

# \$1.47 million in VHCB funding to assist households affected by Hurricane Irene

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At a meeting on December 6, the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board presented funding awards to the Addison County Community Trust and the Central Vermont Community Land Trust to create affordable rental housing in the towns of Hancock and Barre. The Windham and Windsor Housing Trust will rehabilitate two properties with 12 apartments in Chester and Gageville. Grants to the network of HomeOwnership Centers and non-profit housing organizations will provide financial counseling and homebuyer education to households who lost their homes in Hurricane Irene and assist communities in rebuilding after Irene. The Upper Valley Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, the Stowe Land Trust, and the Vermont River Conservancy will use VHCB funding to conserve 413 acres of agricultural land, recreational land and wildlife habitat.

Christine Hart, Chair of the Board, said, "These VHCB grants will be used in communities across the state and will complement flood recovery efforts, provide economic stimulus, support the agricultural economy, and provide public access to recreational land for generations to come."

In Hancock, a community that was hard hit by Hurricane Irene, the Addison County Community Trust will acquire and rehabilitate five apartments in the village. A \$140,000 VHCB grant and \$161,320 in federal HOME Program funding will be matched with private funding and federal rental assistance to provide affordable rentals to five households.

The Board awarded \$50,000 to non-profit housing development groups and HomeOwnership Centers to provide financial counseling and homebuyer education to households who lost their homes in Hurricane Irene and to assist communities in rebuilding after Irene. The VHCB funding will be matched by \$150,000 provided by the NeighborWorks Corporation, a national housing organization that supports five Vermont HomeOwnership centers located in Burlington, St. Albans, Lyndonville, Barre, West Rutland, Brattleboro and Springfield. The Vermont Community Foundation has pledged \$50,000 towards the effort, and the Enterprise Foundation, a national organization providing development capital and technical assistance for affordable housing, will provide \$50,000.

The Central Vermont Community Land Trust will use \$170,000 in VHCB funding to develop transitional housing on South Main Street in Barre for individuals recovering from substance abuse. CVCLT will lease the property to Phoenix House, an organization operating addiction recovery programs nationwide. A resident manager will facilitate programming that includes individual case management, group and individual counseling, and appropriate social activities. The Department of Corrections considers the Central Vermont location a priority and will provide \$200,000 in funding for the project, which they expect will reduce recidivism. Phoenix House will contribute \$100,000.

In Chester and in the village of Gageville in Westminster, the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust will rehabilitate 12 apartments in two buildings using \$436,000 in VHCB funds and \$213,336 in federal HOME funds. Improvements will include a comprehensive energy efficiency retrofit, increased affordability, addition of solar hot water and a sprinkler system, update of the apartment interiors and reconfiguration of the apartments.

The Upper Valley Land Trust will conserve two farms in Newbury and Thetford, protecting 122 acres of agricultural land in the watershed of the Connecticut River. A VHCB grant of \$15,750 will be matched by \$35,000 in federal farmland conservation funding provided by NRCS and \$48,250 in funding from the Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund to conserve a 62-acre organic dairy farm in Newbury and Ryegate. Located

along I-91, this highly visible and scenic property will be sold by retiring dairy farmers Alice and Larry Allen to Walter Morse and Joseph Mahr, organic dairy farmers from Barre.

An \$85,000 VHCB grant to the Upper Valley Land Trust, matched by \$147,500 in NRCS funding, will conserve 60 acres to be sold to Vaughn Farms LLC for addition to their 425 acres of farmland in Thetford. A local trail network passes through the property and conservation will provide a buffer for the Conant Swamp, a wetland in the watershed of the Connecticut River.

In Dummerston, the Nature Conservancy will use a VHCB grant of \$75,000 to conserve 25 acres on Black Mountain, adding to 583 acres conserved over a twenty-year period and managed as a nature preserve. The land hosts natural communities that are rare and unique in Vermont. A trail on the property provides public access for hunting, walking, hiking, and snowshoeing. The parcel's frontage on Black Mountain Road will allow for development of a parking area and the addition of a kiosk.

With a \$350,000 VHCB grant, the Stowe Land Trust will purchase, conserve, and transfer to the town 257 acres of recreation lands located in the village, just west of Route 100 and south of the Mountain Road and abutting the Town forest. Nine miles of well-used mountain bike and walking trails on the property will add to a trail network being developed by the Vermont Ride Center, an economic development initiative focused on the towns of Waterbury and Stowe and spearheaded by the VT Mountain Bike Association. The Town of Stowe will contribute \$250,000 towards the acquisition; the Stowe Land Trust has initiated a \$1 million private fundraising campaign to complete the project.

The Vermont River Conservancy will use \$120,285 in VHCB funding to purchase nine acres of land on the Missisquoi River in Enosburgh. The river frontage will be conveyed to the Village of Enosburg Falls for use as a public fishing access and canoe launching site. The site will also be designated as a launching site for the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. The remainder of the parcel will be donated to the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity for development of two affordable houses. The acquisition is leveraged by a \$20,000 grant from a private foundation and by private fundraising of \$41,965.

The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board is an independent state funding agency providing grants and loans for the development of affordable housing and the conservation of agricultural and recreational lands, natural areas and historic properties. Since 1987, VHCB has funded the development of more than 10,000 homes for Vermonters and the conservation of more than 390,000 acres of land.

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