

WAITSFIELD ROAD DEPARTMENT 2011 Report

It seems that every year we talk about how extraordinary the past year was. Well, this was the year of years. We saw historic snows, and record floods, *twice*.

January arrived and so did winter. The constant weather kept our guys on the roads every day. The month of February set an all-time record for snowfall. When it was not snowing, they were busy maintaining snow banks and parking lots. We always say that you need to keep up with winter, and when the March 1st storm arrived, we were ready. Thirty-two wet inches of snow made for a very challenging storm. All roads were kept open and people were moving. Despite the lack of power, our crew was making their way around the shop with flashlights. It looked like CSI.

When the snow is deep, come spring, you know that if we have a rain event of any kind, it will mean trouble. And, just that happened. Late in March, the rains came and the streams rose, culverts were full, and water had its way. Just the tip of what was to come. So, the snow is now gone and spring is trying to break through. But the clouds persisted and the rain was never ending. One particular day, May 20th, the rain became a problem for a small part of our town. No more than a mile wide piece of our town, got an unprecedented downpour. We heard the total rainfall was up to five inches in forty minutes. Whatever the amount was, we saw water where there had never been water before. Eleven roads were washed out, or, washed away. As the night descended on our town, our crew stayed with getting roads and drives put back. Before their efforts were done that night, with the help of others, only three roads were left closed. Within three weeks, with the help of several contractors that were hired, and our own department efforts, the bulk of the work was done.

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At nearly mid-summer, the Fourth of July, we were finally doing some road maintenance. Our new roadside mower was busy maintaining our roadsides, the grader was grading our roads, and the backhoe was replacing culverts that were part of our regular maintenance.

As the annual maintaining of our roads continued, it was also vacation time for the guys. They need to get their vacation in during this time as they are on call for six months of the winter, which keeps them close to

home. Things were getting back to normal, until one Sunday afternoon, when a gal named Irene came for a visit. By the time she left, not only was our town turned upside down, the entire mountain corridor of the Green Mountains, was forever changed.

Irene took her toll, but our roads fared relatively well, compared to those of our neighbors and other places in Vermont. Though, we did not escape her wrath. Without the help of the Waitsfield-Fayston Volunteer Fire Department, we could not have handled the closing of roads, and, the traffic control. As with all of our surrounding towns, we are very fortunate to have such a group of people willing to be there when you need them. When Irene was finished, we were happy to see that much of the work we had done after May's flood, had held up fine. We had several roads closed, most of which were open within a day or so. We still have some problems out there, and they will get addressed this year.

As fall came along, the days were getting shorter, quickly, and we knew time was running out before winter. Crushed gravel needed to be put up, roads needed fall grading, and the very dry November was just what we needed. So, the crew was able to accomplish most of the summer work that we had planned on. Even with an early taste of winter in October, the crew kept up with the work that needed to be done.

One cannot say enough about our Road Department which is under the leadership of Rodney Jones, our road foreman. He has led his guys day after day, storm after storm, flood after flood. Late in the year, one of the crew resigned, and we hired a new road maintainer. There was not much time before we were again plowing and sanding our roads, and Rodney had to bring him "up to speed" in a hurry. We end the year with Ken Bagley, Josh Rogers, and Foreman Jones, ready for what Mother Nature will bring us!

Charlie Goodman
Road Commissioner



Road Foreman Jones digging out Palmer Hill ditch,
05/21/2011. (Photo: V. Capels)