

Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions

Natural Resources Work

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In the absence of county government, the State and its municipalities created regional planning commissions to work with the federal, state, and municipal governments on a wide range of issues to prepare for the future.

Regional and Municipal Planning – RPCs are responsible for updating their regional plans at least every 8 years. Regional plans are important in helping our member municipalities address current and potential issues of concern. RPCs act as cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. RPC's work in recent years has focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education, training, modernizing bylaws, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards, and implementing new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential to ensure a smooth state and local permitting process. Related to Natural Resources: plans are required to have land use (including forest, recreation, agriculture), energy, preservation, flood resilience, and implementation elements. These plans are used by RPCs in reviewing municipal plans, guiding action, and reviewing Act 250 and Section 248 applications.

Brownfields - Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over \$12 million for this economic redevelopment initiative. Environmental site assessments remove concerns about contamination and allow properties to be sold and redeveloped in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, provide greenspace, and increase housing opportunities.

Act 250 and Section 248 - RPCs review state Act 250 and Section 248 permit applications to ensure proposed projects conform with the regional plan.

Tactical Basin Planning - RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to develop EPA-required watershed plans with the involvement of municipalities, conservation districts, and watershed associations. Tactical basin plans are critical for identifying priority actions to achieve clean water goals. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

Municipal Roads General Permit – RPCs help our municipalities conduct road erosion inventories, prioritize projects/segments, and obtain grant funding. ANR has RPCs lead the Grants-in-Aid pilot project to provide funding for municipalities to construct best management practices on municipal roads ahead of the Municipal Roads General Permit. In FY18, 173 municipalities participated, and 44.7 miles of roadway were improved. The improvements were to 720 road segments with 1,322 best management practices constructed. RPCs also help municipalities apply for, and implement, Better Roads and Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation grants from VTrans.

Stormwater and Natural Resource Projects – RPCs help municipalities apply for and implement Ecosystem Restoration Program and Clean Water Block grants. The goal of the program is to support projects that will restore and protect Vermont's rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands from nutrient and sediment pollution. The program supports stormwater master plans, project design, project implementation, natural resource restoration projects, and some limited agricultural projects and equipment purchases.

Other – RPCs often take on special projects related to forest integrity, forest planning, or outdoor recreation planning. We also work on transportation planning, emergency management, land use, economic development, energy, public health, and other topics of interest to our municipal members.