

The Edge of Hawley

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**HURRICANE IRENE SPECIAL
EDITION**



1846 Meetinghouse

Home of

The Sons and Daughters of Hawley

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Dealing with Hurricane Irene

By Greg Cox, Fire Chief & Emergency Management Coordinator

Ten days before Hurricane Irene came to call, a committee met at the town hall to discuss how to update Hawley's flood mitigation plans in light of our most recent experience with flooding in 2005. Irene has since provided us with far more experience with flooding than we'd like, and our revisions will no doubt have to be revised again.

For the fire department, Hurricane Irene began the week before that. Any time severe weather is forecast, we firefighters make sure our equipment is ready. We make sure our pumps and generators are working and full of fuel and oil; we charge radio and light batteries, we gas up the trucks and fill the fuel cans, we make sure the chainsaws are sharp and ready to go, and we make sure we have enough bottled water and other stuff to ride out a storm. We can't prevent bad weather from striking, but we can get ready for it.

Irene began pouring in earnest about 5 am on Sunday, and by 7:30, I measured 4.25 inches in our rain gauge. Given that we has previously had 8 inches of rain in August, the ground couldn't absorb any more water, which meant the deluge was sure to cause massive flooding. By 8 am, so much water was going over our pond's spillway that the 5-foot high culvert under Pond Road couldn't handle all the flow. I put up saw horses to block the road and keep unwary drivers from being swept away. By the time I got back to my house, water was flowing over the road. I reported the flooding to Shelburne Control, changed my drenched clothes, and headed up to the fire station to open the town's Emergency Operations Center. On the way I found water ready to flood Pond Road above Poudrier's, Forget Road west of the potato barn, East Hawley Road between Clark Road and Hunt Road, and Plainfield Road below the fire station.

At the EOC, our radios can dispatch not only firefighters but also the Hawley road crew when necessary, as well as to talk with Plainfield or Savoy emergency crews and MEMA's state emergency center in Framingham. When our EOC is manned during events like Irene, we try to minimize radio traffic on the Tri State Dispatch channels to relieve some of the pressure on Shelburne Control, which may be handling calls in 10 or more towns at once. When Control needs us to respond to a problem reported by 911, they call and we dispatch our firefighters or EMTs locally.

In ideal circumstances, we'd have two people to man the EOC to answer the phone, man the radios, keep the log, and dispatch two- or three- person teams to handle problems like flooded basements or flooded roads. That Sunday, however, only two East Hawley firefighters were available, and it soon became clear that any West Hawley firefighters who were in town were cut off by the deep washouts on Route 8A and hence could only deal with problems in the areas they could reach. I therefore manned the EOC while Bob Root used our brush truck to check and block roads that were flooding.

After talking with Richard Gould about the road conditions, it was clear that all we could do that morning was try to block off roads that were flooding or washing away to try to keep people out of trouble. We began to compile a list of roads that were closed, washed out or flooded, and we began to have firefighters do checks on people in the areas they could reach to make sure they weren't in danger. We also had West Hawley firefighters periodically check the dam at Hallockville Pond to make sure it wasn't in danger of breaching.

By 9:30 am, the list of roads which were closed or damaged had hit double digits. West Hawley Road was severed by the Chickley River just south of Deraways, and cut in multiple places where North Brook and other streams ripped

through the road when culverts got plugged by debris. East Hawley Road flooded at the town line and a ½ mile long trench had been cut down the south side of the road below the elbow, reducing it to just one lane. East Road was undermined by landslides north of the bridge and was totally washed out above the lower ziplines. Buckland Road was severed in multiple places below Pond Road by the rampaging Clesson Brook and where it flowed 3 feet deep over Pond Road, it had ripped away half of the road. Middle Road was also severed by the overflowing Mill Brook. The town garage and West Hill Road were cut off by North Brook and the brook that drains by the Browne residence. Swift River was flowing nearly 4 feet deep over Plainfield Road. Other roads were no doubt also damaged but we couldn't reach them.

With the list getting longer by the minute, I contacted selectmen Darwin Clark and Richard Desmarais and told them that we needed to declare a state of emergency effective as of 8:30. They approved and we informed the state of the emergency at 9:45 a.m. A state of emergency is important because it allows the town to spend money without town meeting authorization to deal with the emergency, and it provides the legal authority to order residents to evacuate if necessary.

Up to that time, it was still possible to get to the northern part of West Hawley via Charlemont although flooding was being reported in Charlemont and landslides had been reported on Route 2 at Cold River. As water levels rose, however, East Hawley Road in Charlemont began to flood. Charlemont and Ashfield requested National Guard troops to evacuate people threatened by flooding.

At 11 am, the situation worsened considerably. The utility that operates the Deerfield River dams in Vermont issued a warning that they would have to do a controlled release of 33,000 cubic feet of water per second from Harriman

Reservoir – 20 times the amount of a normal release for rafting. When that water began arriving in Charlemont, it caused severe flooding cutting off West Hawley and filling East Hawley Road by Berkshire East with water 6 feet deep.

Shortly after 11, the rain began to slacken, although it didn't stop until after 5 pm. Damage, however, continued to mount. Two mobile homes were swept away by the Chickley River in Fullerville and another house was undermined by Hawkes Brook in Bozrah. The river also ripped away the land behind the town garage, allowing the rushing water to undermine half of the building. The all-important Route 8A bridge over the river near the Charlemont line had erosion damage to its approaches and eyewitness reports raised the question of whether it could be safely used. In the dugway, the river undermined part of the road making it safe to use only one lane.

Because we still had access to most of East Hawley, we knew what most of the damage there was. In the part of West Hawley south of Forge Hill Road, our firefighters were able to check on residents and track the damage there, keeping in touch with us by radio even though the phones were out. We have no firefighters who live in the northern part of West Hawley and with many phone lines there out, it was hard to keep track of how much damage there was and whether people were safe. We were eventually able, with the invaluable help of Jason Velasquez, to account for everyone in that area before evening.

In the areas of town normally accessible from Buckland, we couldn't check on residents because both Buckland Road in Hawley and Clesson Brook and Dodge Roads in Buckland were severely damaged cutting off access.

By noon, we had had more than 10 inches of rain. During the morning we had been repeatedly called to help residents whose basements were filling with water from the deluge, but

we couldn't spare firefighters to help them. When the rain slackened and the streams started to fall, however, we were able to send out portable pumps to help empty their basements. During the afternoon, we concentrated mostly on making sure that residents were OK and determining as much as we could how much damage there was so we could ask the state and federal agencies for help. We also helped Ashfield and Plainfield check on areas of those towns that were now only accessible from Hawley due to washouts elsewhere.

In mid afternoon, we began to get visitors – primarily people trying to go north who discovered that with the Deerfield River so massively in flood and all the bridges closed, it wasn't possible anymore. “You can't get there from here,” we'd warn them when they asked for directions to Rowe or to Vermont. For the next week, we would say that more times than we could count.

By evening it was clear that all of West Hawley lacked power, water and phone service and that access was cut off to all residents north of Fullerville. It was also clear that residents along Buckland and LaBelle Roads, as well as the entire Dodge Corner area, were cut off without power, phone service, water or access. Hawley's only access to other towns was through Ashfield and Plainfield and the roads going to Ashfield were badly eroded. Although it was still open to the Charlemont town line, the portion of East Hawley Road below the elbow was badly eroded and dangerous. We had a seriously ill resident in West Hawley whom we couldn't evacuate that day due to the flooding in Charlemont who would have to be gotten out the next day, and we had 15 guests at Stump Sprouts who couldn't leave due to the damage to 8A.

After discussing what we knew about the damage with Richard and the selectmen, we decided that we needed to immediately ask the state's and the National Guard's assistance in reopening and fixing Route 8A, and in dealing

with Buckland Road. After talking with MEMA a number of times, I composed a 4-page report detailing what we knew about damages and problems in Hawley and asking for immediate assistance. We also requested that pallets of bottled water be supplied to help residents until power could be restored and they could again use their wells.

In our request, we said that our first priority was to restore access to the cut off portions of West Hawley. We asked that the National Guard help to reopen Route 8A in the southern portion to regain access to the town garage and to residents in the Forge Hill and West Hill area. We asked that the state inspect the newly rebuilt bridge at the northern end for safety and for help to reopen and rebuild 8A. We also asked that National Grid concentrate on restoring power to both portions of West Hawley. Our third priority was to reopen access to the cut off residents whose access comes from Buckland. The report was emailed to MEMA that night and I discussed the different issues with them a number of times before 11 pm.

The next day when the waters went down, the full extent of the damages became visible. Because we had to deal with multiple state and federal agencies, we needed to keep the EOC open during the day so messages could be relayed by radio in areas where phone service was out. Just as during the storm, our EOC radio operators allowed us to coordinate inspections and meetings with different agencies.

While Richie was working to line up a contractor to begin temporary repairs to stabilize East Hawley Road and Buckland Road, I worked with MEMA on Monday to get state and federal inspection teams to see the damaged areas. In late morning I escorted a team of inspectors from MEMA, FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Executive Office of

Transportation, and a contractor for the state to show them the damage to Route 8A.

I knew what to expect but the damage was truly breathtaking. “You are not going to believe this,” the contractor’s representative said as we went south past Stetson’s. “This is just amazing.”

In some ways, the incredible extent of the problems on Route 8A made it easier to get help as no one seeing it could imagine a small town being able to deal with it quickly. As a result, the state highway inspector authorized ETL that day to begin repairs to restore access and rebuild Route 8A. ETL promised to begin to move in equipment as soon as the state allowed machinery to be brought over the Deerfield River bridge in Charlemont. The state contract allowed the town to concentrate its limited resources on repairs elsewhere. ETL began work the next day. Thanks to Richie’s efforts, Warner Bros. also began temporary repairs on East Hawley Road that day (Tuesday) and after spending two days shoring it up to keep it from collapsing more, began to stabilize the Buckland Road and restore access there on Thursday.

Using materials stored in West Hawley near the town garage, Wayne Clark and George Rice were able to make partial repairs to the washouts between Fullerville and Forge Hill to open access to residents north of Fullerville later on Monday and on Tuesday. National Grid was able to restore power to the northern part of West Hawley by late Monday and, by rigging a temporary line along the section of 8A the river removed, was able to restore power to the southern part Tuesday night. Our firefighters ferried truckloads of donated food and bottled water to the southern part of West Hawley on Monday.

While we made good progress in restoring power and access to West Hawley residents the day after Irene, we still had to worry about residents cut off bordering Buckland.

Clesson Brook had carved a 25 foot wide, 15 foot deep trench through Buckland Road just above the box culvert ½ mile below Pond Road and did damage in multiple areas in both Hawley and Buckland making it impossible to get to Dodge Corner other than on foot. The box culvert had become blocked by trees and debris which floated down on the flood waters and jammed the opening – unable to go under the road, the overflowing brook went through it. Much of the debris that blocked the culvert and caused the logjams was from the 2008 ice storm – the town had asked for assistance from FEMA then to remove the debris from the brook area but had been denied – a classic example of the saying: pay me now or pay me later.

We were offered help that Monday from a FEMA search & rescue team to check on the residents who were cut off. The team hiked from the washout 1 mile to the base of Dodge Road and then 2 miles up into the Dodge Corner area. That mission was carried out late Monday afternoon finishing about 10:30 pm. The residents were safe, but they had neither power nor phone service and they were cut off by the damage to Dodge Road in Buckland.

Because they weren't likely to be able to get out soon, our firefighters carried bottled water and food up to the Dodge Corner area on foot on Tuesday and, using our ATV and our brush truck, took up a generator, fuel, and a tank load of drinking water for livestock later on Wednesday. Road access to Dodge Corner was restored on Thursday from Buckland, and power was finally restored that weekend.

After spending Monday and Tuesday taking different inspection teams to the different sites in Hawley where major damage occurred, the focus shifted to examining areas where residents suffered damage and developing estimates of how much damage there was to determine if the county qualified for a major disaster declaration. This was incredibly time-consuming, particularly because to go from one end of West

Hawley to another, we had to embark on a 20 mile journey at slow speed on damaged roads going through Charlemont, East Hawley, and Plainfield to get to locations less than 3 miles away from the original site, and then return. It was important, however, so the town would qualify for the maximum assistance from the state and federal government to rebuild the roads and town garage.

About 8 pm Wednesday night, while waiting at my house for our firefighters to return from ferrying water via Ashfield, Buckland Center, over Orcutt Hill and then up to Dodge Corner, I got our 15th call of the day from MEMA. “Chief Cox,” the woman said, “Governor Patrick is going to come visit you tomorrow afternoon.” The governor was going to visit Buckland, Heath, Hawley and some towns in Berkshire County on the way to his home in Richmond. I suggested that the governor might want to see the damage on Route 8A. Ten minutes later, however, the woman called back and said that because 8A and Route 2 were essentially dead ends right then, it would fit the governor’s schedule better to see the damage on East Hawley Road and Buckland Road so he could then head over through Plainfield and go to towns west of here. I called each of the selectmen and our Treasurer Charlie Stetson to warn them that the governor would be there about 1 pm.

Thursday proved to be extremely busy as we had to take FEMA damage assessment teams to each of the major damage sites in the morning and let them measure and calculate projected costs to restore them. We also had a second FEMA team that wanted help locating private properties that had been damaged in the storm. And, we had to work with the Environmental Police who were searching the state forest for Bob Stone who had gone missing two days before. The good news was that the governor was running late. One of his advance people called to say that his 1 pm visit would be a 2 pm visit. The advance person and a National Guard team

came about an hour early to set up and go over what the governor would like to see. Did we have some maps or photos for the governor to see where the damage was?

As luck would have it, Brandon Root had printed up a bunch of photographs he took while riding with his father delivering bottled water to West Hawley and Dodge Corner. Brandon had mounted them on a board. We set up Brandon's display on a table in one of the fire truck bays, along with a large USGS map of Hawley.

The governor arrived in a black SUV with a state police escort a little after two. He shook hands with different people, including my son Ben, Sarah Mizula and Brandon. He then talked with Brandon about the different photos in his display and talked with some residents about the problems they were having getting access to their homes. He talked with me about the location of the different damage sites in town and then he and some of his staff rode down to where Clesson Brook had destroyed Buckland Road. After examining the damage and talking with the Warner Bros. workers who were clearing the truckloads of debris that had plugged the box culvert, he and his staff reloaded, went up to the fire station to get directions, and headed west to see damage in Berkshire County.

Hurricane Irene

None of us in Hawley (or for that matter, any of those up and down the east coast) will soon forget the Sunday morning, August 28th, when Hurricane Irene arrived with a fury. It will, in all likelihood, go down in history as the 100-year-flood for much of the western parts of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont.

For me, it began with my wife waking me at about 8:30 am and telling me we had a problem in our basement. Barefoot

and in my pajamas, I headed to the cellar where I stepped into 3” of water. I soon discovered my little utility pump didn’t stand a chance against the rising water. I checked out the floor drain. Was it plugged? No, not plugged, just operating in reverse. The rain came so fast and hard, our already high water table could absorb no more. The drain provided a relief valve of sorts and it pumped water into the basement. I stuffed a towel into the 2.5” opening to slow the inflow. I began to raise everything that wasn’t wet to higher surfaces. At 9:30 am I turned off the power in the cellar and I called the fire department to please come pump it out. If water reached the electrical outlets, that would spell dangerous trouble. By 10 am the water’s depth reached 12”. Bob and Brandon Root arrived with the fire truck. I’m sure we were just one of many calls. The two of them worked very hard to help others on that day! With a powerful pump they sucked down the water to a more manageable level. Around 11 am, the rain slowed. With the water level down to 3” again I used my one working pump and a wet vac to remove the last of the water.

The worst of it was over and I could begin the cleanup process, which would take days. I walked down Pond Road to see what the pond looked like. I could not believe my eyes. The downstream side of Pond Road looked like Niagara Falls with nearly 12” of water flowing across the road and washing out the area around the culvert.



Pond Road-Thwing photo

Our 6 foot wide brook was now about 50 feet wide and the water was raging. Remember that we are at the top of the hill; everything flows down hill from us.



Clesson Brook-Thwing photo

The above two pictures were taken at 11:30 am. By 12:15, the water had stopped flowing over the road and we could see the damage clearly.



Pond Road-Thwing photo

Farther down Clesson Brook, the trees and debris blocked the box culvert. The water took out the road on both sides of the culvert for a length of 50 feet or more.



Buckland Road box culvert-Cox photo

Hawley had 30 inches of rain in about 6 weeks starting before Irene and continuing throughout the month of September. The water table is still so high, that even now, a 1 inch of rainfall causes brooks to swell and people to worry.

Within days, the National Guard mobilized at Mohawk Regional High School with more that 150 people and related equipment working at sites throughout the local area.

Route 8A, just south of Stetson's, was completely washed out for an extensive area where the Chickley River takes a sharp turn. Flood waters seldom follow the twists and turns of a wandering stream, but rather try to move in a straight line. As a result most of the road damage in Hawley was done where waterways took a turn close to a road.



Route 8A washout-Cox photo

Log jams in the waterways caused water to change direction with devastating results everywhere.



Chickley River log jam-Stetson photo



Route 8A near #240 West Hawley Road-Tirone photo
Pat and Tex LaMountain lost two house trailers up near
the intersection of the Chickley River, King Brook and Basin
Brook. They washed all the way down the Chickley as they
broke part.

The town garage suffered severe damage and is now being repaired without the benefit of insurance. When it was built, it was not in a flood zone, so didn't need flood insurance. Now the normal insurance won't cover it because it doesn't cover floods.



Town garage-Cox photo

Much of the building had to be taken down so the foundation could be repaired



Town Garage-Stetson photo

Sunday, August 28th, 2011

Irene Inundates Tedd White's Farm

By Lisa Turner

Hurricane Irene arrived. It was well publicized, giving folks ample time to prepare. We usually are given plenty of instructions on what to do to prepare for a hurricane. However, we very seldom get more than rain or wind from any given hurricane. Therefore, I did the usual minimal preparations for this storm.

I put aside a couple of gallons of water; I did all my laundry ahead of time in the event of no power. Tedd checked on the generator to make sure it was in running order. He also purchased gasoline and put some aside in several gas cans so that he could have it to run the generator in order to milk the

cows. (fifty of them, twice a day). We did not bother to stock up on food, as we certainly figured we could survive on what we had in our cupboards. This turned out to be the case. On Sunday morning when Tedd woke up to milk the cows, it was indeed raining. It was a steady, heavy mist type of rain, not a heavy downpour. Though the Chickley River across the street from our house (located at 28 West Hawley Road, Hawley, MA) was rather high, we were not alarmed. We had seen this before with lots of rain. We still felt, at that time, that we would not really have much trouble due to hurricane Irene. Tedd woke me from a sound sleep about 8:00 a.m. He asked that I keep any eye on the storm, since he would in the barn milking. I looked out the window, saw the height of the river and noted the rain. Still, I thought...just another rainy day. No wind was present. I went out to help Tedd do the remaining chores. We finished feeding all 130 cows and the milking was complete. Once they were all taken care of, we began to assess the storm situation in earnest.

It was about 10:00 a.m. It never let up raining and the river began to rise even higher. There is a small brook on the side of our house. It is always so shallow, that you can walk over the stones in it with your shoes on and not really get too wet. It often comes close to drying up in the heat of summer. About 10:00 a.m., we noticed that both the Chickley River across the street, on Route 8A and the little brook next to the house began to swell rapidly. (We call it Bob's Brook, after Bob White, who owned the house before us with his wife Ethel.)

The Chickley River began to rage and large trees and objects were rapidly floating by. It began to overflow onto the road. The brook began to rise and flow with a force I had never expected it was capable of. Not only did it rise rapidly, but it flowed heavily.

That brook raged with muddy water and millions of rocks. We had a large pile of cut/split wood along that side of the lawn that was now compromised. The water was at the level of our wood pile, approximately five feet higher than normal. We also had a farm stand next to the brook, loaded heavily with bundles of wood (\$6.00/bundle). Both the farm stand and the cords of split wood were about to be washed away.

Tedd jumped on the tractor with the bucket and began to collect any wood he could and move it to higher ground. We got about 2/3 of the pile and began to lose the battle. Then we hooked the farm stand on to the tractor and pulled it to higher ground. In the front of the house, on the lawn, we had an old iron hay rake there as a decoration. We hooked on to that and pulled it to higher ground. All the while, the river overflowed onto 8A and began to empty into our field. From the brook, rocks were spewing from it at an incredible rate of speed. It sounded just like thunder. I would have thought it was thunder, but Tedd recognized it as the sound of the rocks headed down the mountain into the brook, and now they were rushing into our back yard. We were both on the tractor trying to quickly make water courses in an effort to divert the small brook (now a raging river) toward the road. After about an hour of this we began to lose that battle. The rocks were so powerful, combined with the raging water, that we had to give

up.



Bob's Brook culvert blockage-Turner photo

The water raged through our back yard, down our driveway and across the road to combine with the overflow from the Chickley. It was so strong and high that we could no longer safely be out in the storm.

I watched with a sick feeling in my stomach as the water poured into the basement of our house through the cellar bulkhead. We had been trying to hold back the water for about an hour and a half and had to give up. We parked the tractor and went up into the hay loft in the barn to stay out of harms way. From there we watched the storm for the next two hours as it continued to rain, water surrounded our house and rocks and gravel was dumped into the backyard and the driveway. The level of the water reached the top step of the back porch, and I felt sure it was about to pour into the house. It was an awful, helpless feeling.

Around 1:00 p.m., the rain began to lighten up and the water slowly began to recede. By 3:00 p.m., the rain was minimal and the sun actually began to shine! Then the damage was more visible. We watched huge 50 foot trees being pushed down the Chickley River. We saw various types of debris rush by. Huge chunks of asphalt, that was once West



Route 8A at White's Farm-Turner photo
Hawley Road, were spread throughout our field along with trees, chunks of wood, coolers, hats, toys, buckets and all else. The most astonishing thing was the sheer volume of gravel and rocks that was now in our back yard, cellar and driveway. There was not a blade of grass to be seen in the backyard due to all the gravel and rocks. In the driveway, the gravel was at least 4 feet high from the road (8A,) all the way back to the milk house and across the backyard. Bob's Brook and the culvert under 8A were completely plugged with gravel and trees. Water was flowing across 8A rather than under it. The road was torn to pieces. We ended up with 3 feet of water in

our cellar and about 4 inches of muck at the bottom of the water.

Fish were flopping helplessly in our field and on what was left of 8a (also known as West Hawley Road). The area looked like a war zone. I never in my life would have thought that such destruction would come from that little brook. I could understand it happening with the Chickley River, but not that tiny little brook. We were in shock and in awe. We felt numb and helpless. Amazingly, we still had phone service and electric power.

By evening, we had no power. We had to milk the cows that night using the generator. We were out there until 12:30 in the morning and back up at 6:00 a.m. to begin again. Tedd and I took it well. Maybe we were too shocked and numb to take it any other way. We were mighty tired, yet so glad that none of the cows were hurt, we were fine and all of our family members were fine.

Hurricane Irene Attacks Forge Hollow

By Pamela and Craig Shrimpton

Like everyone else in the hill towns, we heard that Hurricane Irene was heading our way. Although we expected some wind and rain and maybe a power outage, we weren't prepared for what ultimately transpired. As is the custom in our hill towns, a protracted power loss was probably in the cards. Knowing a power loss meant no fresh water, we filled as many water jugs as we could find. Figuring we were ready to ride out the storm, we tuned into the Weather Channel and waited for Irene to come knocking at our door.

The morning of Hurricane Irene arrived, and we were awakened by what sounded like thunder, but definitely wasn't since it never stopped. After a few minutes trying to figure out what was making all that racket, we realized the incessant bang, bang, bang we were hearing was the sound of boulders

rolling down the Chickley River, which borders our farm. Although it was raining hard, there was no wind at all. Nothing like what you would expect from a hurricane, just a hard rain like many of the rains we get in these parts. Unfortunately, we were to find that looks can be very deceiving because the rain was falling much faster and much harder than it appeared. Donning our foul weather gear that was left over from our days at the Boston Harbor Sailing club, we ventured outside around 9 am. As we got closer to the river, the sound of the boulders, trees and the odd piece of building material grew louder and more ominous. While we couldn't see the boulders in the muddy water, we could certainly hear them crashing to and fro as they made their way down towards the Deerfield. Judging by the sound they made, we estimated some could have been as much as a half-ton.

The power of the water rushing along the bank was shocking; one false step and a tumble in the river meant certain death. We decided to keep our distance. Observing the boulders being tossed down the river as if they were pebbles was awe inspiring. As we made our way down the road towards the bridge which connects Forge Hill Road to West Hawley Road, we thought something didn't look quite right.

Taking a moment to get our bearings, we realized just what it was. The entire hillside above our once beautiful swimming hole was completely gone, swept away by the power of the water like sandcastles at high tide. We walked towards our bridge to get a better look, but we didn't dare to cross over. The water had risen to just inches below the bridge deck. Our little ankle-deep Chickley was now about ten feet deep, moving fast, and sweeping away everything in its path.



Forge Hill bridge-Thwing photo

We had seen enough -- things were bad and getting worse. We decided to head back to the house to try and catch the latest news, but no sooner than we turned on the TV, we lost our electric and phone services. We knew something serious had happened since while power outages are common, we usually don't lose the phone.

Later that morning, we found out that West Hawley Road was completely washed out on both sides of our little hollow. We were trapped! Many people have a romantic notion about being snowed in; well, we can tell you that it's not very romantic. In fact, it's really pretty scary when you have no power, no phone and no way out. However, at that point, we didn't know how bad it really was so we remained calm and once the rain stopped, we ventured out to survey the carnage. We walked down the dirt part of Forge Hill Road and noticed there was a crack in the road alongside the steep embankment that runs along the river. Just as Craig started to say it looks

like this road could go at any time, we heard a rustle of leaves and saw the tips of the trees vibrating like someone was shaking them. “Run! It's giving way!” hollered Craig. Grabbing me by the scruff of the neck, he yanked me from the precipice just as the entire hillside collapsed into the river.



Forge Hill Road washout-Thwing photo

All night long we were continually awakened by the sound of trees falling into the river. As each tree lost its battle with the river with a crack and crash, our mood became more somber. How could we ever recover from this? We were sure our little hollow was wrecked.

We went a couple days without showers but luckily got our electric back a few days later. The phone took a couple weeks longer to be fixed. As a reward for our patience, the Verizon worker dropped off a couple of wooden spools for our goats to play on. It was a nice gesture in an attempt make up for our lack of service.

It was a strange feeling to be trapped between the two washouts with no way out, but everyone in the area lent a helping hand. We never felt isolated. Although the Chickley River has taken on a whole new look between the storm and the subsequent construction to fix the banks, and we lost many trees, our house was left unharmed and our little hollow was not wrecked. It's just a little different. Even the swimming hole behind Kim Fitzroy's house looks like it survived. Unfortunately, Forge Hill Road from our place to Pudding Hollow is no longer traversable and a stream now runs down the center of what's left of the road.

We learned one thing from this experience. Things are never quite as bad as they first seem when you have good friends and neighbors to lend a helping hand. With everyone pulling together, we realized we are much more fortunate than many others and just hope that Forge Hollow and our beloved hill towns never see another hurricane like Irene again.

Watching Irene, from 96 Middle Road

by Alice Parker

Five of us prepared for the storm as well as we could, debating whether or not to go to Church that Sunday morning. Thank goodness we didn't, or we wouldn't have gotten home for three days! The rains came down harder and harder, and soon there were streams running down the sides of the road, as well as through the meadows on both sides of the house and down our driveway. The brook was roaring louder than I'd ever heard it. When we looked over the guard rail, it was a third of the way up the canyon below, over the tops of the old stone constructions there, with large trees and rocks hurtling down. Peter Purdy phoned to say that the brook at the foot of the hill was over the bridge and the meadows there.



New bridge at Singing Brook Farm-Cosby photo



Where new bridge stood at Singing Brook Farm-Cosby photo

We kept waiting for the wind -- which never came. The rain let up enough in the afternoon for a walk of inspection -- the road to the dam was washed out, with water pouring over the dam, and our new bridge completely gone. It took two weeks for the water to subside enough to see that the dam itself was full of gravel, and the lawns around covered with sludge. That will be a big job to repair.

The electricity was out for more than two days -- which wasn't bad -- and we never lost the phone, through some miracle. But we survived well, and certainly ate well, with mandatory ice cream clean-up! My 13-year-old grandson said that next time he went to a hurricane, he'd be sure to take a huge box of Wings and some Febreze!

What Mother Nature Destroyed, Men and Machines Restored

Seven weeks after Irene arrived; most of Hawley has been repaired and restored. Our thanks go to the subcontractors. Warner Bros worked on Buckland Road restoration and ETL worked on the West Hawley Route 8A repairs. The town crew worked on East Road and other smaller projects. Starting about October 25th, Warner Bros began the restoration of East Hawley Road below the hairpin turn.

Below, an excavator works in Clesson Brook just below the sharp bend at Clark's where another brook joins Clesson Brook. They lowered the stream bed and piled rocks up on the sides of the brook, especially the road side.



Clesson Brook below Clark's-Thwing photo



Clesson Brook at Clark's-Thwing photo

The above photo shows the rebuilt banks at the culvert where the stream comes down beside the Clark's driveway and crosses the road to join Clesson Brook. Loaders brought very large rocks to the edge of the bank and dumped them over the side. An excavator in the brook used the rocks to rebuild the walls so they would not wash away again.



Rebuilt Route 8A-Thwing photo

Route 8A, just south of Stetson's, is now completely rebuilt. The river has been dug deeper and the debris has been removed. About 500 yards north of this the river that washed out a huge area but did not touch the road. That section of washout is about 500 ft long and about 75 feet wide. It is slowly being rebuilt with materials removed from other sections of the river where rock debris accumulated behind a blockage.

To prevent a future washout of Forge Hill Bridge, ETL lowered the river bed by 4 feet. All along this section of the

river you can see the effects of deepening the river and building up the banks to avoid future problems.



Chickley near Shrimoton's-Thwing photo



Chickley behind town garage-Thwing photo

In the previous photo you can see the back of the town garage from the reshaped river bed. Imaging how high the river bed/water must have been to have undermined the building's foundation. Two house trailers in various stages of destruction swept by the back of this building.

The following two photos show where LaMountain's two house trailers sat before Irene took them down river. The first photo shows only a deck remaining, the second photo shows the river after it was deepened and the sides built up. There had to have been a LOT of water to have floated the house trailers. The river is now about 10-15 feet below where the trailers sat.



LaMountains empty site-Thwing photo

As of October 17th the estimate for all repairs in Hawley was about 2.1 million dollars with up to 90 % expected to be covered by FEMA, MEMA and insurance. The remaining \$200,000 may have to be absorbed by the town and that means the taxpayers. That means you.



Chickley at LaMountain's-Thwing photo

We hope to never see this kind of storm and related damage in Hawley again.

Editor's Note: Two months after Irene, two snowstorms hit Hawley. The first left 5 inches of snow on October 27. The second storm dropped another 26 inches on October 29th. Hawley suffered no damage from these two snowstorms. The rest of the area and much of New England were devastated. Their snow was heavy and wet and their trees still in leaf. Most of our trees were bare and the snow was dry because of our colder temperatures at our higher elevations.

Our country has certainly seen the effects of global warming this year, and will probably experience more severe storms in the future.

S&D Website

<http://sites.google.com/site/sonsdaughtersofhawley/Home>

For those of you with a computer, check out this issue of the *Edge* on our website and see the photos in color and in a larger size.

A special request to all you Sons and Daughters.

I (we) would greatly appreciate getting email addresses from all of you who have an email address.

This would make it much easier for us to communicate with you about cancelled events, new events, and other things related solely to the Sons and Daughters of Hawley business.

Just send an email to kthwingjr@gmail.com with **S&D Email Address** in the subject line.

Thank you very much.

MEMBERSHIP FORM JULY 2010-JUNE 2011
Sons & Daughters of Hawley, PO Box 206, Hawley, MA 01339

Annual Membership Dues:

Individual/Event	\$10	_____
Family	\$12	_____
Contributing	\$15	_____
Sustaining	\$25	_____
Life Member	\$200	_____

Honorary Free Membership is provided for all persons over the age of 70 years, who are related to Hawley by ancestry, birth, marriage, or residence.

I am in this category: _____

Life or Honorary Members

We would appreciate your additional contributions: _____

The *Edge of Hawley* would appreciate your direct support. _____

Gifts of Membership

Consider a gift membership for a family member. _____

Name _____

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Memorial or Contributor's Plaque

Honor your family: _____ plaques @ \$55 each _____

On pew _____ in vestibule _____

Inscription: 29 characters/line, 2 lines only

Building Fund Donation

I wish to support the restoration of the Meetinghouse. _____

I wish to support the renovation of the Hawley Grove. _____

I wish to support the building fund in general. _____

Enclosed is a check for Sons & Daughters in the total amount of: _____

The Sons and Daughters of Hawley

Shippable Sale Items

BOOKS

<i>Hawley Massachusetts; The First Fifty Years, 1770-1820</i> by Harrison Parker	\$35.00
<i>Hawley Bicentennial Cookbook, 1792-1992</i> by The Sons and Daughters of Hawley	\$5.00
<i>Cottage Piety Exemplified</i> , a biography of Martha S. Taylor of Hawley published anonymously by Rev. Rufus Taylor (3 rd son)	\$11.00
Home to Hawley Scrapbook ; a collection of works from various sources	\$7.50
<i>Tales of Hawley</i> , by Maida Riggs	\$5.00
<i>The 1989 Guide to Historical Sites in the Hawley State Forest</i> prepared by the Town of Hawley Historical Commission	\$7.50
<i>Pudding Hollow Cookbook</i> by Tinky "Dakota" Weisblat	\$30.00
<i>History of the Town of Hawley</i> by Williams Giles Atkins	\$9.00
<i>Town of Hawley Bicentennial Program Book 1792-1992</i> , a summary of 200 years in Hawley	\$7.00
<i>Rediscovering Hawley's Old Town Common</i> by John Sears	\$5.00
<i>Hawley Story or My Memory Garden</i> , by Minnie Harris Billings	\$5.00

HISTORICAL MONOGRAPHS by Harrison Parker

Hawley's Loss of Land to Plainfield in 1803	\$4.00
Fullerville	\$4.00
East Hawley and its Center	\$4.00
The Old Hawley Town Common and Poverty Square	\$3.00

USEFUL ITEMS:

4" Meetinghouse Tree Ornament by Marion Ives	@ \$10.00 each	____ pcs	\$ ____
Coffee Mug	@ \$ 6.00 each	____ pcs	\$ ____
Meetinghouse, Grove or Old Town Common T- Shirts	@ \$ 12.00 each	____ pcs	\$ ____
Meetinghouse, Grove Tote or Old Town Common Sling Bags	@ \$ 6.00 tote @ \$12.00 sling bag each	____ pcs	\$ ____
S&D Event Calendar	\$18.00	Year 2011	\$ ____

HAWLEY FINE NOTEPAPERS:

Meetinghouse	10 @ \$6.50	____ sets	\$ ____
Charcoal Kiln	6 @ \$5.00	____ sets	\$ ____

Please add 10% to the total sale price to cover shipping costs

Enclosed is a check for Sons & Daughters in the total amount of: _____

The Edge of Hawley
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Hawley, MA 01339

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