WRC STAFF ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

This summary highlights staff activity during the month of JANUARY 2020. The lead staff person is listed in parentheses by each programmatic area heading.

Brownfields Redevelopment (Susan Westa)
- New England Youth Theater – Prepared WRC grant/loan agreement and support information needed for closing and met with applicant. Project involves cleanup and demolition of dilapidated structure.
- Saxtons River Park – Project complete and closed out.
- Red Clover Commons II – Working with Brattleboro Housing Authority and VT Housing Trust on their application for cleanup funds on site to build additional housing. Met with Chris Hart.
- Area-wide Plan – Refined draft Call for Interest that will be sent out to all communities within the region. This plan is designed to focus on a downtown or village center that has multiple brownfields sites. The plan will include redevelopment plans for the area and specific sites of concern.

Community Development (Susan Westa)
- Community Development Committee Meeting – Andrea Ansevin-Allen, USDA Rural Development presented the various funding programs available through their agency.
- Sibling Region Committee Meeting – Working with Committee to prepare materials for Executive Board and Full Commission Meetings. Committee requested approval of an introductory letter to KROVA Innovation Center in Sweden. Members of Committee are preparing for a self-funded introductory trip in April 2020.
- Bi-Town Housing Committee Meeting, Wilmington and Dover – Attended in support of efforts to address complex housing issues in these resort towns. Camoin Associates recently completed a housing study and plan. This Committee is now working on implementation strategies.
- Brattleboro Housing Action Team – This group is an outgrowth of an unsuccessful grant application. The team is made up of a diverse group of local stakeholders who want to address this complex issue in Brattleboro. Brattleboro Savings and Loan committed a small amount of seed funding to get this project up and running and to show a commitment to other funders. The team will continue to meet on a monthly basis.
- SeVEDS (Southeastern VT Economic Development Strategy) – Participated in Board Meeting.
- Windham Regional Broadband Project
  - Kickoff Meeting, 1/16/2020 – Coordinated meeting, including RSVPs for over 60 attendees. Developed presentation and other support materials.
  - Addressed many questions from communities and residents.
  - Compiled list of towns who have passed resolutions of intent to participate in the project and appoint an official contact person.
  - Attended Deerfield Valley Broadband Meeting.
- Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference, Communications Committee – Met and began developing materials and contact lists to spread the word about this fall’s conference in Burlington, September 30th and October 1st, 2020.
Emergency & Resiliency Planning (Alyssa Sabetto)

- Lots of progress on drafting the Jamaica Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Paul Fraser and Bob Stomski provided some great Irene pictures which are in the draft plan to illustrate damages experienced.
- Addressed internal town staff/planning participant comments received on the first draft of the Wardsboro LHMP. Sent a revised draft to the town after addressing comments.
- Talked with Green Mountain Power about their current and planned efforts around Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), and then shared that feedback with Margo as she prepared for a public meeting about preparing for EAB.
- Held the quarterly Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief Roundtable. This one was in Guilford. Great attendance and lots of lively independent discussion and skill sharing. Jeff Nugent presented a number of mapping tools that could be applicable to emergency planning and response, and he did a great job presenting.
- Talked with Stephanie Smith of Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) about LHMP updates for each of the towns. The state works directly with the towns to assist in getting funding for plan updates through FEMA grants.
- Set up the annual ICS-402 class (incident command structure) to be held at WRC in April. Rich Cogliano will be the instructor.
- Attended MGT-462 “Community Planning for Economic Recovery”, an interesting class put on by FEMA in Concord, NH. Learned of some new online mapping and analysis tools that I’ll be reviewing for LHMP information.
- Talked with State Fire Marshal, Bruce Martin, about attending and being our guest speaker for the April 14th EMD/Fire Chief Roundtable. This request was in part because of the recent ChemMatrix incident in Grafton and the reminder of the reason for requiring Tier II reports.
- Participated in monthly VEM conference call.
- Arrangements finalized to hold “MGT 417 Crisis Management for School-Based Incidents for Key Decision Makers” in Londonderry in May. This will be a joint effort between Bennington RPC, Rutland RPC and WRC to serve southern Vermont.

Energy (Marion Major)

- Reviewed the Windham Town Enhanced Energy Plan for Determination of Energy Compliance as requested from the town. After the review and discussion of the plan, the Energy Committee recommended a positive Determination of Energy Compliance to the Executive Board contingent upon the hearing scheduled in Windham on February 3rd.
- Windham Wood Heat funded a geographically targeted digital campaign increasing awareness of automated wood heat and the opportunities available in the county.
GIS/Mapping (Jeff Nugent & Lisa Donnelly)

- Provided information to the Rockingham town planner about lidar data and mapping of Special Flood Hazard Areas and River Corridors.
- Worked on a map for the Landmark Trust web site showing the location of their properties.
- Watched a webinar on Search and Rescue mapping tools.
- Attended a meeting with Rise VT staff and other agencies to work on their summer passport program to encourage healthy activities for elementary school children.
- Provided the Rockingham town planner with a map of high crash locations, and mileage of private roads, in town.
- Spoke with the Guilford planning commission chair about updates to their town plan maps.
- Worked with WRC’s IT consultant to resolve the Monday morning lack of server and internet access.
- Looked into Census Bureau’s Boundary Verification Program. Noticed many discrepancies in the data the Census Bureau has on town boundaries, which would result in about 60 homes potentially being counted in the wrong town. Communicated with other RPCs and VCGI on this issue, and VCGI is arranging a conference call with the Census Bureau. Sent an email to towns suggested they hold off on approving the Census Bureau data until we hear the results of that call.
- Finalized Brookline and Windham updated culvert maps.
- Prepped WRC’s bike parking database for 2020 counts in downtown Brattleboro.
- Created on-line maps of Newfane’s culverts, parcels, and road erosion inventory results, and then met with Newfane’s road foreman to put the data onto his new tablet.
- Met with Marlboro’s E911 coordinator to work on updates to their E911 data and map.
- Created and submitted to ANR road erosion inventory data for Brookline, Windham, and Vernon for entry into ANR’s Municipal Roads General Permit data portal.
- Provided the Wardsboro road foreman with information on the steep grades on Fornuto Road, to provide to town truck salesman as truck is having problems getting up the hill.
- Assembled data and created a map for the Town of Rockingham for their Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative grant application.
- Provided the Rockingham public works director with a map of hydrologically connected road segments in town.
- Provided a figure for the number of property owners in the Vermont portion of the Green River watershed to WRC’s natural resources planner.
- Did an initial review of Census Bureau’s statistical areas for the 2020 Census. WRC suggested adding a number of Census Designated Places, and modifying some block group boundaries. It looks like we got most everything we asked for, though some CDP boundaries are going to require some adjustments.
- Worked with VCGI and WRC staff on the state’s “orthophoto buy-up” areas, where they fly some more developed parts of the region at a higher level of resolution=better orthophotos. We suggested additions to their areas and they were approved, so we will have 2020 orthophotos at a higher resolution for all of the larger villages in the region.
- Finalized work on Vernon town forest kiosk maps, then met with town recreation director at a local print shop to arrange for them to be printed. Kiosk map is now installed.
- Provided information to Retreat Farm staff on miles of trails in Brattleboro for a grant application.
• Worked with WRC’s IT consultant on new computer for four staff members. Got a local TV repair person to fix an electrical issue with one of our pedestrian counters. Glad there are people out there who still fix stuff like this!
• Grants in Aid data entry and outreach to towns for Putney, Brookline, and Winhall.
• Participated in a conference call with VCGI, E911 board, and RPCs about Vermont building footprints data layer and how local data (RPC’s, town’s) can be integrated into it.
• Developed a presentation on on-line mapping tools for emergency management directors, then presented at the EMD monthly meeting. Topics included coordinates, data formats, Google Maps, Google Earth, E911 Atlas, Avenza PDF maps, ArcGIS on-line, and Arc Collector.
• Supplied information on GIS work for year-end reporting to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development
• Created maps of Consolidated Communications’ Vermont Telephone’s broadband coverage and speed claims for the Marlboro Committee on Unified Broadband

Natural Resources & Water Quality (Margo Ghia)
• Coordinated an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Planning & Preparedness Workshop for Municipalities in Newfane on 1/29/20. Local panel presented on Ash tree inventories from Londonderry, Guilford and Brattleboro.
• Led a WRC Natural Resources Committee meeting on 1/23/2020.
• Corresponded with Green Mountain Power regarding EAB. Connected GMP with Marion in Transportation for a future Road Foreman meeting.
• Coordinated an EAB presentation for the public in Londonderry on 1/9/20.
• Updated the Natural Resources and Water Quality pages on the WRC Website.
• Conducted Stormwater Master Planning research and drafted a letter to municipalities on upcoming grant opportunities and collaboration potentials with WRC.
• On behalf of Saxtons River Watershed Collaborative (SRWC), attended an informational/planning meeting for a Japanese Knotweed conference at The Nature Museum. SRWC will co-host the conference and will work on a F&W Watershed Grant for Knotweed education.
• Coordinated a meeting to discuss Brattleboro Clean Water Projects. Attending were Brattleboro planning office, zoning office, and public works, as well as Connecticut River Conservancy, Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, and VT DEC.
• Attended Southeastern Vermont Watershed Alliance water monitoring meeting. Following up with clean water partners on a few sites where there were consistently high E-coli and Nitrogen readings.
• Attended a Clean Water Regional Coordination Meeting with CRC, WCNRCD, ONRCD, TROPC, SWRPC on 1/16/20
• Attended Connecticut River Joint Commission Wantastiquet Sub-Committee special meeting on 1/2/20.
• Submitted a VT Watershed Grant on behalf of the Green River Watershed Alliance (GRWA). Request for $5000 to support education and outreach.
• Updated the GRWA website.
• Led a GRWA meeting on 1/13/20
• The Johnson Dam project in Dummerston and all of its associated deliverables to the State of Vermont have been completed.
• The Windham Connectivity Collaborative (WCC) was awarded a $6000 New England Landscapes Futures Grant through Harvard Forest.
• Worked with WCC Sub-Groups to convene and discuss next steps and mission for sub-group before the full Collaborative meeting in February.
• Discussed the potential of a dam removal and culvert replacement on East Putney Brook with VT DEC Basin Planner and Connecticut River Joint Commission. The project will not be ready to apply for the current ERP round; however, we will continue to keep this project on the radar. We are scheduling a meeting in late February to discuss regional dam removals for spring/summer ERP rounds.

Project Review (Alyssa Sabetto)
• No Committee meeting held in January as there were not projects to discuss. Some smaller projects have slowly been rolling in during the month of January.
• Reviewed Project Review information and prepared for February Committee meeting.
• Reviewed the ANR/VNRC proposal for changes to Act 250.

Town Planning Assistance (John Bennett)
• Provided assistance to Grafton requesting WRC Town Plan review for approval and confirmation of the town planning process and with requesting an Act 174 Determination of Energy Compliance. Received requests from town for both in regard to the Town Plan adopted February 13, 2020. Began work with the town to schedule the two required public hearings. Met with the Planning Commission (PC) Chair to provide assistance with, among other things: the continuing Town Plan update process, work on the draft of a town survey and possible sources of grant funding, and the necessary steps in moving forward with the application for Village Center designation. Provided assistance to the town in addressing potential impacts of the Town Plan designation of the town (Village) park as a “critical resource area” as that might relate to the possible future development of a gazebo and parking area.
• Received a request from the Guilford Conservation Commission for assistance reviewing the draft of the Natural Resources chapter for the Town Plan update.
• Reached out to Londonderry on behalf of the Department of Housing and Community Development regarding the status of the 2019 Municipal Planning Grant required mid-term report and requisition. The town has it on its to do list.
• Provided assistance to Marlboro Zoning Administrator (ZA) regarding permitting in the Wildlife Habitat Overlay District.
• Provided assistance to Putney Town Manager regarding the Town Clerk’s Certificate (per 24 V.S.A. § 4474) “which shall be presumptive evidence of the facts as they relate to the lawful adoption of” a Town Plan or bylaw.
• Met with staff to discuss assistance to Rockingham with their VCRD Community Visit Priorities.
• Continued work on Stratton Town Plan update, text and Proposed Land Use map.
• Provided assistance to Westminster PC Chair regarding PC issues and meeting management.
• Met with Whitingham Administrative Assistant, BDCC, and WRC staff regarding BDCC’s award of technical assistance to the town with Municipal Center flood resilience projects. Met with town and WRC staff regarding those projects and several other flood resilience projects. Worked on finalizing a Municipal Planning Grant-funded contract with the town for WRC managing of the Jacksonville flood resilience.
projects. VTrans awarded the town the Environmental Mitigation grant for a scoping study of the Municipal Center flood resilience projects that WRC had assisted the town in applying for.

- Provided assistance to Wilmington ZA regarding zoning administration issues.
- Reviewed the Windham Town Plan adopted 12/16/19; the Planning Coordination Committee, pending a successful hearing, voted to recommend WRC approval of the Town Plan and confirmation of the municipal planning process. Worked with the Windham PC Chair to prepare for the two required hearings (one for Town Plan review and approval and confirmation of town planning process and one for review of the enhanced energy plan for a Determination of Energy Compliance).

**Transportation (Marion Major/Chris Campany)**

- Mailed surveys to all subscribers in the regional elderly & disabled transit program. We received responses and began entering data for VTrans. The results will be provided to the regional transit groups.
- The Transportation Committee and Executive Board reviewed proposed changes to the scope of work on Route 9 in West Brattleboro adding more safety measures and complete street elements. Both the committee and board endorsed a letter supporting the proposal.
- The WRC submitted a letter of support for the Town of Brattleboro’s VOREC (Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative) application.
- Information was sent out to the Transportation Committee on VTrans lists of projects for regional ranking in our annual Project Prioritization Task. This will be discussed in the February committee meeting.
- Marion sent complete street reporting forms and requested input from all town road foremen.
- Marion continued work with counterpart at Southwest Regional Planning Commission NH on the Hinsdale Bridge Project coordination. We met with the UMass Amherst Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning department to discuss the opportunity of working with Masters students on developing a visionary design for the reuse. Worked with Brattleboro and Hinsdale on solidifying design ideas for the interpretive signs incorporated into the new bridge design.
- Marion continued local project management work on the salt sheds in Wardsboro, Brookline, and Newfane. Wardsboro had the project kickoff meeting and Brookline and Newfane are receiving their conceptual designs.
- Chris worked with Weston on its review of bicycle and pedestrian design alternatives for the village.
- Participated in the final meeting of the Vermont Transportation Board Helipad Working Group. The purpose of the effort is to advise towns how to best develop local regulations to address any concerns they might have with proposed new helipads or private runways.
- Participated in a meeting with the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and Hunger Free Vermont about how to best roll out the new food access town planning tool kit. WRC participated in the development of this toolkit which is available here: [https://www.vtfarmstoplete.com/resources/local-planning-for-food-access](https://www.vtfarmstoplete.com/resources/local-planning-for-food-access).

**Vermont Yankee (Chris Campany)**

- Participated in meeting of the Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel. Presented concerns and suggested potential improvements to the Panel’s enabling statute.