



# HIGHWAY HIGHLIGHTS: BRISTOL

By Erik Wells  
Newsletter Editor

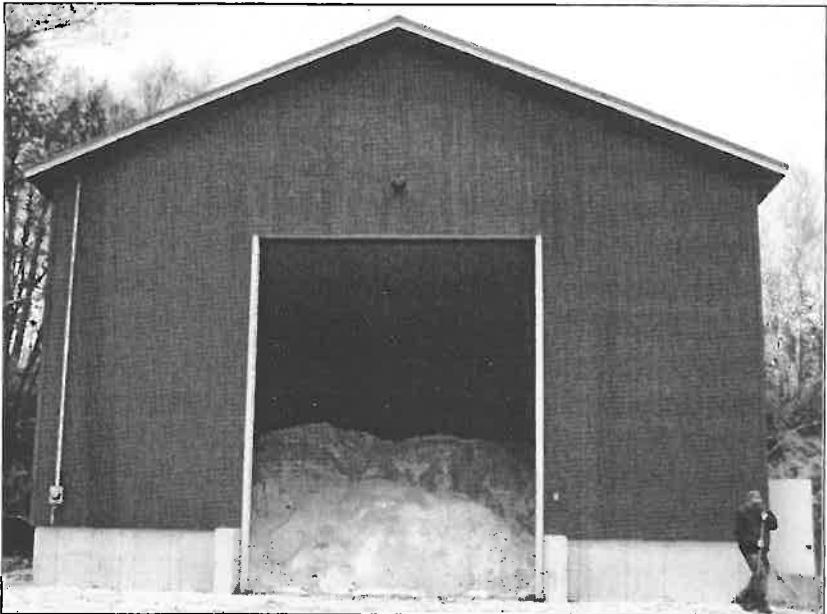
## FAST FACTS

**Population:** 3,760  
**County:** Addison  
**Municipal square miles:** 42  
**Chartered:** 1762  
**Home to:** Bristol Village,  
Mt. Abraham High School  
**HIGHWAY CREW**  
**Pete Bouvier** (Foreman)  
6 years working in dept.  
**Mike Menard** (30 years)  
**Dan Gebo** (26 years)  
**Eric Cota** (23 years)  
**Cale Pelland** (8 years)

In Bristol balance and collaboration are key. The Highway Crew finds balance between maintaining its downtown village and town roads in the Addison County community located in the foothills of the Green Mountains. There are about 42 miles of road in town, split almost evenly between gravel and paved. The area the crew covers ranges from class 3 roads leading up to the Notch, to the sidewalks in the village setting. Digging the village out after a snowstorm can be a challenge, Foreman Pete Bouvier said, "Every decent snowstorm we are down there moving snow." The crew sends out its artillery, a quarter-century old Kabota tractor with a v-plow and blower (if needed) and for big storms attaches the 14 foot pusher to the loader that has "made life a lot easier," Pete said. In addition they handle cleaning out storm drains in the square mile village, repainting crosswalks, and collecting trash weekly from 20 locations, including several town buildings and barrels maintained on the town green and downtown block.

He's in his sixth year as Foreman, but Pete isn't new to the area. He has spent his entire life in Bristol and his family has been in town for generations. He took the foreman job after 34 years at VTrans to work for his hometown. We spent time talking at the town barn the week before deer camp as the crew made its final preparations for winter.

Bristol has planned to replace stretches of roadway with a schedule moving forward. The major project undertaken this past summer was the reconstruction of a heavily traveled mile stretch of Burpee Road. It was in bad shape, with 8 to 10 inch "hog trough" rutting throughout. All the culverts were replaced and the road was raised



Bristol's new 2,400 square foot salt shed was completed in 2010. It can hold 1,000 tons of salt; enough for a normal winter.

using four-inch stone skimmed with gravel before it was repaved. Additionally, the shoulder was widened. Bristol's project, like many others in Addison County, was successful and cost-effective with assistance from neighboring towns. Nearby towns assisted Bristol by running their trucks and hauling for the Burpee Road reconstruction. There is an informal agreement between towns to assist each other with the understanding that the favor will be repaid at some point, no matter if it is a year or two later. This collaboration has open support from Selectboards, Pete said. A couple years ago Bristol was reconstructing another stretch of roadway when its grader went down for three weeks. With the pavers scheduled to come surrounding towns pitched in with their equipment to finish the prep work.



*Bristol's Highway Department (left to right) Mike Menard, Cale Pelland, Dan Gebo, Eric Cota and Pete Bowvier.*

Like many towns Bristol received some damage from Irene. We checked out a stretch of Lincoln Road that was recently repaved after a washout from the storm. The town held a meeting to discuss and analyze how it facilitated its emergency response, Pete said. Moving forward Bristol would like to develop an emergency response plan.

The Highway Department has a strong working relationship with the Selectboard and Town Administrator Bill Bryant, Pete said. "It makes life so much easier. We seem to have a lot of support in town. We get into town meeting and they're always pretty thankful. I think we do a pretty decent job of cleaning the roads." Bill returned the compliment by saying, "Pete and his crew get a lot done and are always looking out for our taxpayers - they are a hard working and dedicated group." Such support led to the construction of a new salt shed that was completed last year. The 40x60 foot shed cost \$128,000 including engineering, Bill said. A Selectboard member oversaw the project, essentially serving as the general contractor. The highway department did the site excavating, clearing and backfilling. Having a number of subcontractors for the remaining construction was somewhat complicated, Bill said, but doing it that way led to considerable cost savings. The shed holds about 1,000 tons, enough for a normal winter in town, Pete said.

Pete and the other four members of his crew are a cohesive group. They elect to take a long morning break around 9 a.m. each day instead of an afternoon

break. During that time they usually go to the local store for coffee and a bite to eat, but in the winter they fire up the hotplate and have a big breakfast two to three times a week. On storm days working to clear the roads from 3:30 in the morning to 9 at night, having a nice morning meal is a needed time to recharge, Pete said. He estimates that they do 98 percent of their mechanical work in-house. Sitting in one of the two buildings on site hangs a white

board listing each piece of equipment and when it is next scheduled for greasing and full service. Bristol has four dump trucks, a loader, tractor and excavator in its equipment fleet. "(The excavator) has been very handy for us," Pete said. "A lot of towns are probably hesitant about buying track machines, but I don't think I would ever want to go back to a backhoe. We got rid of ours and it was a blessing."

The Highway Department works hard to coordinate maintaining the town gravel roads and the village center. Through balance and collaboration the dedicated group maintains Bristol's existing infrastructure while working with the town government to plan and implement improvements for the future. And just as important, they enjoy and take great pride in the work they do.



*Downtown Bristol Village, the hub of the community in the foothills of the Green Mountains rich with history and pride.*

