

**Hazard Mitigation Planning Meeting - South Hero**  
**March 20, 2025 | 11:00 a.m.**  
**South Hero Town Office and Zoom**

**Attendance:** Kim Julow (Treasurer & former Fire Chief), Sue Arguin (Town Administrator), Naomi King (Town Clerk), Pat Robinson (Fire Chief), Martha Varney (Zoning Administrator), Dave Carter (SB), Shaun Coleman (NRPC)

This purpose of this planning meeting was to review and score various hazards affecting the town of South Hero. The meeting follows up on a previous session where they had agreed to follow the state's approach to risk assessment while focusing primarily on natural hazards, with hazardous materials being the only non-natural hazard retained.

### **Survey Results**

Five people have responded to the community survey so far.

### **Hazard Identification and Risk Analysis**

**Risk Assessment Methodology** The group used Vermont Emergency Management's (VEM) risk assessment approach which:

- Evaluates hazards based on likelihood/probability of occurrence (scored 1-4)
- Assesses potential impacts to infrastructure, life safety, economy, and environment (scored 1-4)
- Calculates an overall score by multiplying the probability by the average impact score
- Ranks hazards to prioritize mitigation efforts

### Snow Events

- **Probability:** Highly likely (4) - occurs regularly. It's Vermont. South Hero doesn't experience Nor'easters as frequently as the past. Big snow events are becoming less frequent throughout the winter season.
- **Infrastructure Impact:** Minor (2) - due to road blockages, especially on private roads that the town does not maintain. Some residents have trouble with drifting snow on private roads and ask town for help clearing so they can get out. Especially along lake shore like Wally's Point Road where some residents are physically unable to clear their roads. Occasional power outages from snow storms but those are less frequent as power companies strengthened infrastructure over the years. No impacts to public infrastructure from snow loads.
- **Life Safety:** Minor (2) - potential isolation of vulnerable residents.
- **Economic Impact:** Negligible (1) - within normal town operating budget expectations.
- **Environmental Impact:** Negligible (1) - temporary, natural recovery
- **Areas of Concern:** Private roads with drifting issues, the Sandbar (which sometimes requires closure due to whiteout conditions).

### Invasive Species

Anne is the emerald ash borer expert. The town is actively removing trees from within the right of way to prevent spread of borer and risk of tree falling in road ways. They removed a big ash tree on River Bay Road and will be removing ash trees on White's Beach. There's obviously a lot more outside of the town's right of way. Poison parsnip where it is prolific and town is trying to come up with a plan to deal with parsnip.

- Probability: Highly likely (4) - Emerald ash borer is already present.
- Infrastructure Impact: Negligible (1) - isolated occurrences
- Life Safety: Minor (2) - potential for injury
- Economic Impact: Negligible (1) - manageable remediation costs (\$7,000-14,000 for recent tree removals)
- Environmental Impact: Minor (2) - localized damage
- Areas of Concern: Emerald ash borer affecting trees, blue-green algae in Keeler Bay.  
For lake: zebra mussels and blue green algae blooms but state has jurisdiction over lake.

### Flooding

Keeler Bay has seasonal lakeshore floods as ice and snow melt. Happens every year. There are lots of year camps that are being converted to year-round homes like on Sunrise Drive on Keeler Bay. One conversion recently near the fishing access in Keeler Bay just converted. There's always seasonal flooding down there that is minor.

Martin Road ("*Shadowland*") has some minor flooding. Shaun will follow up with Foreman.

- Probability: Likely (3) - 10-75% chance annually
- Infrastructure Impact: Moderate (3) - affects roads and properties around keeler bay and shadow land. The were questions about when the causeway (Route 2) flooding and armoring. It flooded in 2011. The town has no jurisdiction over Route 2 but the concern will be noted in the plan.
- Life Safety: Minor (2)
- Economic Impact: Minor (2)
- Environmental Impact: Minor (2) - natural recovery possible
- Areas of Concern: Keeler Bay, Shadow Land, Land's End, Sunrise area (formerly camps, now year-round homes)
- Notable Event: 2011 flooding with six weeks of inundation

Lake Erosion: White's Beach is a problem area. It has southern exposure. The lake flows north. West shore road lake is undercutting the road.

- Probability: Likely (3)
  - Infrastructure Impact: Minor (2)
  - Life Safety: Low (1)
  - Economic Impact: Moderate (3) - Route 2 causeway state and federal funding. Rec impact to bike line and white's beach.
  - Environmental Impact: Minor (2) - short-term recovery possible
  - Areas of Concern: South-facing shorelines with wind exposure
  - Notable Event: May 6, 2018 spring storm (wind and waves) that damaged the Colchester-Islands causeway and caused significant shoreline erosion. The bike ferry, which is operated by cycling organization Local Motion, transports bikers across the 200-foot cut to and from South Hero and Colchester. The causeway reopened July 4, 2018.
- VTRANS and Federal Highway Administration paid for the costs of repair (\$290,000).

### Heat and Drought

- Probability: Unlikely (1) Drought periods are occurring more often. Haven't had any know long sustained drought periods like in southern end of state.
- Infrastructure Impact: Negligible (1)

- Life Safety: Negligible (1). People with functional access needs most at risk. Town has identified cooling shelters and sites identified in EM plan.
- Economic Impact: Negligible (1)
- Environmental Impact: Negligible (1)

#### Infectious Disease Outbreak

- Probability: Unlikely (1)
- Infrastructure Impact: Negligible (1)
- Life Safety: Moderate (3) - potential for multiple fatalities and widespread infection in town.
- Economic Impact: Major (4) - significant economic disruption (referenced COVID impacts on tourism)
- Environmental Impact: Negligible (1)

#### **Additional Notes**

- FEMA requirements have become more stringent, requiring more detailed documentation
- The plan can be used as a reference when applying for grants like Better Roads
- The group noted that state-owned infrastructure (like Route 78) would need state action, but can be mentioned in the town plan.

#### **Next Steps**

- The group agreed to meet again in two weeks (April 3rd)
- The hazard scoring will help identify mitigation goals and projects for the plan
- Each identified hazard will require a mitigation goal
- The plan will include detailed narratives about each hazard, including historical events and areas of concern

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.