



NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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HISTORIC STONE CULVERTS

The floods of October 8th, 2005, which devastated buildings and farms along several streams in Walpole and Alstead, caused lesser damage throughout southwestern and central New Hampshire. A survey carried out by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) drew attention to an often-overlooked highway structure, the stone culvert.

A number of stone culverts were damaged by flooding, and planning for their restoration has recognized their vulnerability to casual replacement. Local authorities may regard these structures as having little historical value or as being too small to accommodate future floods. In fact, such culverts are among the most evocative of the cherished stone structures that give character to New Hampshire's cultural landscape. With proper maintenance, they are nearly imperishable.



Dry-laid stone box culvert on Gore Road, Warner, N. H., showing minor flood damage.
(Photograph by James L. Garvin)

Most stone culverts date from the nineteenth century, but some may have been built in the 1700s. They generally take two forms: the rectangular box culvert and the much rarer arched structure. Pending the development of a full survey of surviving structures and a procedure for evaluating their significance, the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources has provisionally declared all surviving stone culverts to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

FEMA is developing several innovative methods of retaining and repairing them, and has suggested armoring their earth fill against erosion and providing auxiliary bypass structures to handle floodwaters.



Dry-laid arched culvert, Memorial Highway over Temple Brook, Temple, N. H.
(Photograph by James L. Garvin)

DHR, FEMA, and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation are seeking resources to begin a survey of stone culverts in southwestern New Hampshire as a template for a future statewide inventory.

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