Community Resilience Key to Helping Farmers Recover from Major Flood Event

Burlington, VT: The Intervale Center is calling on the community to help farmers recover after major flooding that took place Monday and Tuesday. Heavy rain and rising waters resulted in major floods across Vermont, and major crop losses followed for farmers.

The Intervale Center manages 360 acres of farmland, forest, and recreational trails at the Intervale, located a mile from downtown Burlington and adjacent to the Winooski River. The rise of the river resulted in extreme flooding for Intervale farms and trails this week. Vermonters turned out to help farms harvest before waters rose on Monday thanks to calls for volunteers from the Intervale Center, Intervale Community Farm, and Pitchfork Farm. The Intervale Center has since closed Intervale Road to the public in order to assess and document damage with farmers, but encourages those looking to help to make a gift at www.intervale.org/donate.

Funds raised will help with cleanup and recovery for both the Intervale Center and Intervale farms impacted by flooding. These funds will go not just to recovery but also towards their work to build a resilient food system that can withstand climate events in the Intervale and across Vermont. Contributions will allow the Intervale Center to quickly clean up the Intervale so that the public can once again utilize the area as a community resource, support the farms the organization works with at the Intervale and across Vermont, plant trees in riparian buffer zones to mitigate floods like this, and help provide food to those experiencing food insecurity.

Community care has been essential to helping the food system recover from past climate events. The Intervale Recovery Fund raised a significant amount of funds for Intervale farms in 2011 following Hurricane Irene, and in 2019 farms at the Intervale were able to salvage much of their harvest with help from volunteers following heavy rains on Halloween.

“This flood event has major implications for the farms and food enterprises we work with across Vermont,” says Travis Marcotte, Executive Director of the Intervale Center. “We have worked with hundreds of Vermont farms and know how committed they are to growing quality food and taking care of their land and their communities. The best thing the public can do to support farms right now is buy local at stores, CSAs, and farm stands; donate to and share relief funds; and stay apprised of hands-on opportunities to help.”
The Intervale Center is committed to supporting Vermont’s food system with immediate aid and long-term solutions in the face of climate crisis. Following Irene, their Conservation Nursery donated 15,000 native trees for statewide partners to repair riparian zones that had been eroded from flooding and have since planted 335,000 trees in restoration projects throughout Vermont. The Intervale Center has also offered one-on-one business development support to more than 500 farms since Irene hit, connecting them with vital resources and support to increase the resilience of their businesses. The organization’s ongoing leadership in riparian restoration and sustainable land stewardship will be essential to building resilience in the natural environment that serves as a foundation for our food system.

Many of the farms the Intervale Center works with across the state have also been greatly impacted by this historic flood event. NOFA-VT’s Farmer Emergency Fund and the Center for Agricultural Economy’s Vermont Farm Fund are fundraising emergency aid for Vermont farmers at this time.

Early season frost, hazardous air quality, and unprecedented floods are signs that our food system and climate need support through work like the Intervale Center’s now more than ever. The Intervale Center will continue to steward land in ways that mitigate environmental impact and serve as a model for food and farm organizations around the world.

For 35 years, the Intervale Center has led a community food revolution that sustains farms, land and people. We work in Vermont and nationally to address massive challenges, including hunger and malnutrition, farm viability, water quality, and climate change. We have pioneered farm and food innovations in local food development, commercial composting, ecosystem restoration, farm business incubation, food access and food hub development.

For more information, please review our media kit or contact Kelly Duggan at kelly@intervale.org.