

Wells, Vermont  
2026 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan



East Wells Road Embankment After a Landslide – November 2019

FEMA Approval Pending Adoption Date:  
Municipal Adoption Date:  
FEMA Formal Approval Date:

**Prepared by the Wells Hazard Mitigation Planning Team**

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**Technical Assistance by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)  
Supported by FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) funds**



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<sup>1</sup> Todd could not attend the Planning Team meetings due to work conflicts, but he provided insight periodically throughout the Plan development process

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Community planning and action can reduce the impact of expected but unpredictable natural events. The goal of this Plan is to advance mitigation investments to reduce risks posed by natural hazards and increase Wells’s resilience to natural hazard impacts.

Hazard Mitigation is any sustained policy or action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from the effects of natural hazards. All levels of government have come to recognize that it is less expensive to prevent disasters than to repeatedly repair damage after a disaster has struck. While hazards themselves cannot be eliminated, it is possible to identify local hazards, where their impacts may be most severe, and what actions and policies can be implemented to reduce the severity of their impacts.

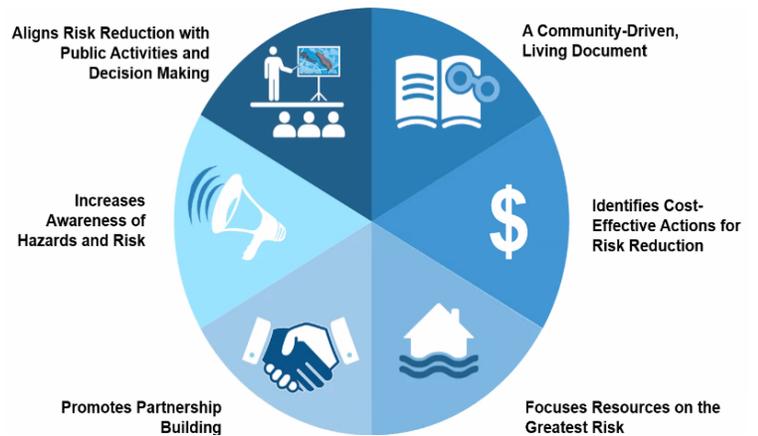
*Furthermore, the Town seeks to be in accordance with the strategies, goals, and objectives of the **2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan.***

This Plan recognizes that many hazards are interrelated and can cause cascading effects. Communities should therefore take a holistic approach to mitigation and integrate its principles and practices throughout government operations.

# 2 PURPOSE

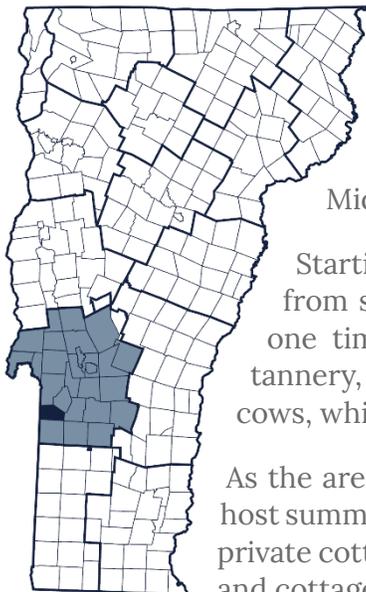
This Plan identifies all natural hazards facing the Town of Wells, ranks them according to local vulnerabilities, and develops strategies to reduce the risks posed by these hazards. Once adopted, this Plan is not legally binding; instead, it outlines goals and actions to prevent future loss of life and property.

The benefits of mitigation planning include:



Source: FEMA LHMP Skill Share Workshop 2021

# 3 COMMUNITY PROFILE



## Land Use and Development Patterns

Chartered in 1761, Wells initially covered over 23,000 acres. Residents from Wells and the nearby towns of Ira, Poultney, and Tinmouth petitioned the State to create a new municipality, bordered by ridges that hindered travel to meetings and worship. Thus, Wells ceded 6,118 acres in 1784 to help establish Middletown Springs; in 1798, Poultney annexed an additional 4,000 acres.

Starting from humble beginnings in apple orchards, early industry in Wells shifted from sheep farming to wool processing, with the development of mills. The town at one time boasted three stores, four distilleries, blacksmith shops, wagon shops, a tannery, and multiple grist and sawmills. Farmers adapted by moving from sheep to dairy cows, which eventually became the main enterprise.

As the area became more populated in the 1800s, two grand hotels were constructed to host summer visitors. These hotels thrived before being dismantled in the early 1900s, when private cottages started to serve as family retreats. Over the decades, recreational land uses and cottage industries have come to define the community's economic character.

Wells is a small rural town (the seventeenth largest) in the southwestern corner of Rutland County. The land cover is a mix of forests and agricultural fields, dotted with residential sites. Lake St. Catherine, situated in the northern half of Town, is the most distinctive land feature and significantly influences the Town’s land use and economic base. Indeed, development in Wells over the past century has focused on this lakeshore.

The predominant land use in Wells is single-family residences, many of which were summer cottages that have been converted into year-round homes. Another major historic and current land use is slate quarries. The largest concentration of commercial uses is located along VT Route 30 from the center of Town to the Pawlet border. Development is most concentrated in the low-lying areas, including Lake St. Catherine, Little Lake, Lake Lucidian, and Wells Village.

The eastern portion of the Village Center includes the intersection of Vermont Route 30 and North and South Streets. Commercial activity within the Village is primarily housed in historic structures, which elegantly accentuate the Green, the Wells Village Library, and two houses of worship: St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and Wells United Methodist Church. Other notable properties include the Wells Country Store, Wells Village School, the Town Office, the Wells Volunteer Fire Department, and the U.S. Post Office. The Town Garage is located just south of the Village Center.



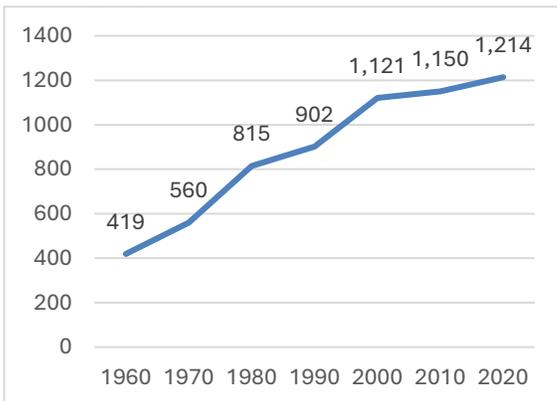
The iconic Wells Country Store

**Land Features**

Situated in the Taconic Mountains, Wells showcases a diverse range of landforms, having alternating bands of hills, low mountains, valleys, and upland terraces. Elevations vary from 500-600 feet in the wetlands of Bullfrog Hollow and near Little Lake, to several peaks east of VT Route 30, beginning at 1,200 feet. Coy and Northeast Mountains, southwest of the Middletown Springs border, reach heights of 2,000-2,100 feet.

Most ridgelines and high-altitude areas remain largely undeveloped. Due to their shallow soils and steep slopes, ecosystems at higher elevations are fragile and prone to damage. The most extreme features of the Town, the cliffs of Pond Mountain, act as a physical and visual barrier, as well as an essential habitat for deer and several rare and endangered plants and animals.

**Demographics and Growth Potential**



The 2020 Decennial U.S. Census shows a population of 1,214 and 865 housing units, of which 541 are occupied. It is worth noting that the majority of remaining units are seasonal homes along the lakes: their occupants cause the population to nearly double in the summer. Wells has experienced steady population growth, tripling since the 1960s, although the first few decades of the 21st century suggest stabilization at ~1,100-1,200 people.

Between 2010 and 2020, the median age of Wells residents increased from 49 to 54, surpassing the median age of 47 in Rutland County. Twenty-six percent of the population in Wells is over 65, and around 12 percent are considered disabled. The Town's population density is 59 people per square mile, somewhat lower than the overall state density of 68 people per square mile.

The Town has over 300 seasonal units, representing at least 35% of the total housing stock, well above the 17% average for Rutland County. Of the permanent residences, about 84% are site-built single-family units, about 4% are multi-family units, and about 11% are manufactured housing. Approximately 13% of residences are renter-occupied, while 87% are owner-occupied.

## Precipitation and Water Features

Wells has about 130 precipitation days per year. The average annual precipitation is 42.8 inches of rain, with July being the wettest month. The average annual snowfall is 65.6 inches, with January being the snowiest month. Projections from the University of California San Diego predict that by 2044, under scenarios of both intermediate and extreme greenhouse gas emissions, Wells will see 0-2 days of extreme precipitation per year.

*Although Wells has had its largest population since 1790, it **does not expect substantial growth in the coming decade** due to limited public water utilities, soil types restricting wastewater utilities, and hilly terrain. Land policies promote preserving forests, farmlands, floodplains, and scenic ridges outside the Village Center and Lakeshore District. The Town wants future development in the Village to respect its charming, residential character.*

Nearly one square mile (or over 500 acres) of the Town is covered by water. Surface waters include Lake St. Catherine (Big Lake, Little Lake, and Little Pond), as well as Lake Lucidian, a manmade water body. Notable tributaries include parts of Endless Brook and Coy Brook to the north and northeast, along with the Wells, Snow, and Mill Brooks to the south. There are also associated unnamed tributaries, marshlands, and wetlands to the west of the lakes, especially Bullfrog Hollow.

According to the Agency of Natural Resources, ~6.5% of the Town's land area (or almost 971 acres) is Class II Wetlands. These play an important role in water absorption and holding capacity, reducing flooding hazards and replenishing groundwater supplies.

## Average Temperatures

July is the hottest month in Wells, with an average daytime temperature of 82.2°F. There are 6.1 days annually when the high temperature is over 90°F, hotter than most places in Vermont. January is the coldest month of the year, with an average nighttime temperature of just 9.5°F. There are 156.3 days annually when nighttime low temperatures fall below freezing, warmer than most places in Vermont.

*The Vermont Climate Action Office reports the period from **2010-2020 was the warmest decade on record**. If this trend continues, Wells will likely have more than 6 annual days of 90°F by 2050.*

Projections from the University of California, San Diego predict that by 2044, under an intermediate emissions scenario, Wells will see 0-20 days above 90°F and 120-160 days below 32°F per year. Under an extreme emissions scenario, Wells will see 0-40 days above 90°F and 120-140 days below 32°F per year.

## Drinking Water and Sanitary Sewer

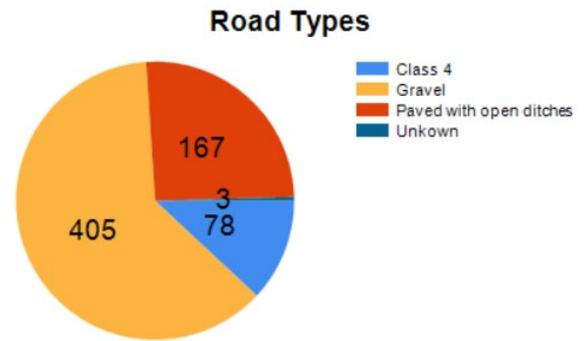
There is no municipal water system in Wells. However, non-community public water systems serve a small development, Butternut Hill Condominiums, and the Wells Village School. Also, some cottages along Lake St. Catherine draw water from the lake and treat it for drinking. Homes and businesses otherwise rely on individual shallow or drilled wells for their water supply. Sewer is disposed of through individual on-site septic systems.

## Transportation

Wells covers ~23.4 square miles and has an extensive network of State and Town Highways. VT-30 is the main highway, connecting Middlebury to the north and Brattleboro to the south. Near Lake St. Catherine's shoreline, this roadway narrows due to water or lakeside developments on one side and steep slopes on the other. This poses an increased risk of rockslides in some areas. VT-31 is a second important route passing through the northwest, linking Poultney to Granville, NY. Personal vehicles are the primary mode of transportation.

According to 2025 VTrans Town Highway data, the Town has a total of 34.9 municipal road miles, including 12.7 miles of Class 2 roads and 22.2 miles of Class 3 roads. Approximately 74% are gravel or dirt, and 26% are paved. In addition, there are 6.9 miles of State highway in Wells, for a total of ~46.2 miles of traveled highways, including Class 4 roads. The local road network is maintained by a Town highway maintenance crew of three full-time employees, whose garage is located on South Street.

The Town’s 2023 structures inventory (short structures and culverts) shows Wells has fourteen (14) short structures (bridges with 6’-20’ span), with one (1) owned and maintained by the State. There are ±429 culverts in the municipal road right-of-way; all were inventoried in 2025 by the RRPC. Of these, 94 culverts are classified as being in “poor”, “urgent”, or “critical” condition and should be considered for replacement and/or upgrade in accordance with the Town’s Road and Bridge Standards.



Source: MRGP Current Summary for Wells, VT

According to VTrans, there are three (3) Town-owned long structures (bridges with >20’ span), with a fourth owned by the State. VTrans inspects long structures every two years through the Town Highway Bridge Program.

The Town’s 2018 road erosion inventory shows that 88.3% of the road mileage is hydrologically connected—meaning it is within 100 feet of a water resource (e.g., stream, wetland, lake, or pond). Proximity to water resources can make these sections of road more vulnerable to flooding and fluvial erosion.

**Table 1: Power Outage Summary**

Average Annual (2020-2024)	
Avg # of times a customer was without power in a year	2.15
Avg length of each outage in hours	6.48
Avg # of hours the typical customer was without power	13.91
2024 only	
Avg # of times a customer was without power in a year	3.54
Avg length of each outage in hours	10.28
Avg # of hours the typical customer was without power	36.35

**Electric Utility Distribution System**

Green Mountain Power provides electric service to approximately 945 accounts via three primary circuits. Average annual outage statistics between 2020 and 2024 are summarized in **Table 1**.

The longest power outage affecting the greatest number of accounts between 2020 and 2024 was 25.33 hours, impacting 759 accounts in 2022 (DR4695). The longest outage during this time period occurred in 2024 with a 45.33-hour outage, but this only impacted 5 accounts. Also in 2024, there was a 16.22-hour outage that affected 164 accounts.

**Public Safety**

The Wells Fire Department, a twenty-member on-call volunteer department, provides local fire protection. The Department is a member of both the Rutland County Mutual Aid Association and the Washington County Mutual Aid Association, allowing for additional assistance from surrounding communities when resources within the Town are maximized. Law enforcement is provided primarily by the Vermont State Police. Additional assistance is provided by contract with the Rutland County Sheriff’s department for 8 hours a week.

Emergency medical response, including ambulance service, is provided by the Granville Rescue Squad in Granville, NY. Two hospitals are equidistant from Wells by ±27 miles: the Rutland Regional Medical Center in Rutland City, and the Glens Falls Hospital in Glens Falls, NY. Specialist/medivac support is available at Dartmouth Hitchcock (±80 miles), the University of Vermont (±80 miles), and LifeNet New York (±44 miles).

## Emergency Management

Per the Town's Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP), the town appoints an Emergency Management Director (EMD) and Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC). These individuals work with others in town to keep the LEMP up to date and coordinate with nearby towns and non-profit agencies that serve at-risk populations. The Town Office serves as the emergency operations center when needed. The Modern Woodman of America (MWA) Halls serve as the primary and alternate local shelters and can operate as a warming and cooling center in the winter and summer, respectively.

## 4 PLANNING PROCESS

### Plan Developers and Plan Development Process

The 2026 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is an update to the 2020 single-jurisdiction mitigation plan. **Table 2** and **Appendix C** provide a summary of the process used to develop the 2026 update. Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Team members include the Selectboard Chair, the Planning Commission Chair, the Road Foreman, and the Emergency Management Coordinator/Town Clerk. It is worth noting that all Planning Team members participated in the 2020 plan update.

#### Table 2: Plan Development Summary

**Sept 22, 2025 Planning Team Kick-off Meeting:** Discussed what an LHMP is; benefits of hazard mitigation planning; current plan status; planning process; and developed the public engagement strategy – see **Appendix C**. Planning Team working meetings were not open to the public.

**Sept-Dec, 2025:** Completed Phase 1 engagement activities – see **Appendix C**.

**Oct 20, 2025 Risk Assessment Workshop:** Confirmed community profile (Section 3), completed risk assessment, and began developing profiles for highest risk natural hazards (Section 5). Subject matter experts attended the workshop to assist with risk assessments for Invasive Species and Infectious Disease.

**Nov 10, 2025 Planning Team Meeting:** Finalized Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (Section 5) with input from Phase 1 engagement. This is a critical milestone in the plan development process. Draft plan was prepared for presentation to the Selectboard and first public comment period.

**Dec 2, 2025 Draft Plan Presentation:** Presented to Selectboard to encourage input from local government and the public that could affect the plan's conclusions and better integrate with Town initiatives. Meeting was recorded and is available on the Town's website.

**Dec 2-16, 2025 Draft Plan Public Comment Period:** Draft plan posted for first public comment period. Draft plan discussed at Dec 16, 2025 Selectboard meeting with opportunity for public comments – coincided with close of first public comment period. Selectboard authorized proceeding with development of mitigation strategy on Dec 16, 2025. Meeting was recorded and is available on the Town's website.

**Jan 5, 2026 Planning Team Meeting:** Discussed comments received on Dec draft; finalized Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (Section 5), and began work on Hazard Mitigation Strategy (Section 6).

**Jan-Apr, 2026:** Completed Phase 2 engagement activities – see **Appendix C**.

**Jan 26, 2026:** Evaluated broad range of possible actions to address highest risk natural hazards. Subject matter experts attended the workshop to assist the planning team with action evaluation.

**Feb 16, 2026 Planning Team Meeting:** Developed actions proposed for implementation (Section 6); began work on Plan Maintenance (Section 7) and Mitigation Strategy – Changes Since 2020 (Section 4).

**Mar 23, 2026 Planning Team Meeting:** Finalized actions proposed for implementation (Section 6) with input from Phase 2 engagement; finished work on Plan Maintenance (Section 7) and Mitigation Strategy – Changes Since 2020 (Section 4). The final draft plan was prepared for presentation to the Selectboard and second public comment period.

**Apr 7, 2026 Final Draft Plan Presentation:** Presented to Selectboard to encourage input from local government and the public.

**Apr 7-21, 2026 Final Draft Plan Public Comment Period:** Final draft plan posted for last public comment period. Draft Plan discussed at Apr 21, 2026 Selectboard meeting with opportunity for public comment – coincided with close of last public comment period. At meeting, Selectboard granted approval to submit the final draft Plan to Vermont Emergency Management for Approval Pending Adoption.

In addition to the local knowledge of Planning Team members and other relevant parties, several existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information were utilized in the preparation of this Plan – see **Table 3**.

**Table 3: Existing Plans, Studies, Reports, & Technical Information**

2025 FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Handbook & 2025 FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Policy Guide used to ensure plan meets the Federal mitigation planning requirements.

2025 FEMA NFIP Insurance Reports used to determine how many structures are insured and number and type of repetitive loss properties (Section 5) and describe NFIP compliance (Section 6).

2025 Local Emergency Management Plan primarily used to identify local organizations that support at-risk populations to ensure these organizations are invited to participate in the plan update.

2025 State of Vermont Highway Mileage Summary used to develop Transportation information in Community Profile (Section 3).

2025 Town of Wells Municipal Plan Referenced to develop multiple sections of the Community Profile; Mitigation Strategy Updates – Changes Since 2020 (Section 4); and Community Capabilities and Integrating Into Existing Plans and Procedures (Section 6).

2024-2020 Green Mountain Power Outage Data used to develop Table 1 in Community Profile.

2023 Structures Inventory (culverts and short structures) referenced to develop flood risk profile and mitigation actions to address floods (Section 6).

2023 State of Vermont Hazard Mitigation Plan primarily referenced to develop the risk assessment, including invasive species and infectious disease, and hazard profiles.

2023 State of Vermont Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool referenced to develop the Average Temperatures information in Community Profile and the risk assessment and hazard profiles.

2021 Vermont Climate Assessment referenced to develop the flood risk profile.

2020 United States Census Report referenced to develop the Demographics and Growth Potential information in Community Profile.

2019 Wells River / Lake Saint Catherine Watershed Stormwater Master Plan referenced to develop the flood risk hazard profile and mitigation actions to address floods.

2019 Road Erosion Inventory referenced to develop the Transportation information in Community Profile, the flood risk hazard profile; and mitigation actions to address floods .

2013 FEMA Mitigation Ideas Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards used to develop mitigation actions to address impacts from severe winter storms, high wind, floods, and extreme heat (Section 6).

2013 FEMA Mitigation Ideas Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards used to develop mitigation actions to address impacts from severe winter storms, high wind, floods, and extreme heat (Section 6).

2008 Flood Insurance Study for Rutland County, Vermont Referenced for community profile in Section 3; however, given the age of the document and the hydrologic and hydraulic analyses for the Town of Wells, it provided little in terms of assessing and profiling current flood risk.

2007 Mettowee River Phase 2 and 2005 Mettowee River Phase 1 Stream Geomorphic Assessments referenced to develop the flood risk hazard profile and mitigation actions to address floods.

Flood Ready Vermont used to develop the flood risk profile and State Incentives for Flood Mitigation (Section 6).

VTrans Town Highway Bridge Inspection Reports used to develop the flood risk profile and mitigation actions to address floods.

Vermont Statewide Highway Flood Vulnerability and Risk Map used to develop the risk profile in Section 5 and mitigation actions to address floods in Section 6.

VTrans Transportation Resilience Planning Tool Used to develop the flood risk profile and mitigation actions to address floods

Vermont Dam Inventory (VDI) Used to develop the flood risk profile and mitigation actions to address floods.

RRPC Local Liaison Reports of Storm Damage Used to develop the risk profiles and hazard histories in Section 5.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric (NOAA) National Climatic Data Center's Storm Events Database Regional data for Rutland County used to develop the risk profiles and hazard histories.

FEMA Disaster Declarations for Vermont Used to develop the risk profiles and hazard histories

GIS Data Layers incorporated into base mapping to assess and profile flood hazards, including FEMA National Flood Hazard Layers and State River Corridor Assessments.

OpenFEMA Dataset: Public Assistance Funded Project Summaries for Vermont used to develop the risk profiles and hazard histories.

## Mitigation Strategy Update – Changes Since 2020

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(Placeholder)

## 5 HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

### Local Vulnerabilities and Risk Assessment

The Planning Team completed a risk assessment for a broad range of natural hazards, consistent with those in the 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan. Hazards were ranked based on 1) probability of occurrence and 2) potential impact on community assets—people, infrastructure, the environment, and the local economy. The assessment considered the effects of future conditions, like climate change, on the type, location, and range of intensities of identified hazards.

The ranking process is presented in **Table 4** on the following page and reflects the **highest-risk hazards** the Town believes it is most vulnerable to. The **highest-risk hazards** are those with a higher probability of occurrence and/or more severe or extensive impacts on community assets.

Each of the **highest-risk hazards** is profiled in this section. Lower risk hazards do not justify mitigation due to a lower probability of occurrence and/or negligible impacts and are not profiled in this Plan. Refer to the State Hazard Mitigation Plan for additional information on lower-risk hazards.

A summary of the risk assessment, including input from Phase 1 engagement activities, is provided here: See **Appendix C** for more details about engagement methods and the number of respondents.

#### Phase 1 Engagement: Natural Risks and Hazards in Wells

Hazard	Risk Score	Phase 1 Engagement Input
<b>Extreme Heat</b>	<b>9.00</b>	40% of survey respondents have experienced extreme heat; 23% believe it is likely to occur in the next 5 years
<b>Invasive Species</b>	<b>8.00</b>	(not surveyed)
<b>Drought</b>	<b>7.50</b>	87% of survey respondents have experienced drought; voted #1 of the top 3 hazards most likely to occur in the next 5 years
<b>Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice</b>	<b>7.50</b>	77% of survey respondents have experienced extreme winter events; voted #3 of the top 3 hazards most likely to occur in the next 5 years
<b>Strong Wind</b>	<b>7.00</b>	87% of survey respondents have experienced extreme heat; voted #2 of the top 3 hazards most likely to occur in the next 5 years
<b>Flash Floods/ Fluvial Erosion</b>	<b>3.50</b>	40% of survey respondents have experienced flash flooding; 27% believe it is likely to occur in the next 5 years

#### In this Plan, natural hazards are defined as:

- Geological hazards including landslides and earthquakes.
- Environmental and climatic hazards including flooding, wind, hail, snow and ice storms, extreme temperatures, drought, wildfire, and invasive species.
- Biological hazards including infectious disease that can become epidemics or pandemics.

#### Infectious Disease

This Plan must assess the risks posed by all hazards identified in the 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan, including infectious diseases. This hazard is unique and diverse. While the probability of occurrence in Wells may be high, the potential impacts will depend heavily on the specific infectious agent.

During the risk assessment, the Planning Team assumed an endemic level of infectious disease spread. They concluded that the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), located in nearby Rutland City, is better equipped to mitigate any outbreaks; therefore, the team considered it a lower-risk hazard for the municipality.

Given the diverse nature of this hazard, this Plan cannot fully explore it. Readers should look to VDH for more information on infectious diseases.

**Table 4: Community Hazard Risk Assessment**

Hazards	Probability	Potential Impact					Risk Score
		 People	 Infrastructure	 Environment	 Economy	Average	
<b>Extreme Heat</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>9.00</b>
<b>Invasive Species</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>8.00</b>
<b>Drought</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>7.50</b>
<b>Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>8.25</b>
<b>Strong Wind</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>7.00</b>
Flash Floods/ Fluvial Erosion	2	1	2	2	2	1.75	3.50
Infectious Disease	2	4	1	1	1	1.75	3.50
Hail	3	1	1	1	1	1.00	3.00
Inundation Floods	2	2	1	1	1	1.25	2.50
Earthquake	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00
Landslide	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00
Wildfire	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00

\*Score = Probability x Average Potential Impact

	<b>Frequency of Occurrence:</b> Probability of a plausibly significant event	<b>Potential Impact:</b> Severity and extent of damage and disruption to population, property, environment, and the economy
<b>1</b>	<b>Unlikely:</b> <1% probability of occurrence per year	<b>Negligible:</b> isolated occurrences of minor property and environmental damage, potential for minor injuries, no to minimal economic disruption
<b>2</b>	<b>Occasionally:</b> 1–10% probability of occurrence per year, or at least one chance in next 100 years	<b>Minor:</b> isolated occurrences of moderate to severe property and environmental damage, potential for injuries, minor economic disruption
<b>3</b>	<b>Likely:</b> >10% but <75% probability per year, at least 1 chance in next 10 years	<b>Moderate:</b> severe property and environmental damage on a community scale, injuries or fatalities, short-term economic impact
<b>4</b>	<b>Highly Likely:</b> >75% probability in a year	<b>Major:</b> severe property and environmental damage on a community or regional scale, multiple injuries or fatalities, significant economic impact

### Invasive Species

This Plan must assess the risks posed by all hazards identified in the 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan, including invasive species. This hazard is unique and diverse. While the probability of occurrence in Wells may be high, potential impacts will depend heavily on the specific invasive species.

For invasive species, the team focused on a specific forest pest of high concern, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), due to confirmed detections in Wells and many nearby municipalities. They concluded that EAB infestation is highly likely and that minor to moderate impacts justified mitigation. Concern was also voiced about the spread of Eurasian Milfoil in Lake St. Catherine. Dense milfoil stands can obstruct water flow, especially in drainage systems, which may exacerbate flooding conditions in nearby areas.

Given the diverse nature of this hazard, this Plan cannot fully explore it. Readers should consult the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources for more information on invasive species (terrestrial, aquatic, and forest pests).

## Highest Risk Hazard Profiles



### Extreme Heat

This is an emerging concern for communities acclimated to a cooler environment. Excessive heat events involve a combination of significantly high temperatures and high humidity. Multiple (at least 3) consecutive days of excessive heat, during which the maximum temperature exceeds 90°F, are known as heat waves. Vermont's "heat season" typically lasts from May to September.

From 2001-2010, Rutland County experienced one heat wave in August 2006, with no reported damage.

From 2011 to 2020, Rutland County experienced five heat waves, four of which occurred during the Vermont heat season. The fifth, which occurred in March 2012, resulted in \$650,000 in damage to the regional maple sugaring industry.

From 2021 to 2025, several short-lived heat outbreaks occurred, but these were too brief to be formally defined as heatwaves. The first true heat wave during this period happened in August 2025.



Vermont Department of Health data indicates that state residents experience heat-related illnesses at around 87°F. While everyone is affected by hot weather, the risk of heat illness is greater for frontline populations, outdoor workers, urban residents, and the homeless. Other at-risk indicators include living alone, having limited transportation options, and lacking air conditioning or other cooling options. Wells's older population, outdoor workers (primarily in farming and forestry), and those living in older houses without central air or air conditioning are especially at risk from the impacts of extreme heat.

Wells does not have a system for monitoring the needs of at-risk populations before or during extreme weather events. However, it can provide aid if requested, and the Town can set up a temporary cooling center at the Modern Woodmen of America (MWA) Halls if needed.



The materials used in transportation infrastructure exhibit a limited range of heat tolerance. Asphalt can melt and crack upon cooling, while concrete can buckle due to limited room for the slab to expand. Thermal expansion may cause bridge connections to swell and collapse.

The Town has a high percentage of unpaved roads and thus perceives a lower susceptibility to damage to its highway infrastructure, specifically asphalt cracking. Given Wells's reliance on drilled wells, increased evaporation rates may hinder access to potable water for homes that cannot draw it from the lakes.



A gradually warming climate will increase soil drying rates, contributing to drought-like conditions. Heat-stressed trees are more likely to succumb to disease or pest invasions. Conversely, warmer air can hold more water vapor, which in turn influences the frequency and magnitude of extreme precipitation events that weaken tree integrity.

Drought-like conditions can also increase the potential for brush fires. Brush fire probability depends on local weather conditions (lightning, drought, extreme heat);

**Excessive temperatures have and will continue to impact Wells.** 40% of survey respondents said they have experience with extreme heat events, while 23% believe one is likely to occur in the next five years.

outdoor activities (camping, debris burning); and the amount of “fuel” present in the environment. While Wells has not experienced a notable brush fire in recent years, other municipalities in Rutland County have, including nearby Castleton and Fair Haven.



Higher temperatures, especially if accompanied by drought, can significantly impact crops and other agricultural operations. Additionally, the potential for harmful algal blooms in water bodies increases, which may negatively affect local tourism.

### Extreme Heat Hazard History

These are the most recent significant events impacting Wells. Hazard histories are limited to 20 years in the past. All damages are to property unless otherwise noted.

7/7/2020: Apparent temps of 95-100°F for four days; no reported damages

6/18/2020: Apparent temps of 95-100°F for six days; no reported damages

7/1/2018: Apparent temps of 95-110°F for six days; no reported damages

3/17/2012: 70 and 80°F temps, with maximums 30-40°F above normal for four days; \$650,000 regional damage to maple sugaring industry

7/21/2011: Apparent temps of 100-108°F for four days; no reported damages

8/1-8/2/2006: 90°F temps with an excessive heat index of 100-105°F; no reported damages



### Invasive Species

These are typically introduced to non-native ecosystems by human activity, both intentional and accidental. Not every non-native species is invasive; the organism must be capable of causing harm to the environment, the economy, or human health. The exact nature of these harms varies by species, but commonalities include changes in native species composition, disruptions of natural ecosystem functions, and millions of dollars spent annually on control and prevention measures.

**Once detected, invasive species are virtually impossible to eradicate or contain.** Millions of dollars are spent annually in Vermont on long-term management and asset protection.

Though many aquatic and terrestrial invasives currently inhabit Vermont, forest pests are most relevant given their impacts on local trees. Examples include Asian long-horned beetle, oak wilt, and spotted lanternfly.

Given the data available, this Plan examines the impacts posed by the emerald ash borer (*Agilus planipennis*), an exotic beetle. Emerald ash borer (EAB) is well established in Rutland County and was first detected in Wells in 2025. As of November 2025, nearby municipalities with confirmed EAB infestations include Danby, Middletown Springs, Pawlet, Poultney, and Tinmouth. According to the USDA, it is not currently in Granville, NY, but an infestation here is inevitable, as every other county in New York, except Washington, has confirmed EAB infestations.

EAB larvae burrow through the inner layer of the ash tree’s bark, impeding the tree’s ability to conduct water and nutrients throughout the tree. Lacking sufficient water and nutrients, healthy ash trees can die within 1-4 years of exhibiting the first signs of invasion.



Those working to remove an infested tree are at the greatest risk of injury. Once infested, the tree becomes brittle, significantly increasing the risk and complexity of its removal.



Photo Credit: State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets



Infested trees along roads become hazards as they die, pulling down powerlines or falling into the roadway. During high precipitation events, they also add to riverine debris. The Town does not have an ash tree roadside inventory, so it is currently unknown how many ash trees are within the road right-of-way in Wells.



Because 5% of Vermont’s trees are ash, the State’s forest composition is vulnerable to this invasive species. While it is present in most Vermont counties, its population is low, and it has infested only a small percentage of the state’s total ash trees. The location and number of ash trees at risk in Wells are currently unknown.

Delaney Woods, a 173-acre municipal forest, is a valuable ecological and recreational asset that may be vulnerable. However, the anticipated impact is minimal, as the forest is composed primarily of softwoods, with hardwoods limited to oak and maple.



EAB has serious financial implications for forest landowners and municipalities, including productive timber losses and costs to remove ash trees along roadsides. Assigning financial losses for Rutland County specifically would be difficult, so this information is not included.

### **Emerald Ash Borer Hazard History**

Because invasive species often spread over a long period, identifying a hazard event involving them is difficult. FEMA also does not declare federal disasters for invasive species outbreaks.



### **Drought**

This type of natural hazard is characterized by a period of lower-than-average precipitation, leading to a water shortage. It is typically a slow-onset natural hazard that can last months or years. Higher temperatures, water demands exceeding availability, low winter snowpack, and insufficient rainfall are all factors that can lead to a significant drought.

Drought is a natural part of the climate cycle and can occur anywhere, at any time. It is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to monitor and assess because it develops slowly and covers extensive areas. This is unique in comparison to other disasters that have rapid onsets and apparent destruction. Refer to the 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan for a complete discussion of how drought differs from other natural hazards and of extreme heat trends in Vermont.

The USDA rates droughts from D0-D4, depending on the severity of the drought, the amount of time it will take for vegetation to return to normal levels, and the possible effects of the drought on the vegetation and water supply:

Category	Description	Possible Impacts
D0	Abnormally dry	Short-term dryness is slowing the planting/growing of crops or pastures.
D1	Moderate Drought	Some damage to crops and pastures. Streams, reservoirs, or wells are low; some water shortages are developing or imminent. Voluntary water restrictions are requested.
D2	Severe Drought	Crop or pasture loss is likely. Water shortages are common; water restrictions are imposed.
D3	Extreme Drought	Major crop/pasture losses; widespread water shortages or restrictions.
D4	Exceptional Drought	Exceptional and widespread crop/pasture losses; shortages of water in reservoirs, streams, and wells, creating water emergencies.

For the purposes of this Plan, all moderate drought events (i.e., in which any percentage of the cumulative percent of land area is classified as D1 for at least four weeks) and above are featured in this hazard profile. For a history of abnormally dry events in Rutland County, see the U.S. Drought Monitor.

From 2001-2010, Rutland County experienced a moderate drought from Aug 2001 – Mar 2002. Severe drought (D2) occurred over a small area ( $\leq 1\%$ ) in Nov and Dec 2001.

*87% of survey respondents have experienced drought. During the past 20 years, Rutland County has seen several instances of moderate drought (D1) and severe drought (D2). **Extreme drought (D3) made its first appearance since the 20<sup>th</sup> century in September 2025.***

From 2011-2020, Rutland County experienced periods of moderate drought from May-June 2015, June-Aug 2016, Sept 2016 – Apr 2017, Jun – Sept 2018, and Jun 2020 – Dec 2020. Severe drought occurred in a majority of the county from Oct-Nov 2016 (~63% of cumulative land area) and a small portion of the county in Sept-Oct 2020 (~5% cumulative land area).

From 2021-May 2025, Rutland County experienced a moderate drought during the following periods: Jan – Apr 2021, July-Sept 2022, and Nov 2024-Mar 2025. From Sept-Oct 2025, much of the County experienced at least a severe drought ( $\geq 88\%$  cumulative land area), with extreme drought affecting 75% of the Region.



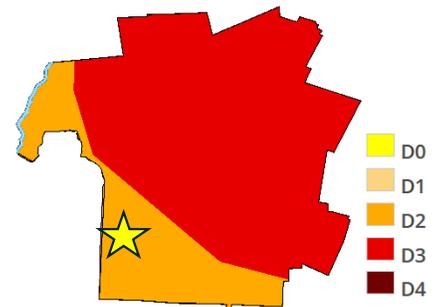
Drought ranked #1 of the top three hazards likely to occur in the next five years. It can lead to low or dry water levels in drinking water wells. This is particularly concerning for the Village, which has shallow wells. In addition to the obvious effects on water quantity, water quality suffers due to increased concentrations of contaminants such as lead. In conjunction with extreme temperatures, drought can compromise food and nutrition and increase incidents of illness and disease.

Because drought is strongly correlated with extreme heat, there is overlap with the populations at higher risk- mainly the youth, the elderly, outdoor workers, expecting mothers, and those with pre-existing health conditions.



Structural impacts of drought are uncommon, making the risk to municipal buildings, facilities, infrastructure, or governmental functions low. If a drought is severe enough in its frequency, duration, and/or intensity, it may require the construction of new community water supplies with better storage capability.

There are several existing bodies of water in Wells. Lake Saint Catherine is for drinking water on a small-scale, individual basis, mainly for campsites. The lake is unlikely to be used for large-scale portable water supply; residents are more likely to drill new, deeper wells on their properties if their current sources run dry.



Source: USDA Drought Monitor Map for Rutland County: Oct 7, 2025



The impacts of drought on the natural environment can be extensive. Primarily, water availability becomes severely constrained for both cultivated and wild plants and animals. During droughts, deciduous trees in Vermont have experienced leaf scorch, leaf yellowing, and early leaf color change, all indicators of poor leaf health. One survey respondent noticed these signs in wooded locations throughout Wells during the most recent drought.

As water levels in underground aquifers fall, the ground runs the risk of subsidence. Subsidence is the sinking of the ground, which can impact roads and buildings and can lead to the formation of sinkholes. Historic drought events suggest this is not likely in Wells, especially given the prevalence of ledges and steep slopes in Town.



There may be situations in which water-intensive industries and agricultural production shift to other locations due to water scarcity. Other industries directly affected include energy, tourism, and fisheries. The wide-ranging impacts of drought can consist of job losses, business failures, and lost investments. In Wells, where industry is minimal, the greatest threat is posed to local water bodies used for recreation due to lower water levels and poor water quality.

## Drought Hazard History

These are the most recent significant events impacting Wells. Hazard histories are limited to 20 years in the past, except for federal Rutland County Disaster Declarations, which are depicted in **bold**. All damages are to property unless otherwise noted.

Sept-Oct 2025: D3 drought in 75% of county

Nov 2024 – Mar 2025: D1 drought in 0-50% of county

Jul-Sept 2022: D1 drought in 0-33% of county

### **11/11/2020: USDA Disaster S4869 2020 Crop Year**

Jun 2020 – July 2021: Multiple periods of D1 drought in county; D1 drought in 100% of county in Jul-Aug 2020 and Mar-Apr 2021; D2 drought in 5% of county in Sept-Oct 2020

Jun - Sept 2018: D1 drought in 40-100% of county

Feb – Apr 2017: D1 drought in 0-20% of county

Sept 2016 – Feb 2017: D1 drought in 90%-100% of county; D2 drought in 65% of county from Oct-Nov 2016

June – Aug 2016: D1 drought in 0-15% of county

May-June 2015: D1 drought in 0-50% of county

### **6/5/2012: USDA Disaster S3249 2012 Crop Year**



## Extreme Cold, Snow, and Ice

These events typically occur between December and March in the Rutland Region. They can include snow, sleet, freezing rain, or a mix of these wintry forms of precipitation. Events can also be associated with Strong Wind or Floods, increasing the potential hazard impacts. The costs of these storms include power outages due to heavy snow or ice, damaged trees, school closures, and traffic accidents.

From 2001 to 2010, Rutland County experienced \$2.27 million in property damage and \$100,000 in crop damage from winter storms, including Disaster Declarations DR3167 in 2001 and DR1698 in 2007.

From 2011 to 2020, Rutland County experienced \$1.4 million in property damage, and \$100,000 in crop damage from winter storms, with \$465,000 in property damage due to a 10” – 20” heavy, wet snowfall across the county on December 9, 2014 (DR4207).

*68% of survey participants are concerned about extreme winter storms in the next 5 years. **Impacts of greatest concern** are extended periods of extreme cold coupled with a long-duration power outage.*

From 2021 to May 2025, Rutland County experienced \$110,000 million in property damage and \$1.02 million in crop damage due to a hard freeze in May 2023 (S5470).



Extreme cold/snow/ice ranked #3 of the top three hazards likely to occur in the next five years. Severe winter storms increase the risk of car accidents, and extreme cold increases the risk of hypothermia and frostbite. This threat is amplified if extreme temperatures coincide with power outages, which can cut off heat and communications. See the Strong Wind profile for more information about the Town’s vulnerability to power outages.

The impacts of extreme cold and severe winter storms are hardest felt by Wells’s at-risk populations—the disabled, the elderly, outdoor workers, and those living in substandard housing. About 12% of Wells residents are considered disabled; 26% of residents are over the age of 65; 16% work consistently in outdoor conditions; and 84% of houses were built before 2000. The Town has particular concern for the more isolated residents in highly rural areas without reliable communications, mainly along Lamb Hill and Sawmill Hill Roads.

The Town does not have a system for monitoring the needs of at-risk populations before or during an extreme winter storm. However, it provides aid if requested and can set up temporary warming shelters at the MWA Halls if needed.



Car accidents are a leading cause of death and injury during winter storms. To lessen roadway impacts, the Town maintains a fleet of equipment, including two tandem dump trucks equipped with four plows, one backhoe wheel loader, one grader, and one excavator. Overhead utility lines that are covered in ice or wet snow accumulation pose the greatest risk to infrastructure; see below.

As shown on the following map (page 21), roads historically prone to drifting include High Chapparral Road, Lamb Hill Road, Mill Pond Road, and West Lake Road. However, these areas are maintained accordingly, and snow accumulation and ice events typically do not result in a long-term loss of road accessibility. Roads adjacent to critical facilities (Town Garage, Town Office, Village School, MWA Halls) are well-maintained.

Although its effects are currently limited, there's potential for “mud season” to worsen. This period usually starts in late March or early April, when the snow melts and the ground thaws, only to refreeze and create mud on gravel roads. As hard winter freezes become less frequent, Wells is experiencing thaw-freeze cycles earlier in the season. This makes plowing gravel roads more challenging, as one survey respondent noted – “Mud season on our rural roads [is] sometimes impassable. This causes problems if a fire truck or ambulance is needed.” However, the Town is closely monitoring this situation and has already used techniques (e.g., the French Mattress) on Sawmill Hill Road to improve drainage conditions.



The primary environmental concern is tree damage. Trees provide many environmental services and benefits, including stormwater management, improved air quality, carbon storage, shade, wildlife habitat, noise reduction, and aesthetic value.

Wells’s vulnerability lies with roadside trees falling into the road and/or onto utility lines due to the weight of ice or wet snow accumulation. The resulting impacts include the loss of trees, utility disruptions, and road debris that require clearing.

Another survey respondent stated – “I think we have been making ourselves extremely vulnerable to extended power outages.... There are so many wires and devices on the distribution poles [that] they look very vulnerable to wind, ice, wet snow, and the trees that overhang them.”



As stated previously, the Town’s commercial sector is minimal. The few farms and lumber operations that exist in Wells are mainly vulnerable. Home-based businesses are also at risk in the short term; potential impacts include inaccessibility, commute delays, and frozen pipes.

## Extreme Cold, Snow, and Ice Hazard History

These are the most recent significant events impacting Wells. Hazard histories are limited to 20 years in the past, except for federal Rutland County Disaster Declarations, which are depicted in **bold**. All damages are to property unless otherwise noted.

### **5/18/2023: S5470 record low in the 20s: \$1,025,000 regional crop damage**

1/16/2021: 3-6" wet snow: \$60,000 regional damage

2/7/2020: 8-12" snow; ¼" ice: \$35,000 regional damage

1/19/2019: 10-18" snow; -10 to -20 below zero degrees with 30+ mph winds creating windchills colder than 20-40 below zero: \$25,000 regional damage

3/7/2018: 8-10" snow: \$20,000 regional damage

3/14/2017: 12-22" snow; 35 mph wind creating whiteout conditions: \$50,000 regional damage

11/29/2016: freezing rain, ⅓" ice: \$20,000 regional damage

2/1-2/2015: Record cold month with 15-20+ days below zero and 6" snow: \$25,000 regional damage

1/7/2015: 0-10 degrees with wind of 15-30 mph creating wind chills colder than 20-30 below zero: no reported damage

### **12/9/2014: DR4207 10-20" snow: \$34,830 local damage; \$300,000 regional damage**

3/12/2014: 8-24" snow: \$55,000 regional damage

12/26/2012: Snowfall rate of 1-2" per hour with accumulations of 6-8": \$30,000 regional damage

4/28/2012: sub-freezing temps in 20s for three consecutive nights: \$100,000 regional crop damage

2/23/2010: 6-30" snow: \$300,000 regional damage

12/11/2008: 5-9" snow/ice glaze: \$75,000 regional damage

2/14/2007: 15-35" snow and 0-10 degrees, with wind of 15-25 mph creating windchills colder than 10 below zero; \$275,000 regional damage

2/10/2005: 8-18" snow: \$100,000 regional damage

### **3/5/2001: DR3167 20-30" snow: no reported local damage; \$100,000 regional damage**



## Strong Wind

As defined by FEMA's National Risk Index, strong wind is that which exceeds 58 mph and can be particularly damaging. It can occur alone, such as during straight-line wind events, or can accompany other natural hazards, including severe thunder and/or winter storms.

From 2001 to 2010, Rutland County incurred nearly \$7.9 million in property damage, with the most significant damage amounting to \$4.5 million from an event on April 16, 2007.

From 2011 to 2020, Rutland County experienced over \$2.4 million in property damage, with the most significant incident resulting in \$500,000 in damage on May 5, 2017. On

August 21, 2011, an estimated \$80,000 in damage occurred in Wells due to an event with winds over 70 mph.

From 2021 to May 2025, wind events caused over \$1.3 million in property damage in Rutland County, with the most significant damage totaling \$500,000 from an August 26, 2022 event. In December 2022, a felled tree caused one death in nearby Castleton (DR-4695)<sup>2</sup> with an additional two injuries in Rutland County.



Strong wind was ranked #2 among the top three hazards likely to occur in the next five years. It threatens lives, property, and vital utilities primarily because of flying debris or downed trees and power lines. Areas of concern for strong winds are shown on the following map (page 21).

**87% of survey respondents have experienced a strong wind event.** Many storms with high winds can result in downed trees and damage to phone and power lines, buildings, and other property.

<sup>2</sup> While DR4695 is classified under severe storms and flooding, the mortality in Castleton is directly linked to a tree felled by wind.

Those relying on electric-powered medical devices are especially at risk during power outages. Also, because there is no municipal water system, those who rely on private wells lose access to water. Without a backup power supply, people need to be prepared to withstand potentially 24 hours or more without power or to seek alternative accommodations. As noted in the Community Profile, the longest outage in the Town occurred in 2024, lasting 45.33 hours. In 2022, the average outage lasted 28.45 hours.



Downed trees within the road right-of-way are a significant cause of power outages. Roads passing through dense wooded areas are especially vulnerable, as fallen trees can bring down utility lines for power and telecommunications. Power outages are the main reason for disrupting communications, which are crucial in times of crisis.



The loss of phone service is especially concerning for Wells’s more remote homes, at-risk populations, and seasonal residents. Landline phones, which have been upgraded from copper wires to fiber, depend on an in-home battery backup that usually lasts less than eight hours regardless of phone use. Notably, all municipal buildings have recently transitioned to fiber. The local Planning Team also expressed concerns about Fidium, the fiber provider, and its slow response times. While many residents rely on cell phones, service in Wells remains inconsistent, making it harder to reach emergency services during outages.

As described by one survey respondent – *“There is no cell service in many places including my residence or others close to me. It's elevation dependent which is not so bad for healthy, mobile people. For the less capable, like myself, losing the copper from Consolidated to switch to fiber with Fidium has made me more vulnerable to isolation if/when I lose power. I used to just plug in an old dial phone - an option I no longer have. I don't know if GMP or Fidium know if a customer loses service unless it is phoned in.”*

The Planning Team noted that multiple new towers are expected to come online by early 2026, which should significantly alleviate the hindrance posed by poor cellular coverage.

Telecommunications are essential for warning systems before disasters and for response and recovery efforts. During an emergency, the Wells Town Office’s local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) manages municipal communications, including phone calls, internet access, and two-way radios. Most critical facilities, like the Town Office, Town Garage, Village School, and Village Library, have on-site generators. However, the MWA Halls, which serve as alternative local shelters, do not have backup power.

In addition to utility outages, fallen trees can damage buildings and block road access. When fallen trees become entangled in utility lines, clearing debris from the roadway becomes more difficult, and restoring access can take longer.



Like extreme winter storms, the primary environmental impact of concern is tree damage. Damage or loss to them detracts from the quality of the ecological services they provide.



Strong winds, with associated power outages, can have a short-term impact on the local economy by causing business closures or blocking commutes due to downed trees or power lines.

## Strong Wind Hazard History

These are the most recent significant events impacting Wells. Hazard histories are limited to 20 years in the past, except for federal Rutland County Disaster Declarations, which are depicted in **bold**. All damages are to property unless otherwise noted.

2/16/2025: 52 mph winds; no reported damages

4/3/2024: 52 mph winds: \$100,000 regional damage

2/28/2024: 48 mph winds: \$50,000 regional damage

12/23/2022: 48 mph winds: \$175,000 regional damage

12/11/2021: 40 mph winds: \$35,000 regional damage

3/1/2021: 39 mph winds: \$55,000 regional damage

8/4/2020: 45 mph winds: \$60,000 regional damage

2/24/2019: 48 mph winds: \$50,000 regional damage

4/1/2018: 63 mph winds: \$100,000 regional damage

10/30/2017: 40 mph winds: \$200,000 regional damage

5/18/2017: 59 mph winds: \$10,000 local damage

5/5/2017: 74 mph winds: \$525,000 regional damage

2/29/2016: 39 mph winds: \$20,000 regional damage

9/11/2013: 55 mph winds: \$25,000 local damage

1/20/2013: 43 mph winds: \$25,000 regional damage

12/21/2012: 61 mph winds: \$100,000 regional damage

10/29/2012: 43 mph winds: \$40,000 regional damage

**8/28/2011: DR4022 48 mph winds: \$100,000 regional damage**

8/21/2011: 70 mph winds: \$75,000 local damage, \$10,000 crop damage

12/1/2010: 56 mph winds: \$350,000 regional damage

2/26/2010: 50 mph winds: \$75,000 regional damage

12/9/2009: 55 mph winds: \$35,000 regional damage

3/5/2008: 43 mph winds: \$35,000 regional damage

**4/15-16/2007: DR1698 “Nor’icane” 3” snow and rain, 60-80 mph wind: \$4.5 mil regional damage**

2/17/2006: 37 mph winds: \$125,000 regional damage

9/29/2005: 35 mph winds: \$150,000 regional damage



## Floods

Flood events can damage or destroy property, disable utilities, render roads and bridges impassable, destroy crops and agricultural lands, disrupt emergency services, and result in fatalities. People may be stranded in their homes without power, heat, or communication, or unable to reach them. Long-term collateral dangers include disease outbreaks, livestock losses, septic system washouts, which can pollute the water supply, downed power lines, fuel storage tank leaks, fires, and the release of hazardous materials.

For a multitude of reasons, flooding did not have a sufficiently high risk score to formally be considered a high-risk hazard during the risk assessment. However, it is included among the highest-risk hazard profiles given its significance to Vermont, as described below.

As noted in the 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan and 2021 Vermont Climate Assessment, the most common recurring hazard event impacting Vermont communities is flooding. There are two types of flooding: inundation and flash flooding. Inundation flooding is when water rises onto low-lying land. Flash flooding is a sudden, violent flood that often involves streambank erosion (fluvial erosion).

While inundation-related flood loss can be a significant component of flood disasters, the more common mode of damage in Vermont is fluvial erosion, often associated with physical adjustment of stream channel dimensions and location during flood events. These dynamic and often catastrophic adjustments are due to bed and bank erosion of naturally occurring unstable stream banks, debris and ice jams, or structural failure of or flow diversion by human-made structures.

Several major flood events have recently affected Rutland County, resulting in multiple Disaster Declarations. Between 2001 and 2010, the county incurred approximately \$2.6 million in property damage resulting from flood events. The worst flood came in August 2011 from Tropical Storm Irene (DR4022), which dropped 7-8 inches of rain. Irene caused 2 deaths, \$55 million in property damage, and \$2.5 million in crop damage in Rutland County.

**Wells experienced approximately \$17,195 in local damage during Irene** - \$5,153 in Individual Assistance and \$12,039 in Public Assistance. (There were no National Flood Insurance Program Claims in Wells for DR4022) This was the second-lowest amount of damage incurred in Rutland County, falling short only of the Town of Tinmouth by around \$400.

Although Irene was technically a tropical storm, its effects are included in this flooding section because the storm brought mainly heavy rainfall and flooding to the Town, rather than the strong winds usually associated with tropical storms. This caused most streams and rivers to flood, along with widespread and severe fluvial erosion. In Wells, impacts were mainly limited to East Wells and Tunkets Roads.

From 2012 to 2020, Rutland County experienced approximately \$3.6 million in property and crop damage and three Disaster Declarations: \$420,000 in June & July 2013 (DR4140), \$2 million in July 2017 (DR4330), and \$1 million in April 2019 (DR4445).

According to the NOAA Storm Events database, Rutland County experienced approximately \$200,000 in property damage in July 2023 (DR4720). However, FEMA's Public Assistance Project Summary indicates this number could reach \$4.4 million. The only other instance of significant flooding-related damage in Rutland County occurred in July 2024 (DR4762), resulting in approximately \$50,000 in property damage.

While flooding is possible in Wells, its severity and extent are limited, as shown by the lack of recent photos. Areas of concern for inundation flooding are shown on the following map. Since 2020, the Town has mitigated areas of concern for inundation flooding; refer to page [XX](#) for more details.

There are 116 properties in the FEMA-mapped floodplain, as well as roads, culverts, and bridges. In addition, five properties are located in the FEMA floodway. However, Planning Team members expressed concern about the accuracy of the flood limits depicted in the current FIRMs.

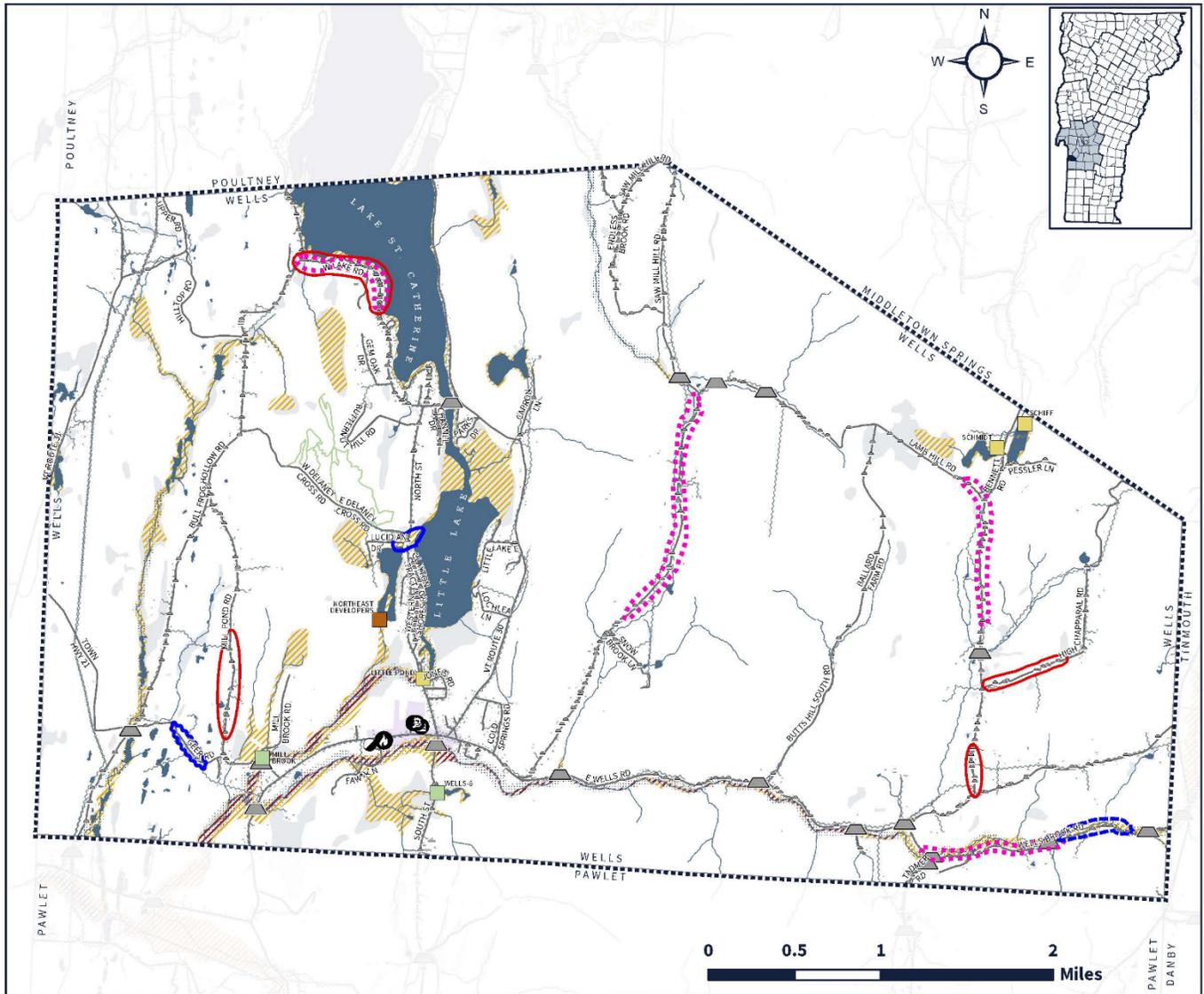
*An estimated 116 buildings (~15% of community structures) are in the Special Flood Hazard Area; predominantly single and multi-family dwellings and camps. There are also some seasonal and mobile homes, accessory buildings/barns, and a boat ramp/dock.*

*According to FEMA, 2% of properties have flood insurance. In total, these twelve policies cover \$2,745,000 in value.*

***There are no repetitive loss properties.***

Unlike inundation floods, flash floods can occur whenever the area has heavy rain. These flood events are inherently sudden and unpredictable and can impact areas outside of designated floodplains, also known as River Corridors. Wells is vulnerable to flash flooding primarily on East Wells Road and Geers Road.

# WELLS



## Flood Area of Concern

- Flash Flood
- Fluvial Erosion
- Inundation Flood
- Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice
- High Wind Area of Concern
- Emergency Operations Center

- Shelter
- Firehouse
- School

## Dams

- Significant Hazard Potential
- Low Hazard Potential
- Minimal Hazard Potential

- Designated Village
- Critical Asset
- Buildings
- Trails
- Power Lines
- Roads
- Bridges
- Culverts

- Lakes & Ponds
- Rivers & Streams
- Wetlands
- River Corridors

## FEMA Floodplain

- FEMA Floodplain
- FEMA Floodway

Credits: Nic Stark for the Rutland Regional Planning Commission | Produced: 11/17/2025

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VCGI, Green Mountain Power, Local governments, RPCs (regional planning commissions), VT Lidar Program, VT Imagery Program, public domain., E911, Vermont River Corridor and Floodplain Protection Program

VT Dept of Environmental Conservation, ANR, See dataset specific metadata.

There are 58 buildings in the State-mapped River Corridors- single-family dwellings, camps, mobile homes, accessory buildings and barns, residential barns, and a gravel pit/quarry. Areas of flood concern are shown on the preceding maps.



40% of survey respondents have experienced floods. According to the National Weather Service, floods kill more people than any other weather-related hazard, except for extreme heat. Most flood-related deaths occur while driving a vehicle into flood waters.

For those sheltering in place, the greatest risk beyond the floodwaters themselves is their ability to isolate. The rapid and erosive destruction of nearby infrastructure may render flooded areas inaccessible. The result is people becoming trapped and requiring swift water rescues, or critical assets such as medical services becoming unavailable. At-risk populations, especially those with a limited range of motion, are at greatest risk of isolation.

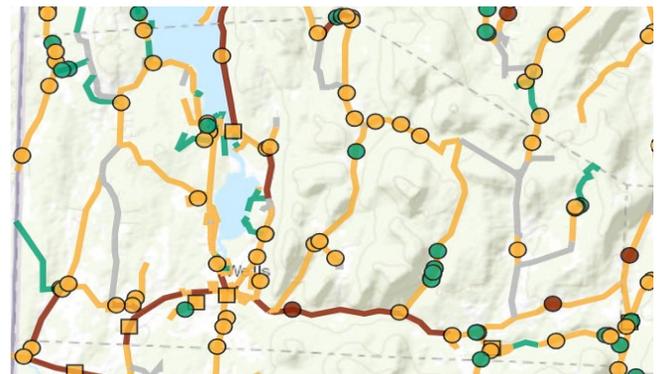
With inundation floods, there are cascading impacts involving infectious diseases. Mosquitos, for example, breed in standing water, and when their population increases, so does the risk of diseases they transmit – e.g., West Nile Virus and Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE).



The most common type of flash flood damage is road washouts. When runoff volumes exceed the capacity of the stormwater drainage system (i.e., ditching and culverts), washouts can occur. The Town’s structures and road erosion inventories, ANR’s Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool, VTrans Highway Flood Vulnerability and Risk Tool, and VTrans Transportation Resilience Planning Tool (TRPT) were used to help identify locations and assets at risk from flash flooding.

Road segments, culverts, and bridges identified as high-flood-risk by the TRPT are shown in red on the right. These include:

- Road segments (—): Bullfrog Road, East Wells Road, Main Street, Mill Pond Road, North Street, VT Route 30.
- Culverts (●): East Wells Road
- Bridges (■): None



VTrans TRPT Flood Risk Results for Wells

The VTrans Highway Flood Vulnerability and Risk Tool additionally lists Butt’s Hill South Road and Sawmill Hill Road as road segments potentially vulnerable to flooding. However, the Planning Team noted these are not traditional problem spots for the Town.

Culvert failures and road washouts can have a significant negative impact on the Town, especially if they occur on roads considered locally important routes for through-traffic, short-cuts, detours, and/or access to critical facilities. When roads are impacted by flooding, the Town coordinates with the Fire Department and State Dispatch to close roads and set up detours. Road closures can increase commute times and emergency response times.

A washout on East Wells Road caused by Irene has been a long-standing and costly issue for the Town. Since 2011, two more tropical storm remnants have further destabilized the area up to the road's edge, resulting in an over 40-foot drop to Wells Brook. After years of studies, monitoring, and permit applications, the Town finally secured a contractor to stabilize the slope in 2025, at a total cost of nearly \$500,000.

In addition to road stormwater runoff, ice or debris jams can cause flash flooding. However, Wells has minimal potential for ice or debris jams.

Dam failures can also cause flash flooding. There are seven (7) dams in Wells listed in the Vermont Dam Inventory, a database managed by the VT Dam Safety Program:

- 1) Little Pond Dam is located on Mill Brook, just north of Jones Lake End Road. It is owned by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and classified as a low hazard potential dam. Last inspected in 2023, its condition is fair.
- 2) Melcher Dam is listed on the dam inventory and is seemingly located on a tributary of Little Lake. According to the Town, there is no physical dam in place here, and the area is more akin to a drained peat bog.
- 3) Mill Brook Dam is located on Mill Brook, just north of Mill Pond Road. Its current owner, condition rating, and last year of inspection is unknown, though it is classified as a minimal hazard potential dam.
- 4) Northeast Developers Dam is located on a tributary of Mill Brook, at the southern end of Lake Lucidian. It is privately owned and classified as a significant hazard potential dam. Last inspected in 2019, its condition is poor.
- 5) Schiff Dam is located on Coy Brook, east of Bennett Road. It is privately owned and classified as a low hazard potential dam. Last inspected in 2023, its condition is poor.
- 6) Schmidt Dam is on Coy Brook, west of Bennett Road. It is privately owned and classified as a low hazard potential dam. Last inspected in 2023, its condition is fair.
- 7) Wells-6 Dam is located on a tributary of Wells Brook, just south of the Town Garage. It is privately owned and classified as a minimal hazard potential dam. Its condition rating and last year of inspection are unknown.

*There are **no high hazard potential dams** in Wells. The Town also does not own any such dams outside of its borders.*

Beaver dams are a recurring concern for Wells. They have previously contributed to flooding at the northern end of Lake Lucidian, affecting areas across Lucidian Drive, Delaney Cross Road, and North Street before spilling into Little Lake. Bullfrog Hollow Road and Sawmill Hill Road also have a history of beaver dams. These areas, where they overlap with the municipal road right-of-way and pose a clear hazard to public safety, are regularly monitored and cleared by the Town to minimize flood risk.



Scars left behind by the East Wells Road slide

Locations listed as a risk for flash flooding in the 2020 plan have since been mitigated by the Town, including Butts Hill Road, Capron Lane, Endless Brook Road, Lamb Hill Road, Little Lake East Road, North Street, Sawmill Hill Road, Town Park Road, and West Lake Road. Refer to page **XX** for more details.



As mentioned previously, flash floods often entail stream bank or fluvial erosion. Excessive erosion can trigger land or mudslides.<sup>3</sup> It also may result in increased turbidity, increased phosphorus transport, or the release of legacy pollutants. Sediment mobilized by fluvial erosion also contributes to aggradation (i.e., a rise in the channel level) and to dammed streams.

<sup>3</sup> While DR4720 damages included land and mudslides linked to fluvial erosion, these hazards did not manifest in Wells and are thus omitted from this Plan based on a lack of available data. Notably, a minor slide did occur on a small portion of Sawmill Hill Road in 2020, but there were no recorded damages.

Existing studies helped identify other locations and assets at risk from fluvial erosion. These include Stream Geomorphic Assessments (Phase 1 and Phase 2), River Corridor Plans, and Stormwater Management Plans. Stream Geomorphic Assessments (SGAs) provide information about the physical condition of streams and factors that influence their stability. For Wells, these include a 2005 Phase 1 SGA and a 2007 Phase 2 SGA of the Mettawee River. SGAs may also identify priority locations for projects related to river corridor protection, such as planting stream buffers, stabilizing stream banks, removing berms, and removing or replacing human-placed structures (e.g., dams, bridges, and culverts). There does not appear to be a River Corridor Plan for any stream reaches in the Town of Wells.

Much of Wells lies within the Wells Brook-Mettawee River subwatershed. The 2019 Wells River/Lake Saint Catherine Watershed recommended 50 projects across the watershed, including 22 in Wells, designed to reduce stormwater flows and increase flood resiliency. These primarily include ditch-erosion and runoff projects, though some involve bridge/culvert improvements and green stormwater management practices (i.e., raingardens).



As the above studies demonstrate, environmental impacts from flooding can be significant, especially to the water quality in Lake Saint Catherine. This, in turn, can have an adverse effect on local tourism and recreation. Access to recreation areas may also be compromised, further exacerbating the adverse impact. Flood events with associated road closures can also have a short-term effect on the local economy, as fewer shopping trips and commuter delays result.

### Floods Hazard History

These are the most recent significant events impacting Wells. Hazard histories are limited to 20 years in the past, except for federal Rutland County Disaster Declarations, which are depicted in **bold**. All damages are to property unless otherwise noted.

**7/11/2023: DR4720 3” rain: \$1.6 mil regional damage**

8/24/2020: 2-3” rain: \$10,000 regional damage

**4/15/2019: DR4445 1-2” rain with significant snow melt: \$72,585 local damage; \$1 mil regional damage**

**7/1/2017: DR4330 3-4” rain the previous 3-4 days with flash flooding on 7/1/17: \$126,190 local damage: \$1.9 mil regional damage**

**6/25-7/11/2013: DR4140 heavy rain over multiple days: \$420,000 regional damage**

**8/28/2011: DR4022 Tropical Storm Irene with ±5” rain: \$17,195 local damage; \$55 mil regional damage**

6/14/2008: 3-5” rain: \$2 mil regional damage

1/18/2006: 1½-2½” rain with significant snow melt: \$50,000 regional damage

4/13/2002: 1-3” rain plus snow melt: \$30,000 regional damage

**12/16/2000: DR1358 2-4” rain: \$26,475 local damage; \$100,000 regional damage**

**7/16/2000: DR1336 heavy rain: \$200,000 regional damage**

### Survey Respondents Said....

Natural hazard impacts they are concerned about:

#1 Loss of life or injuries, especially among vulnerable populations

#2 Damage or loss of roads, bridges, public utilities

#3 Loss or damage to agricultural operations



**The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment is the foundation for the Mitigation Strategy.**

## Vulnerability Summary



### Extreme Heat

**Vulnerable Assets** people (especially at-risk population: the elderly, the disabled, and those living in sub-standard housing, and outdoor workers); highway infrastructure; drilled wells; crops/agricultural products

**Location** Townwide

**Extent** Apparent temperatures up to 110°F for six days

**Past Occurrence** \$650,000 regional damage to maple sugaring industry

**Future Probability** Highly likely, >75% probability in a year



### Invasive Species

**Vulnerable Assets** people; roads; power lines; telecommunications systems; trees

**Location** Unknown

**Extent** Unknown

**Past Occurrence** EAB First detection in 2025

**Future Probability** Highly likely, >75% probability in a year



### Drought

**Vulnerable Assets** people (especially at-risk populations: the elderly, the disabled, those living in sub-standard housing, and outdoor workers); rivers and streams; ponds and lakes; trees; drilled wells; crops/agricultural products

**Location** Townwide

**Extent** D1 drought in 90%-100% of county for several months; D2 drought in 65% of county for two months; D3 drought in 75% of county for one month

**Past Occurrence** Information unavailable

**Future Probability** Likely, at least 1 chance in next 10 years



### Extreme Cold, Snow, and Ice

**Vulnerable Assets** people (especially at-risk populations: the disabled, the elderly, and those living in sub-standard housing); highway infrastructure; power lines; telecommunications systems; trees; building plumbing and service lines; local businesses

## Extreme Cold, Snow, and Ice , Cont'd.

**Location** Townwide

**Extent** 15-20+ days below zero; up to 35" snow; ½" freezing rain/sleet; ¼" ice

**Past Occurrence** \$34,830 local property damage; \$300,000 regional property damage; \$1,025,000 regional crop damage

**Future Probability** Likely, at least 1 chance in next 10 years



### Strong Wind

**Vulnerable Assets** people (especially at-risk populations, those living in sub-standard housing, and outdoor workers); Fire Dept; Town Garage; Town Office; Village School; roads; power lines; telecommunications systems; trees; local businesses

**Location** Town-wide;

**Extent** 60-80 mph wind

**Past Occurrence** \$75,000 local property damage; \$4,500,000 regional property damage; one fatality

**Future Probability** Highly likely, >75% probability in a year



### Floods

**Vulnerable Assets** people (especially at-risk populations: the elderly, the disabled, those living in sub-standard housing, and outdoor workers) residential dwellings; residential farms; mobile and seasonal homes; accessory buildings; accessory barns; camps; boat ramps and docks; communications box; utility pole with phone; highway infrastructure; dams; rivers and streams; local businesses; gravel pit/quarry

**Location** *Inundation Flooding:* along north Lake Lucidian and western Little Lake; Delaney Cross Road, Lucidian Drive, North Street

*Flash Flooding:* Geers Road and Wells Brook Road

*Fluvial Erosion:* Wells Brook

**Extent** ±5" rain; extent data for fluvial erosion is unavailable

**Past Occurrence** \$72,585 local property damage; \$55,000,000 regional property damage

**Future Probability** Likely, at least 1 chance in next 10 years

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### Community Engagement Strategy

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During the kickoff meeting, the Wells Hazard Mitigation Planning Team came to a consensus on a 2-phase Community Engagement Strategy – see **Appendix Table 2**. This Strategy was designed to ensure that at-risk populations had an opportunity for equitable involvement throughout the entirety of the plan development process (i.e., from kickoff to final draft).

This Strategy also ensured the involvement of the Whole Community. For the purposes of this plan, the Whole Community is comprised of 1) local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation; 2) entities with authority to regulate development; 3) neighboring towns; 4) representatives of business, schools or academia, and other private organizations that sustain community lifelines; and 5) representatives of community-serving nonprofit organizations that work directly with frontline populations.

**“A Whole Community approach attempts to engage the full capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, faith-based and disability organizations, and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of local, tribal, state, territorial, and Federal governmental partners.”**  
**-A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action (FEMA, 2011)**

A Goal Statement was developed to guide the planning team’s public outreach throughout the planning process:

#### **The Town of Wells will:**

- **Notify the Whole Community about the plan update at the kickoff, mid-point draft, and final draft;**
- **Solicit feedback from the Whole Community about the frequency and impacts of various natural hazards, and strategies and mitigation methods that should be prioritized; and**
- **Integrate from the Whole Community perspectives and information about hazard impacts and likelihoods, and priorities for potential mitigation actions.**

### Phase 1 Engagement Activities

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#### **Kick-off**

To notify the Whole Community of the Plan Update, the Town conducted a robust advertising campaign. A landing page was created to provide a dedicated online source for all information related to the planning process and opportunities for community engagement. The landing page url is: [tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26). Physical flyers were posted at the Wells Town Office, Wells Transfer Station, Wells Village Library, and Wells Village School. Online notices were posted on the Wells Town Website, Wells Facebook Page, Wells Front Porch Forum, the RRPC website, and the RRPC Facebook Page.

Project communications were sent to segments of the Whole Community throughout the planning process. See **Appendix Table 1** for a complete list. Kick-off engagement materials can be seen starting on page A-**XX**.

**No inquiries or comments received from Town officials or the public in response to project kick-off notices.**

## Gather Data & Assess Risk

To inform the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment section of the plan, the Town employed four (4) engagement methods: survey, workshop, presentation to the Selectboard at a public meeting, and public comment period.

A survey was administered online and was open from September 22 – October 20, 2025. Physical surveys were also available at the Town Office and Wells Village Library. Notice of the survey was included in plan kick-off communications. **A total of 30 surveys were received.** A summary of the survey results is provided below.

The Town conducted a workshop on October 20, 2025 with the planning team and one subject matter expert to complete the community hazard risk assessment. Eric Pulver, the Emergency Preparedness Specialist for Rutland with the Vermont Department of Health, attended the workshop to assess with the risk assessment for Infectious Disease. Noah Hoffman, from the Agency of Natural Resources, was invited to assist with the risk assessment for Invasive Species, but unfortunately could not attend. The results of the risk assessment are presented in **Table 4** of the Plan.

Pop-up events assist Towns in “meeting people where they are: and collecting additional input from demographics that may not have otherwise been engaged. This method of public outreach was considered for the Community Engagement Strategy. The Planning Team ultimately decided not to utilize pop-up events due to limited capacity, limited resources, and limited opportunities to attend community gathering spaces. A “Trunk or Treat” event was held at the Modern Woodman of America property on October 18, but this type of event is poorly suited for gathering input from the public.

### Appendix Table 1. Whole Community Partners

**Hazard Mitigation Agencies:** DEC River Engineer for Southwest VT • DEC Western VT Floodplain Manager • Wells Emergency Management Coordinator • Wells Emergency Management Director • Wells Fire Department • Wells Road Foreman • Wells Town Clerk • Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District • South Lake Champlain Clean Water Service Provider • VDH Emergency Preparedness Specialist • VDH Rutland District Director • VTrans District 3 Projects Manager • VTrans District 3 Transportation Administrator

**Authorities Regulating Development:** Wells Selectboard Chair • Wells Selectboard members • Wells Planning Commission Chair • Wells Planning Commission members

**Neighboring Municipalities:** Selectboard Chair, Planning Commission Chair, Town Clerk, and EMD/EMC for the Towns of Danby, Middletown Springs, Pawlet, Poultney and Tinmouth • Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Village Trustees, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Fire Department Chief, and Police Department Chief of Granville, NY • Washington County, NY Department of Public Safety Office

**Business, Schools, Private Orgs.:** Wells Village School Principal • Wells Springs District School Board Chair • Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union Superintendent • Council of Economic Development of the Rutland Region Executive Director • Rutland County Solid Waste District Administrator

**Non-profit Organizations:** Advocacy Resources Community Rutland • Bayada Home Health/Care • Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council • Cornerstone Housing Partners • Fair Haven Rescue Squad • Housing Trust of Rutland County • Rutland County Health Partners • Rutland County Pride • Rutland Mental Health Services • Rutland Regional Medical Center • Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging • United Way of Rutland County, Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired • Vermont Center for Independent Living • Visiting Nurses Association & Hospice of Southwest Vermont

The draft Plan was provided to the Selectboard at their regular meeting on December 2, 2025, to encourage input from the local government and public on the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment results. Input at this milestone is critical as feedback could affect the plan’s conclusions and ensure that it integrates with other Town initiatives. The meeting was recorded and is available on the Town website.

The draft Plan was posted for a 2-week public comment period from December 2 – December 16, 2025. It was available on the landing page and at the Town Office. Notice of the comment period was posted on the Town’s Facebook page, Front Porch Forum, RRPC Website, and Facebook page. Physical flyers were posted at the Wells Town Office, Wells Transfer Station, Wells Village Library, and Wells Village School. The draft plan and notice of the comment period were direct emailed to all five segments of the Whole Community. Notices included instructions to email comments to the Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

Review of the draft Plan by the Selectboard and public concluded on December 16, 2025. The Selectboard discussed its comments on the final draft plan at its regular meeting on December 16, 2025. A summary of their comments and the resulting draft Plan edits is provided below. Additional input received during the public comment period is summarized on page A-XX.

**(Placeholder for reaction for the public and local officials to the draft Plan)**

(Placeholder for Phase 2 Engagement narrative)

**Appendix Table 2. Wells Community Engagement Strategy**

Engagement Phase	Project Milestone	Outreach Method	Purpose	Target Date
1	Kick-Off	Landing page, flyers, social media, email blast	Notify (inform the Whole Community of the plan update)	9/22/2025
	Gather Data & Assess Risk	Survey	Solicit (feedback from Whole Community on potential natural hazard impacts)	9/22/2025 – 10/20/2025
		Workshop	Integrate (evaluate broad range of risks)	10/20/2025
		Selectboard Presentation	Notify (inform local officials of plan progress)	12/2/2025
		Public Comment Period	Solicit (feedback from Whole Community on draft Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment)	12/2/2025– 12/16/2025
2	Develop Mitigation Strategy	Workshop(s)	Integrate (evaluate broad range of mitigation actions)	1/26/2026
		Survey	Solicit (reaction from Whole Community on mitigation strategy and actions)	1/28/2026 – 2/27/2026
	Finalize Draft Plan	Selectboard Presentation	Notify (inform local officials of plan progress)	4/7/2026
		Public Comment Period	Solicit (feedback from Whole Community on final draft plan)	4/7/2026 – 4/21/2026

**Examples of Phase 1 Engagement Materials**

Physical Flyer

Email Blasts

Social Media Postings

Survey with Results

## Wells

# LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING



## HELP US

# PREPARE FOR RESILIENCY!

## Plan Purpose

- Increase Awareness
- Identify Actions
- Focus Resources
- Communicate Priorities

The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan outlines our long-term strategy to reduce natural disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.



Take our online survey to share what natural hazards you are most concerned about:



## Planning Schedule

- Sept 2025: Plan Update Kick-off ✓
- Oct–Nov 2025: Assess Risks & Identify Hazards ✓
- Jan–Feb 2026: Develop Mitigation Strategy ✓
- Mar–Apr 2026: Finalize Draft Plan ✓
- May 2026: Adopt Plan ✓

## ACT NOW!

For More Information

[tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26)

## KICK OFF EMAIL BLAST INSERT

**SURVEY**

**NOW  
OPEN**

Accepting  
responses through  
Oct 20, 2025



**LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

**2026**

**For more information visit:**  
[\*\*tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26\*\*](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26)

*Help Make Wells More Resilient!*

## **Wells Launching our Hazard Mitigation Planning Process**

Every five years, municipalities update their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, or LHMPs. Ours is due to be updated. We do an LHMP for a few reasons:

- It qualifies us for a higher rate of reimbursement for work we do after declared disasters.
- It makes us eligible for a variety of State and Federal grant programs.
- Most importantly, it helps us focus Town time and investments on the hazards that are most likely to occur, and most likely to have economic and public-safety impacts.

The Rutland Regional Planning Commission will guide us through the renewal of our LHMP, thanks to a grant we received from Vermont Emergency Management. The Town's planning team includes: Don Preuss, Selectboard Chair; Paul Woodruff, Selectboard Member; Dave Ricard, Road Foreman; and Nora Sargent, Town Clerk/Emergency Management Coordinator.

Throughout the planning process, we have targeted opportunities for community input. As we get the plan update underway in September, we'll be completing a risk assessment and identifying the natural hazards that are of greatest concern. We want to hear from our residents about what natural hazards you are most concerned about! Share your feedback by taking our online survey: [\*\*tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26-survey\*\*](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26-survey). The survey will remain open until **October 20, 2025**.

**For more information visit: [\*\*tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26\*\*](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26)**

KICK OFF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

 **Rutland Regional Planning Commission**  
Sep 23 • 🌐

**Public Notice - Wells Engaged in Hazard Mitigation Planning**

Wells is updating its 2020 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan! The Plan serves as a guidebook for identifying and addressing local risks and vulnerabilities, helping Wells become more resilient to natural hazards. For the months of September and October, we want to hear from residents about what natural hazards you are most concerned about! Share your feedback by taking our online survey at <https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26-survey>. Paper copies are also available at the Town Office and Wells Village Library and must be submitted to the Town Clerk by October 20, 2025.

To learn more about the process and opportunities to participate, visit <https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26>.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Wells is updating its  
**LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

For more information and ways to participate in the planning process, check out:  
[tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26)

  wellsvt.com/emergency-resol  

**TOWN OF WELLS, VERMONT**  
MONDAY & WEDNESDAY: 7AM-4PM. TUESDAY: 7AM-6PM

**Natural Hazards Risks and Impacts Survey for Wells**



**ATTENTION!**

What natural hazards are you most concerned about?

Tell us by taking the Wells Local Hazard Mitigation Planning survey  
[TINYURL.COM/WELLS-LHMP26-SURVEY](https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26-survey)

  rutlandrpc.org/bulletin   

 **RUTLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED**

**(SEPTEMBER 23 – OCTOBER 20, 2025)  
LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN  
UPDATES- OPEN COMMENT PERIOD –  
TOWN OF WELLS**

 Date posted: September 23, 2025

**PHASE 1 EMAIL BLASTS – KICK OFF, PRESENTATION NOTICE, AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

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Maggie O'Brien



To:  Maggie O'Brien

Cc: Nora Sargent <wellstownclerk@comcast.net>

Tue 9/23/2025 9:00 AM

Hello, Wells Local Officials,

On behalf of the Town of your Town, we are announcing the official launch of the 2026 update to the Town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). The local Planning Team is committed to providing targeted opportunities for community input, and we would like to hear from you throughout the plan development process. See attached for more information.

From September 23 – October 20, we are seeking your input on the natural hazards and risks of most importance to Wells. You can access the survey directly at <https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26-survey>. The project's landing page will be kept up to date with public involvement opportunities and can be reached at <https://tinyurl.com/wells-lhmp26>. Questions should be directed to me, Maggie O'Brien, at [maggie@rutlandrpc.org](mailto:maggie@rutlandrpc.org).

[Placeholder for email blast images related to December 2, 2025 Presentation and first Public Comment Period]

**PHASE 1 SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS – PRESENTATION NOTICE AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

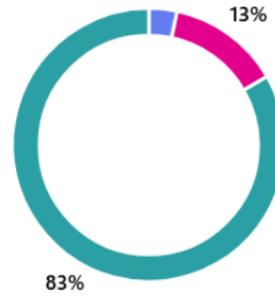
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[Placeholder for social media images related to December 2, 2025 Presentation and first Public Comment Period]

**PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS – 30 SURVEYS RECEIVED**

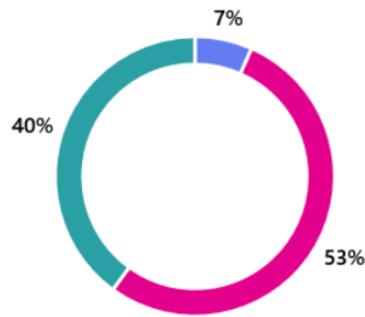
**1. How long have you lived in or owned a business or property in Wells?**

● Less than one year	1
● One to five years	4
● More than 5 years	25



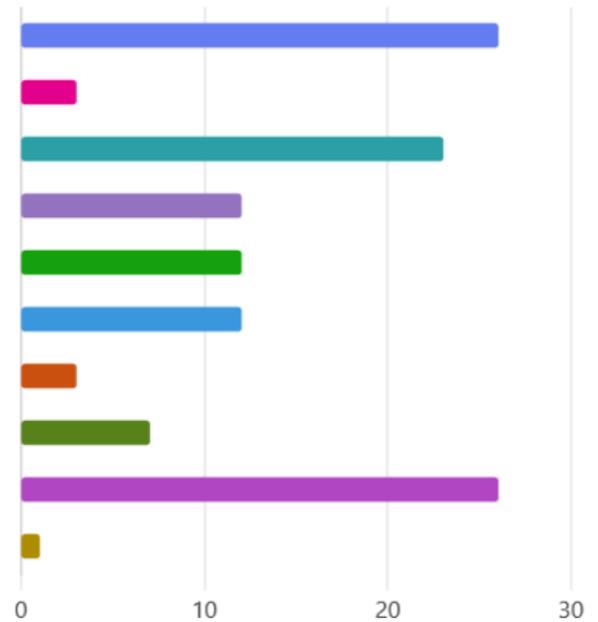
**2. Is your home or business property located in a FEMA designated floodplain?**

● Yes	2
● No	16
● I don't know	12



**3. Which of the following natural hazards have you or someone you know experienced while living or doing business in Wells? (113 votes)**

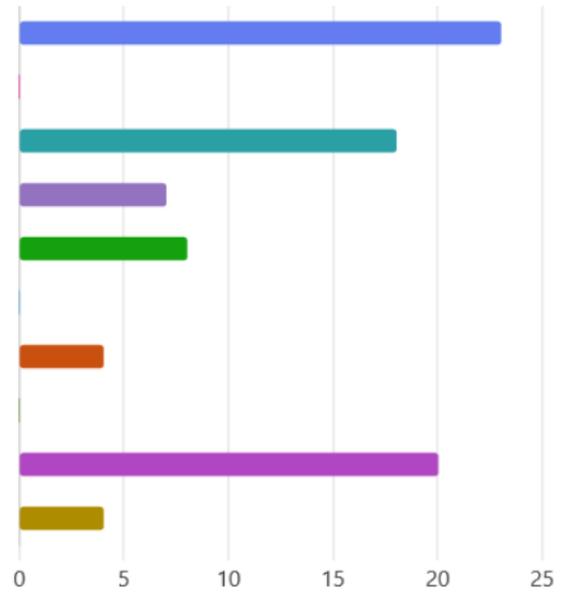
● Drought	26
● Earthquake	3
● Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice	23
● Extreme Heat	12
● Flash Flood/Fluvial (Stream) Erosion	12
● Hail	12
● Inundation Flood	3
● Landslide	7
● Strong Wind	26
● Wildfire	1



#1 Tie: Drought **23%** and Strong Wind **23%**  
 #3 Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice **20%**

**4. Of the natural hazards listed in Question 3, what are the top three you think are likely to occur in the next five years? (84 votes)**

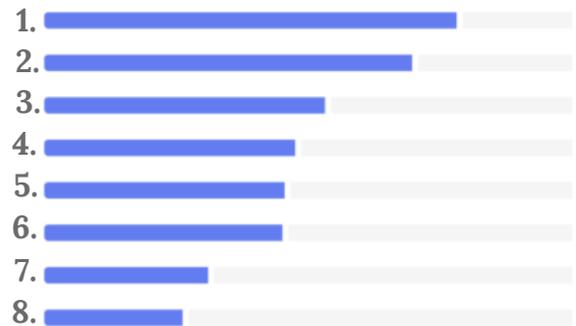
● Drought	23
● Earthquake	0
● Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice	18
● Extreme Heat	7
● Flash Flood/Fluvial (Stream) Erosion	8
● Hail	0
● Inundation Flood	4
● Landslide	0
● Strong Wind	20
● Wildfire	4



- #1 Drought 27%
- #2 Strong Wind 24%
- #3 Extreme Cold/Snow/Ice 21%

**5. Which potential natural hazard impacts are most concerning to you? Rank from 1 to 8. It would be most concerning to experience damage or loss in regards to... (23 responses)**

- 1 Loss of life or injuries, especially among vulnerable populations
- 2 Damage or loss of roads, bridges, public utilities (e.g., sewer)
- 3 Loss or damage to agricultural operations
- 4 Damage to environmental resources (e.g., wetlands, lakes, ponds, rivers, forests)
- 5 Damage to schools and other public properties (e.g., parks, buildings)
- 6 Loss of wildlife
- 7 Business closure or loss
- 8 Damage or loss of cultural/historic properties



**6. Are you aware of any location(s) in Wells that appear more prone to the impacts of flooding, ice, wind, or wildfires? Describe any past damages or recurring incidents in these areas. (15 responses)**

*East wells road, flooding that comes down the upper elevations may continue to impact certain parts of this important roadway*

*Those living near the river*

*The lake seems to get hit hard with wind. The dirt roads are effected by rain.*

*Wells Brook – flooding*

**6. Are you aware of any location(s) in Wells that appear more prone to the impacts of flooding, ice, wind, or wildfires? Describe any past damages or recurring incidents in these areas. (Continued)**

North Road

Wind especially combined with ice or wet snow or after prolonged drought or saturated soil that isn't frozen

No (2x)

Lake for wind

Mud season on our rural roads are sometimes impassable. This causes problems if a fire truck or ambulance is needed

Lake, brooks

Shoreline of lake st. catherine; water fall on rt 30 along lake that empties into the lake with sediment, etc

East Wells Road

East Wells Road Landslide; Rte 30 near river; South end of Lake Saint Catherine & homes below that are of dam

Wooded locations throughout Wells and the surrounding area had significant leaf death on trees prior to the Fall leaf turning signifying tree stress, possibly leading to tree death (due to drought conditions experienced in 2025) and the potential for wildfires.

**7. List any specific community assets you are concerned about losing because of natural hazard impacts. Examples might include a local business or employer, a community gathering site, or a cultural/historical site or artifact. (13 responses)**

Town Garage

Wells School, Library, 2 churches

School

Lakefront land

Community assets kept in basements

Downtown Wells

None specific, mainly the forests as a whole.

DeLaney Woods Trail

Pavilion at Lakeside Park (North St)

I think we have been making ourselves extremely vulnerable to extended power outages. I heard a woman CEO (?) of GMP talking about getting power and cables below route 4 underground ASAP but it's not happening. There are so many wires and devices on the distribution poles they look very vulnerable to wind, ice, wet snow and the trees that overhang them.

None that I know of

docks at the lake or park

Lake St. Catherine and the possibility of wells drying up

8. Anything else related to natural hazard risks or impacts you would like to provide for consideration and incorporation into the Wells Local Hazard Mitigation Plan? (11 responses)

No | No thank you

Being able to clean out gravel + silt in the rivers to help alleviate the flooding issues

Wild fire drought

Is there a municipal water source for those who have lost well or spring?

Water supply issues and toxins

There is no cell service in many places including my residence or others close to me. It's elevation dependent which is not so bad for healthy, mobile people. For the less capable, like myself, losing the copper from Consolidated to switch to fiber with Fidium has made me more vulnerable to isolation if/when I lose power. I used to just plug in an old dial phone - an option I no longer have. I don't know if GMP or Fidium know if a customer loses service unless it is phoned in. Please notify me whether or not GMP & Fidium will know if I've lost service.

Where would folks go for safe shelter in a disaster

Consideration for mutual aid network development (if not already happening) so we can help each other faster and locally

Crowning and ditching roads to prevent water (spring run off, rain flooding) from entering homesteads,

Culverts not big enough to handle flooding

Replacing culverts to handle more water; beavers creating flooding in Lake Lucidian

Agricultural fields, fertilized lawns, and lakeside septic systems draining or leaching into lakes, ponds + streams with more and more drought could be detrimental to those environments with massive algae blooms, potentially, and oxygen depletion. Mechanical removal of milfoil mats in fall to reduce oxygen depletion from the plant decay.

4 respondents (36%) answered water for this question.

