

Why Protect River Corridors

From a Public Safety and Property Protection Point of View

Many agree that clearing gravel and debris from a bridge opening serves as a temporary fix that may save the structure during our smaller, more frequent floods. But we've also learned that confining a river completely within its channel to “stop” flooding—when over applied—doesn't make us safer. Just the opposite: we've seen extensive flood damage, when rivers build-up power and burst from the constraint of being over-straightened, dredged, and bermed.

One answer to this dilemma is to avoid putting ourselves in harms-way in the first place. If rivers are given the room to move and flood at their natural depth and slope, they maintain a “least erosive” form over time. Vermont has delineated *river corridors* to explain the minimal space rivers need to flood and achieve this least erosive form.

Avoiding new development in river corridors, and the on-going and expensive channel maintenance it takes to protect those investments, will reduce our vulnerability AND the damage that occurs downstream when rivers are constrained.

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