integrated improvements into their reconstruction, including wider sidewalks. ■ [Top] The village of **Grafton** demonstrates the type of vibrant downtown that Vermonters and visitors hope to protect. When towns rebuilt after Irene, planning officials had a chance to think about not just replacing the structures that were there, but also building in design improvements to make their communities more flood-resistant in the long-term. ■ [Above] Churchville Road in **Hancock** was rebuilt using larger culverts and stone-lined ditching, which should prevent landslides in the future. ■ [Right] A landslide on Churchville Road after Irene.



**DEB MARKOWITZ,**  
Secretary,  
Agency of Natural Resources

“We have a unique opportunity, created by our heightened understanding of our vulnerability following the damage from Irene, to look ahead and reflect on what we can do to increase our resilience. Strengthening Vermont’s prized land use pattern—beautiful, walkable villages surrounded by a landscape of working farms and forests—is the single most cost-effective strategy we can pursue.”

## Irene taught us about

small and large gaps in our safety nets. In responding, we learned about the need to eliminate silos among state agencies to support recovery for our most vulnerable citizens and neighbors. Interagency collaboration has increased, and we've taken a comprehensive approach to flood-smart community and land use planning. A new structure is in place for supporting individuals and families affected by disaster, relying heavily on the unique strengths of our community groups and volunteers. And although some Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRCs) will dissolve or "go into hibernation" after Irene recovery, we have learned that functional communities generate truly adaptive responses.



**[Top]** Governor Shumlin visits with Diane Graham, a resident of Weston's Mobile Home Park, and UVM students who participated in a semester-long course about disaster recovery. ■ **[Left]** Vermont Disaster Relief Fund Chair David Coates thanks long term recovery partners and donors for their contributions to helping Vermonters build back from Irene. ■ **[Right]** Norwich Cadets at the Mad River LTRC Headquarters, still rebuilding in the winter of 2012.



[Top] A Mendon resident stands across from what used to be a private bridge to his home. ■ [Bottom] He stands on the new bridge that was built with assistance from local groups and friends.

## The Vermont Disaster Relief Fund Fills a Critical Gap In Assisting Survivors

The Vermont Long-Term Disaster Recovery Group was established following spring 2011 flooding events, but it was not until Tropical Storm Irene that the Group expanded to its current role as a body to coordinate resources and raise and allocate donor dollars from the Vermont Disaster Relief Fund (VDRF). VDRF works closely with the Vermont chapter of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, local long term recovery committees, and disaster case managers to deliver resources to those with disaster-caused unmet needs. Although Irene recovery efforts are winding down, the Fund still meets regularly to discuss its future, and according to David Coates, Chair of the Board, "... with leadership from all sectors of Vermont, (VDRF) stands ready to respond once again when the next disaster strikes."

As of July 2013, the Vermont Disaster Relief Fund had provided more than \$3.4 million in direct assistance to over 300 Vermont families to aid in their recovery from the spring 2011 floods and Tropical Storm Irene. In 2012, the Fund also partnered with the Pomerleau Cornerstone Fund, which ensured access to another \$1 million for mobile home owners to replace more than 70 flood-ravaged mobile homes.

## Institute for Sustainable Communities Launches the Resilient VT Project

Vermonters recognize that climate change is bringing new challenges. In the aftermath of recent disasters, the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), working closely with key stakeholders from state and local governments, businesses and non-profits, has facilitated the Resilient Vermont Project to help Vermont become a model of community, economic, and environmental resilience. Over the course of the 18-month project, participants with expertise in community planning, economic development, business, infrastructure, emergency management, transportation, and social services have gathered to create a "Roadmap to Resilience", to be published in fall 2013. This Roadmap will present state, regional and local partners with strategies and policy options to make Vermont more resilient to future weather events. ISC President George Hamilton reflects that, "from the storm, Vermont has stepped forward, determined to learn and grow from this experience. Learning, adapting, and challenging ourselves, we will move toward resilience." To learn more, visit: <http://resilientvt.org/>

**As we continue to**

monitor the ongoing recovery efforts, we must acknowledge that for many, recovery from Irene will never be fully complete. Although most homeowners have returned to safe and functional housing, there are over 100 individuals and families who still await payment for FEMA buyouts. As of May 2013, Do's was on the mend, but the community is still unsure when their favorite diner will be up and running. The Bartonville Bridge celebrated its reopening on January 26, 2013, a date that represented an iconic relinking of past and present over the Williams River. The West Hartford General Store is back to serving local residents and travelers alike, but faces continuing challenges, including higher unemployment insurance on remaining employees. And back in Rochester, a memorial was held to honor those who were washed away when the Nason Brook swelled, restoring the old cemetery's peace and dignity.



VT FOLK LIFE CENTER/MED CASTLE



[Top] The VT Folklife Center in **Middlebury** exhibits “The Power of Water: Lessons Learned from Irene”; here, reflections from Rochester recall the flooding on August 28th. ■ [Left] One of many homes in **Rochester** that awaits final resolution of the FEMA buyout process. ■ [Above] Beyond Imagination in **Wilmington** sustained a disheartening amount of damage, but made a steady comeback (see “after” photo on opposite page).



**CHRIS CAMPANY,  
Chair, Windham Regional  
Planning Commission**

“The reopening of the bridge on a brilliant late-January day was an important symbol of the recovery of the region and the state. A large crowd turned out, and there was great civic pride. As I was walking through the bridge, I noticed that sunlight coming through knotholes in the wood siding caused them to glow bright violet and orange. Many aspects of our recovery are small, beautiful, and unexpected.”



[Top Right] Community members gather for the commemorative reopening of the **Bartonsville** Bridge. ■ [Top] The **West Hartford** General Store, seen here on a beautiful summer afternoon in 2013, is back in business. ■ [Above] **Beyond Imagination** as it sits today, alongside other new stores and shops that have reopened their doors. ■ [Right] **Dot's Restaurant** in **Wilmington** is fully restored and awaiting the return of diners this fall.

**There will certainly be**

future disasters. Even as this report goes to print, two new federal disasters have been declared in Vermont since May 2013. Perhaps Irene has helped prepare us for “the new normal.” Vermont stands strong and ready, confident in our collective ability to weather the storm and recover from whatever comes next.



THE HERALD/BOB EDDY



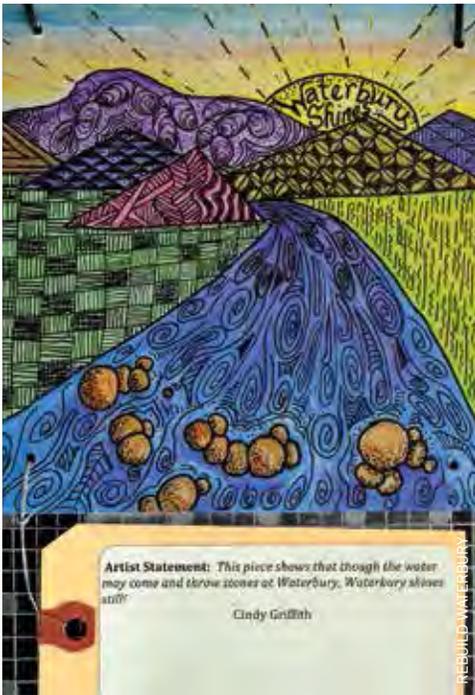
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GORDON MILLER



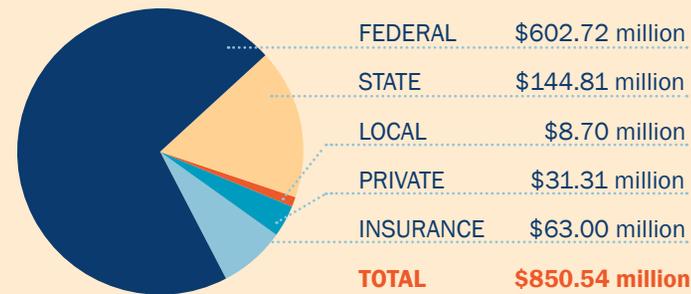
[Far Left] Volunteers pose for a photo after finishing a project in **Berlin**. ■ [Top] Grateful for each other despite their losses, Sally and Charlie Gilman have lived for years at the corner of Camp Brook Road and Route 12 in **Bethel**. ■ [Left] “We Are Vermont Strong” stands out at the Tropical Storm Irene 1st Anniversary Event held at the Chandler Music Hall in **Randolph**. ■ [Above] A young resident of **Rutland** waves a heartfelt goodbye to members of the Air National Guard on September 1, 2011.



[Top] A sign displays one of the many ways communities found to express their gratitude to volunteers and neighbors after Irene. ■ [Bottom] An artist's reflection expresses the strength and togetherness she felt in her community after the flood.

## Irene: Nearly \$1 Billion in Aid for Vermont

As we continue to recover from the losses of Tropical Storm Irene, the economic impact to the state of Vermont is difficult to completely measure. While personal contributions, undocumented losses, and the generosity of thousands of volunteers are difficult to quantify, the chart below provides a general picture of the funding sources that have contributed to Vermont's recovery from August 2011 through July 30, 2013.



For additional information, including a detailed breakdown of these figures, visit [www.vtstrong.vt.gov](http://www.vtstrong.vt.gov).

### JOELLEN CALDERARA, Chair, Central Vermont Long Term Recovery Committee

“The devastation of Irene is undisputed. But with the devastation we also built lasting legacies that will continue to help the State deal with future disasters. Three of the most important legacies, in my opinion, are the strong spirit of community that arose immediately following the receding of the flood waters, the creation of local Long Term Recovery Committees, and the development of the VT Disaster Relief Fund. These lasting legacies will allow Vermonters to mobilize and assist faster and more constructively following future disasters. The legacy of Irene is that Vermont IS stronger!”

## Appendix

### COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

ACCD	Agency of Commerce and Community Development	ESFs	Emergency Support Functions
AHS	Agency of Human Services	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ANR	Agency of Natural Resources	HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
AOA	Agency of Administration	IRO	Irene Recovery Office
AOT	Agency of Transportation	LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee
ARNG	Army National Guard	LTRC	Long Term Recovery Committee
BGS	Buildings and General Services	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant	RPC	Regional Planning Commission
DCMP	Disaster Case Management Program	SBA	Small Business Administration
DEMHS	Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security	USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles	USDA	US Department of Agriculture
DOL	Department of Labor	VDRF	Vermont Disaster Relief Fund
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	VT VOAD	Vermont Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the status of various initiatives described in this report, please visit: [www.vtstrong.vt.gov](http://www.vtstrong.vt.gov). This website also contains a variety of information for those individuals, businesses and communities who may still be recovering from Tropical Storm Irene, including contact information for many of the groups who may be able to help.

For more information about previous Irene Recovery Status Reports published in January 2012, June 2012, and April 2013, please visit [www.vtstrong.vt.gov/RecoveryReports](http://www.vtstrong.vt.gov/RecoveryReports).

For questions about this report, and to view a complete breakdown of the estimated funding sources on page 47, please visit [www.vtstrong.vt.gov](http://www.vtstrong.vt.gov).

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