

**From:** Coriell, Scott [Scott.Coriell@vermont.gov]  
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**To:** Coriell, Scott  
**Subject:** Bennington Public Assistance Appeal from Irene Denied

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 17, 2015

**Bennington Public Assistance Appeal from Irene Denied**

**MONTPELIER** – Despite nearly four years of work by Vermont’s congressional delegation, the Vermont Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security, Agency of Transportation, and Agency of Natural Resources to help the town of Bennington secure funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for costs incurred during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, FEMA today denied the final appeal allowed under federal law.

FEMA’s denial of the appeal by the town of Bennington means the town will not be reimbursed for the \$1.34 million already incurred for emergency protective measures associated with the Roaring Branch of the Walloomsac River in the fall of 2011. This is the second and final appeal allowed under federal statute, which means Bennington is currently responsible for the costs it has already spent to stabilize the river. Bennington was successful in securing \$2.3-million from FEMA in a previous appeal after initially being denied any federal funding.

“This is a disappointing decision,” Gov. Peter Shumlin said. “Bennington and the state of Vermont made what we believe to be a clear case that this work was necessary to avoid further damage to infrastructure in Bennington. Respected hydrologists were clear that this work was necessary and it’s unfortunate that FEMA did not see it that way.”

Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders and Congressman Welch worked together to support Bennington’s case with FEMA, including meetings and direct calls with FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. They issued the following joint statement: “Bennington leaders acted decisively and with courage to protect lives and important public infrastructure in the immediate aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene and should be proud of what they accomplished. To learn now, four years later, that FEMA will not reimburse Bennington for that work is tremendously disappointing.”

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