

PHILIP B. SCOTT
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**REQUEST FOR MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATION
GOVERNOR'S REQUEST COVER LETTER**

July 13, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Through: Ms. Lori Ehrlich
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region I
99 High Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02110

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request you declare a Major Disaster for the State of Vermont for heavy rainfall and severe flooding statewide starting on July 7, 2023 and continuing as of today, July 13, 2023. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Assistance Individual Assistance including Disaster Unemployment Assistance, statewide, as well as any other available federal disaster assistance, including but not limited to U.S. Small Business Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture assistance.

Given the cumulative and compounding severe consequences of the flooding over several days—and ongoing flooding concerns, I specifically request a Major Disaster Declaration for Vermont to include the following:

- 100 percent Federal cost share for Public Assistance Categories A and B for the first 90 days from the date of the Declaration (44 CFR § 206.47(d)).
- 100 percent Federal cost share for all other categories of Public Assistance (Permanent Work Categories C-G) from the date of the Declaration (44 CFR § 206.47(d)).
- 90 percent Federal cost share for all categories of Public Assistance to be placed into effect after the first 90 days (44 CFR § 206.47(b)).

The State of Vermont reserves the right to amend this request as the state pivots from response to recovery.

Rain began falling in southern Vermont on July 7, 2023, and by the morning of July 8, 2023 several miles of road in Killington, in Rutland County has been washed away with an estimated repair cost of \$1.4 million, while the town of Worcester in Washington County, had incurred half a million dollars in road damages. The heavy rains of July 7-8, 2023 exacerbated the antecedent conditions of saturated soils statewide. It started raining again on July 9, 2023, and by the afternoon of July 11, 2023, flood waters had inundated the main streets of Barre City, Johnson, Ludlow, Montpelier, Richmond and other communities across the state. This is a historic and catastrophic flooding event for Vermont.

The National Weather Service began sending out information warning of potential impacts of this system several days in advance. In a briefing on Sunday morning, July 9, 2023, a National Weather Service meteorologist used the word “catastrophic”.

Statewide Impact Summary

The State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) in Waterbury was partially activated on July 9, 2023, and went into full in-person activation as of 0800 on July 10, 2023. During the afternoon of July 10, SEOC staff were directed to leave the Waterbury SEOC and complete the operational period remotely because of concern that the Winooski River was rising in proximity to the SEOC at 45 State Drive, Waterbury, and there was a risk floodwaters would cut off access. On July 11, 2023, the SEOC relocated to higher ground at the Agency of Transportation’s Dill Building at 2178 Airport Road in Berlin, Vermont for transition from remote operations to continued in-person response effective 1200. Partners participating in the ongoing SEOC activation include: Agency of Agriculture, Agency of Human Services, Agency of Transportation, Agency of Digital Services Public Service Department, Agency of Administration, including the Department of Buildings and General Services , Department of Health, Department of Public Safety, including Vermont State Police, Division of Fire Safety, Radio Technology Services and Urban Search and Rescue, Department of Labor, Agency of Education, Agency of Natural

Resources, including Department of Environmental Conservation and Department Forest Parks & Recreation, Vermont National Guard, American Red Cross, SerVermont, and Vermont 211.

When the waters were cresting on southern Vermont's rivers during the evening of July 10, 2023 and on the northern rivers such as the Winooski and Lamoille during the day on July 11, 2023, major transportation corridors including Interstate 89, Route 2, Route 4 and Route 100 were closed due to inundation, rendering many communities inaccessible.

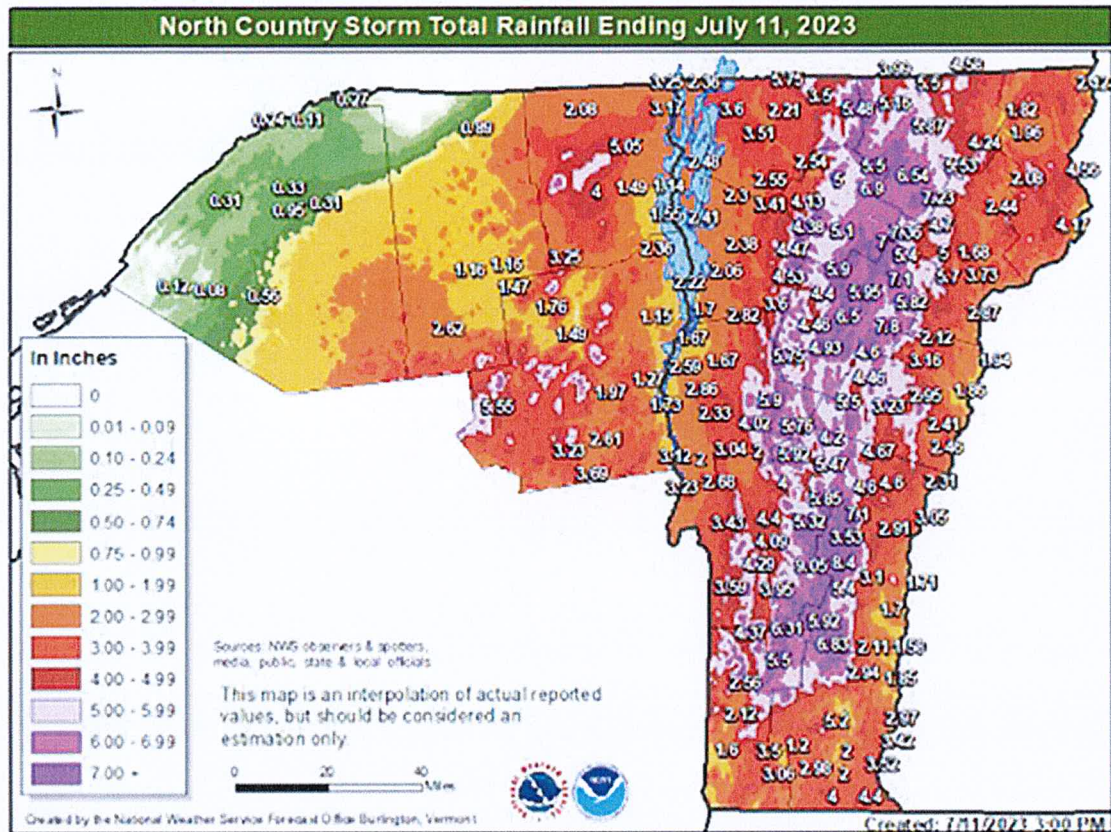
As of July 9, 2023 at 0800, Vermont had eleven Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams staging, two Type I Swiftwater Teams en route from North Carolina via EMAC, and a federal USAR Type III team from Massachusetts. In Londonderry in Windham County and in Weston in Windsor County, the fire stations were flooded. In Andover, ten people were trapped in a state campground and needed to be rescued.

By the end of the next day, the situation report ("SitRep") at the end of the daytime operational period on July 10, 2023, a widespread 3-6 inches of rain had fallen across central Vermont with localized amounts up to 8 inches, and another 1-3 inches predicted overnight. The SitRep showed that 343 people had been evacuated and 70 people were still reported as isolated. Eighteen shelters were open, including the Barre Auditorium being managed by American Red Cross. 9,495 power outages were reported due to 106 outage events.

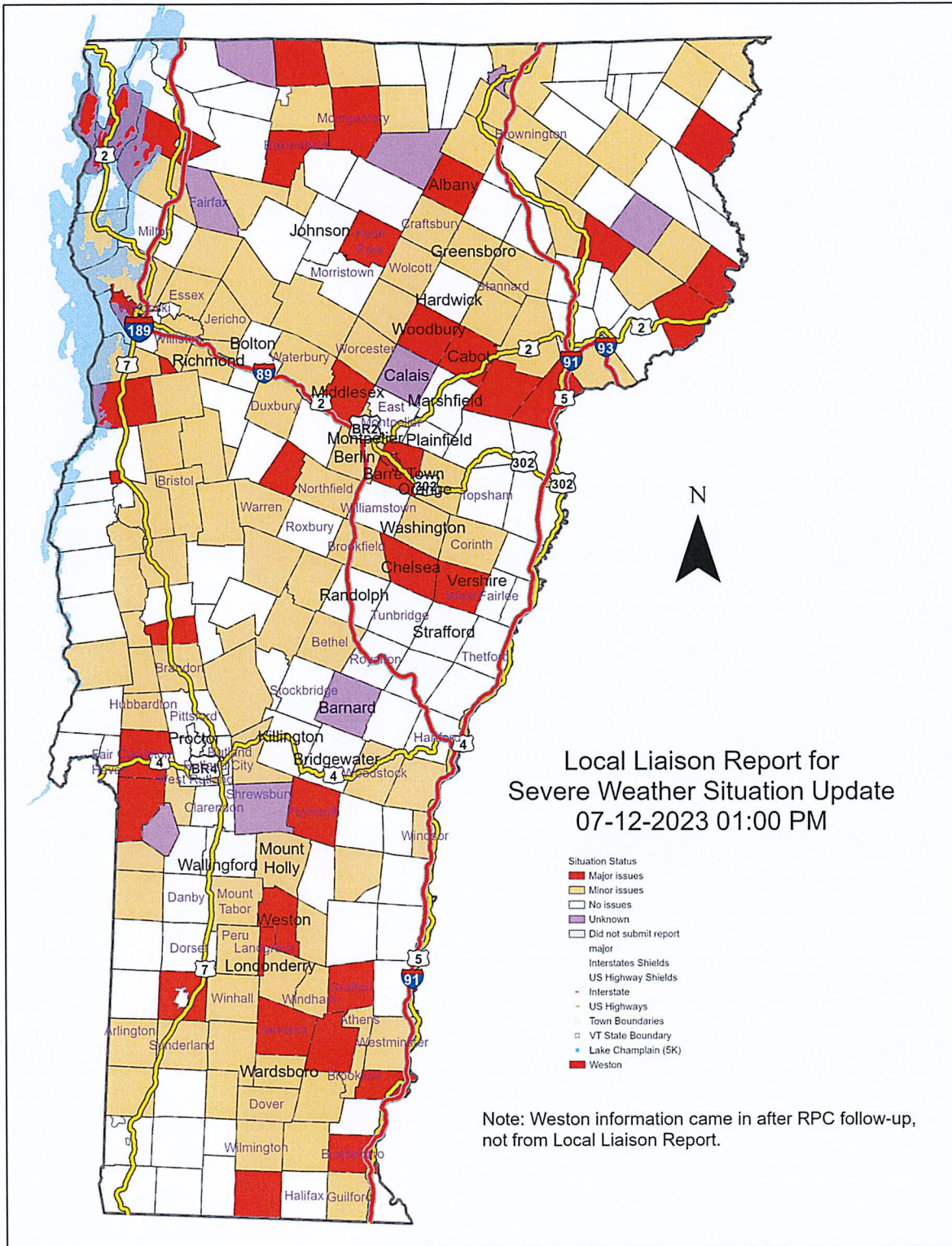
By the morning of July 11, 2023 there had been more than 100 active rescues performed by the twelve (12) USAR Teams working around the state. There were 88 road closures on State roads, and countless closures on local roads. Southern rivers were beginning to subside but rivers in the north were still rising. Damage at the Ludlow Fire Station rendered their emergency vehicles inoperable. Long term care facilities were evacuated in Cambridge, Enosburg, and Montpelier.

During the day on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, a priority focus in the SEOC was dam inspections, as some dams came perilously close to overtopping. Fortunately, the water level at the Wrightsville Flood Retention Dam on the North Branch of the Winooski River above Montpelier crested just below the level at which it would have required activation of the spillway, which would have added to the volume of water already flooding State and Main Streets in the State Capitol.

The following map shows how much rain had fallen at 1500 on July 11, 2023:



The following map shows the situation based on Local Liaison reporting at 1800 on July 11, 2023:



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By Wednesday morning, July 12, 2023, the Johnson Wastewater Facility was damaged. Johnson was one of eleven (11) communities with Boil Water Notices in effect and flooded pump stations were discharging untreated wastewater from the following communities: Bethel, Johnson, Waterbury, Hardwick, Cabot, Montpelier, Fair Haven, Orleans, Chelsea, Saxon's River, and Brandon. Six (6) other communities were discharging partially treated wastewater.

On July 11, 2023, the State and American Red Cross operated three overnight shelters at Barre Auditorium, Rutland and White River Junction. On the night of July 10, 2023, 140 people stayed at the Barre Auditorium. On the night of July 11, 2023, 58 people stayed there. The Rutland and White River shelters did not open until the night of July 11, 2023, when they had four (4) and three (3) people stay overnight, respectively. In addition, nineteen (19) local shelters were opened, and twenty (20) people stayed at local shelters on the first night. Fifty people stayed at Northern Vermont University's campus in Cambridge on the night of July 11, 2023.

Unfortunately, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has reported there has been one storm-related fatality to date.

On July 11, 2023, VEM Interim Director, Eric Forand submitted two PDA requests, one for July 7-8, 2023 in the counties of Lamoille, Washington, and Windsor, and another for Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for the flooding which began on July 9, 2023. As noted above, this request for a Federal Disaster Declaration encompasses all damages starting from July 7, 2023, inclusive and supersedes the prior requests. In light of the severity of the event, it has been possible to validate Individual Assistance damages through aerial photography of flooded communities across the State.

Demographics of Impacted Counties

Vermont is rural and sparsely populated. Some of the requested counties have median household incomes below the national average.

Additional Factors for Consideration

Assessment of costs is ongoing.

The month of July is critical to Vermont's summer tourism season. This flooding comes at a particularly detrimental time for Vermont's economy.

Towns in Vermont obtain insurance through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns' Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund (PACIF). Roads, water crossings, and drainage structures are not covered, and insurance coverage is not commercially available in most cases.

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Given the rural, agricultural nature of our state with generational land and low housing stock, many Vermonters may struggle to provide documentation of land deeds and lack permanent housing. I therefore request flexibility in providing assistance to the most vulnerable in our communities.

State/ Local Resources for Assistance

Vermont's resource referral hotline, VT 2-1-1, is taking damage reports from impacted residents.

Vermont's Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides the non-federal share of declared disasters for eligible municipal Public Assistance applicants and is funded through the Vermont General Fund. This event will create a need for additional ERAF appropriations from the General Fund through Budget Adjustment.

Vermont Disaster History

Since 2013, Vermont has experienced 13 federally declared and numerous non-declared disasters, but nothing to date in 2023:

DR4120 (May 2013 flooding), DR4140 (June-July 2013 flooding), DR4163 (December 2013 ice storm), DR4178 (April 2014 flooding), DR4207 (December 2014 severe winter storm), DR4232 (June 9, 2015 flooding), DR4330 (June-July 2017 flooding), DR4356 (October 29-30, 2018 severe storm and flooding), DR4380 (May 4-5, 2018 severe storm), DR4445 (April 15, 2019 severe storm and flooding), DR4474 (Severe storm and flooding, October 31- November 1, 2019), DR4621 (Severe storms and flooding, July 29, 2021-July 30, 2021), DR4532 (COVID-19), and DR4695 (Severe storm and flooding, 12/22/22 - 12/24/22).

Hazard Mitigation Damage Avoidance

In recent years, Vermont and FEMA have successfully used funding made available pursuant to Section 404 (42 U.S.C. § 5170c) and Section 406 (42 U.S.C. § 5172).

The impacts of this flooding would have been even more devastating if not for mitigation work accomplished since Hurricane Irene in 2011, particularly more than 140 property acquisitions and removals of flood-prone structures accomplished through Hazard Mitigation Assistance.

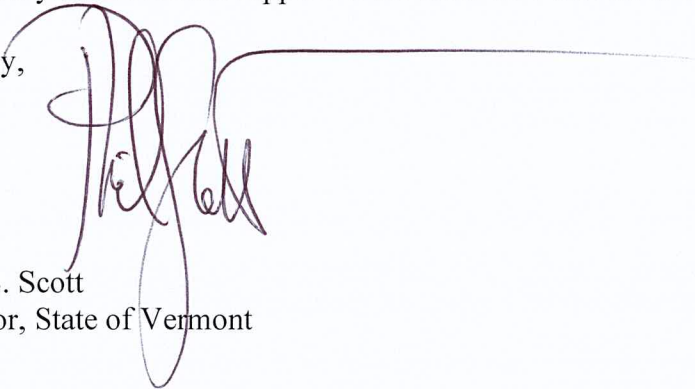
Many of these sites have been inundated in recent days as rivers access their floodplains without harm. We are committed to continuing our ongoing efforts to build resiliency and reduce flood vulnerability using Section 406 and Section 404 Hazard Mitigation.

Conclusion

For many Vermont communities, this statewide storm is the worst disaster in living memory, including Tropical Storm Irene. The Winooski and Lamoille Rivers crested at historically record high levels. The magnitude and severity of the damage will clearly exceed the capabilities of the State and affected local governments without federal assistance. Accordingly, I request a Major Disaster Declaration under the Stafford Act for Individual Assistance, including Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Assistance statewide, as well as any other available federal disaster assistance, including but not limited to U.S. Small Business Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture assistance.

Thank you for understanding the needs of our small state and the deployment of so many members of your team. They have been a valuable addition to our emergency operations. I truly appreciate your continued support of the State of Vermont and its residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Phil Scott', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor, State of Vermont

Enclosures:

- OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13
- A: Individual Assistance
- B: Public Assistance
- C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs