



TOWN OF WAITSFIELD

PRESS RELEASE

TO: *The Valley Reporter*
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SUBJECT: **Waitsfield Village Riverbank Stabilization Project Moves Forward with Award of Grants**

With the one-year anniversary of the havoc that Tropical Storm Irene wreaked on Waitsfield and beyond soon approaching, work will also soon be under way to stabilize approximately 425 feet of riverbank at the Bridge Street Marketplace in historic Waitsfield Village.

The Town of Waitsfield recently received authorization to proceed with the project from the second of two funding sources, a \$108,345 grant from FEMA through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Though the first funding source, a \$36,115 grant from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation, was awarded last fall, the project could not proceed until authorized by the FEMA HMGP grant. The project is estimated to cost \$144,000 and the FEMA HMGP grant will cover 75 percent, while the Agency of Natural Resources grant will cover the 25 percent local cost-share for this project.

The project is designed to significantly reduce the risk of erosion-related flood damages to the historic Waitsfield Village area and the Covered Bridge. It will stabilize approximately 425 linear feet of the bank upstream of the Covered Bridge with a bulk toe revetment with Type IV stone fill, a vegetated buffer, and bioengineering applications where applicable. The bulk toe bank stabilization design was chosen to minimize streambank disturbance. Because the project plans were prepared prior to the devastating August 28, 2011 flood, the scope of work now includes having the project area re-surveyed and the plans updated to reflect the post-flood riverbank. The Bridge Street Marketplace also sustained extensive damage in the 1998 flood, the 14th anniversary of which was June 27.

Bridge Street Marketplace property owners expressed concerns to the Waitsfield Selectboard on many occasions in recent years about the continual erosion of the riverbank upstream of the Covered Bridge. Valerie Capels, Waitsfield Town Administrator, credits Waitsfield resident Kari Dolan with pulling the project together. "Kari was instrumental in preparing both grant applications, involving the property owners and others in the development of the plan, getting the Town of Waitsfield's support, and shepherding the applications through the funding agencies," said Capels. Dolan also serves on the Waitsfield Planning Commission and is the Ecosystem Restoration Program Manager for the ANR Department of Environmental Conservation.

This project is expected to significantly reduce the future risk of flood-related erosion damages to this historic district, which serves as an important commercial hub in Waitsfield. It will also

reduce the risk of severe erosion along the riverbank, control sediment loading, and help to restore riparian vegetation.

According to Ray Doherty, Hazard Mitigation Officer at Vermont Emergency Management, “Waitsfield’s proactive steps toward mitigating flood impacts helped lend support to the HMGP application and ultimate FEMA approval.” Capels added that Waitsfield’s designation as a Village Center through the Vermont Downtown Program may have improved their chances of securing the funding.

Efforts are under way to initiate the update of the survey and design plans and hire a project manager. An archaeological assessment of the project area is expected to be undertaken this summer. Approvals from appropriate state and federal agencies will be sought through the fall. If all clearances are obtained, the project could be put out to bid in the spring of 2013 for construction later that year.