

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Watershed Management Division
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Agency of Natural Resources

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STREAM GRAVEL REMOVAL POLICY

The statutory basis upon which the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) relies in its regulation of gravel removal from streams is contained within 10 VSA, Section 1021(c) which states: “No person shall remove gravel from any watercourse primarily for construction or for sale.”

Exemptions include “emergency protective measures” as defined under 1021(b) and the allowance for the removal of a maximum of 50 cubic yards annually by landowners on their own property under 1021(d). Reporting requirements are associated with each of these exemptions.

An exemption for Accepted Agricultural Practices is provided under 1021(f). This occasionally provides opportunity for limited gravel excavation where associated with streambank realignment and stabilization designed by the USDA NRCS and in consultation with ANR.

ANR does not consider the legislative intent of the statutory gravel removal prohibition to include projects which involve gravel removal primarily to alleviate flooding or erosion conditions directly resultant from diminished channel capacity or channel instability. Wherever field investigation indicated this condition ANR will issue a permit or general permit authorization subject to conditions addressing the criteria under Section E of the General Permit; Next-Flood Measures. A statement to the effect that the primary intent of a proposed project is to remove gravel for some purpose other than for construction or for sale will not be considered adequate. The proposed removal, as evaluated by ANR, must provide the intended relief.

Technical guidance is provided under this policy as follows:

- A. The baseline channel hydraulic capacity shall be considered to be Q1.5 which constitutes the channel forming flow and is typically associated with natural stable river reaches (equilibrium conditions). Channel capacity is defined below the low bank elevation.
- B. Official FEMA National Flood Insurance Program flood profiles or other acceptable historic channel survey information may be used to refine or modify the baseline condition.
- C. Maintenance of channel capacity to a level higher than Q1.5 must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis against the risk of increased long-term channel instability and the effects on adjoining stream reaches and all riparian ownership interests.
- D. Gravel removal may be approved in association with restoration of stable, equilibrium channel conditions in reach-specific applications. Determination of stable channel conditions must be provided through application of the ANR reference stream geomorphic database, documentation of historic conditions or other appropriate physical assessment methodology.

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- E. Gravel removal shall be performed only in a manner which will contribute to long-term river system stability. Stability is defined as the equilibrium condition in which the stream is able to transport the flow and sediment produced by its watershed in such a manner as to maintain its dimensions, patten and profile without aggrading or degrading.

ANR decisions on stream gravel removal must be made within the context of maintaining river reach and system stability. Through administration of this policy ANR recognizes that protection of existing development will occasionally involve compromises between providing an adequate level of property protection and maintenance of the integrity of the river system. Under this policy ANR reserves the opportunity to exercise its best technical judgment and flexibility to render fair and reasonable decisions consistent with policy to address imminent and next-flood threats as stated in statute (10 VSA 102(b)) and the ANR Stream Alteration General Permit.

For definitions and details of the Stream Alteration process please see the Stream Alteration Genera Permit at:

http://www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/rivers/docs/rv_StreamAltGeneralPermit2013.pdf