

Vermont Climate Action Plan Update 2025 - Rural Resilience

Chris Company

Executive Director, Windham Regional Commission

Speaker Appointed Member (Municipal Government), Vermont Climate
Council

Chair, VAPDA Emergency Management Committee

House Energy & Digital Infrastructure Committee - March 26, 2025

Global Warming Solutions Act

- ▶ In 2020, the Vermont Legislature passed the Global Warming Solutions Act ([Act 153 as Enacted](#)), which created legally binding emission reduction requirements.
- ▶ The Act was created in response to concerns around Vermont's changing climate and the magnitude of what must be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and **prepare for the impacts of climate change on Vermont's landscape.**
- ▶ The Act requires Vermont to reduce greenhouse gas pollution to 26% below 2005 levels by 2025. Emissions would need to be 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% below by 2050.
- ▶ In addition to the emission reductions required by the statute, the law also directs the Council to consider opportunities for long-term carbon sequestration through, and **strategies for helping Vermont communities prepare for the impacts of climate change.**

Climate Action Plan

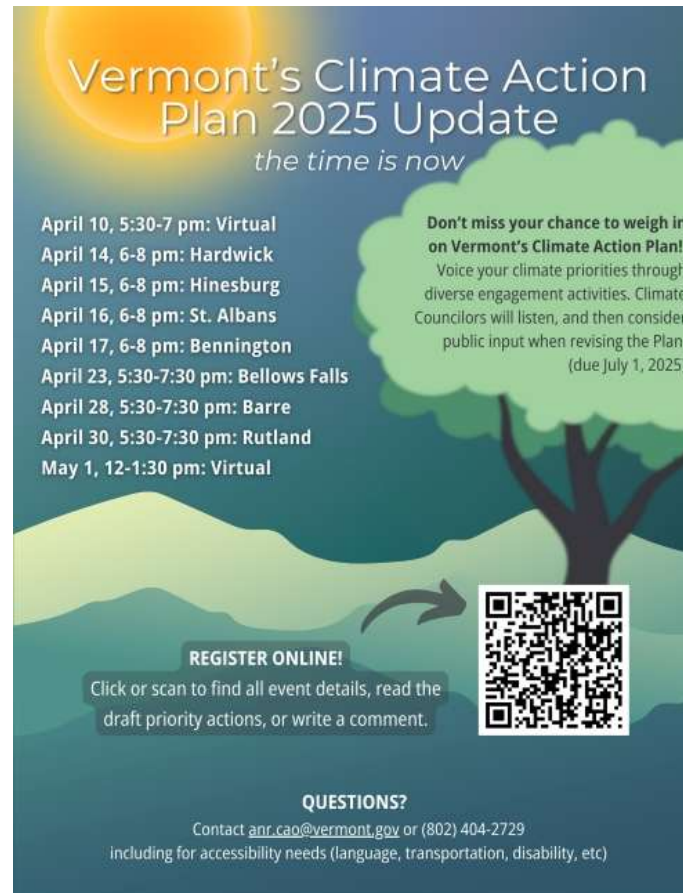
The Vermont Climate Action Plan aims to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help protect Vermont communities and landscapes from the greatest risks of climate change, and create new clean energy industry and jobs.

More specifically, the Climate Action Plan includes strategies to:

- ▶ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation, building, regulated utility, industrial, commercial, and agricultural sectors;
- ▶ **Encourage smart growth and related strategies;**
- ▶ Achieve long-term sequestration and storage of carbon and promote best management practices to achieve climate mitigation, adaption, and resilience on natural working lands;
- ▶ Achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across all sectors;
- ▶ **Reduce energy burdens for rural and marginalized communities;**
- ▶ Limit the use of chemicals, substances, or products that contribute to climate change; and
- ▶ **Build and encourage climate adaptation and resilience of Vermont communities and natural systems.**

2025 Climate Action Plan Update

- ▶ The Climate Action Plan is currently being updated by the Climate Council. The updated plan is due July 1, 2025.
- ▶ Anticipated having the draft plan by the end of March.
- ▶ Still deliberating on priority actions and strategies.
- ▶ Public engagement begins in April.

A poster for Vermont's Climate Action Plan 2025 Update. The background features a stylized landscape with a large tree, rolling hills, and a sun/moon in the sky. The text is arranged in a clear, readable font. The title is at the top, followed by a list of dates and times for public engagement events. A call to action to register online is accompanied by a QR code. Contact information for questions is at the bottom.

Vermont's Climate Action Plan 2025 Update
the time is now

April 10, 5:30-7 pm: Virtual
April 14, 6-8 pm: Hardwick
April 15, 6-8 pm: Hinesburg
April 16, 6-8 pm: St. Albans
April 17, 6-8 pm: Bennington
April 23, 5:30-7:30 pm: Bellows Falls
April 28, 5:30-7:30 pm: Barre
April 30, 5:30-7:30 pm: Rutland
May 1, 12-1:30 pm: Virtual

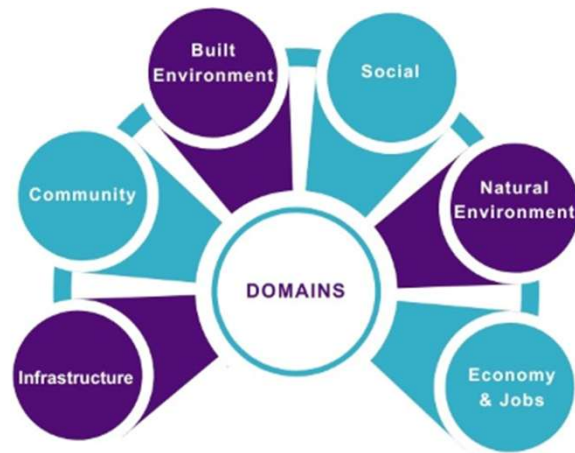
Don't miss your chance to weigh in on Vermont's Climate Action Plan!
Voice your climate priorities through diverse engagement activities. Climate Councilors will listen, and then consider public input when revising the Plan (due July 1, 2025)

REGISTER ONLINE!
Click or scan to find all event details, read the draft priority actions, or write a comment.

QUESTIONS?
Contact anr.cao@vermont.gov or (802) 404-2729
including for accessibility needs (language, transportation, disability, etc)

Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool

- ▶ The Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool (MVI) is a mapping tool to help municipalities understand their vulnerabilities to climate change across several social, economic, and environmental factors.
- ▶ The MVI can help Vermont communities identify where climate change is placing pressure on transportation, electrical grid, housing, emergency services, communications infrastructure, and more.
- ▶ It can inform towns' hazard mitigation plans, local energy plans, or other climate-related efforts. It includes both climate hazard data (for hazards where mapping is feasible), and community characteristics that could indicate vulnerability to climate hazards.
- ▶ Link to tool:
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/fa443357641345efabd35e695947202b>



Drought



Extreme
Precipitation



Erosion



Ice, Hail, and
Snow Storms



High and Low
Temperatures



Wind



Wildfire



Landslides



Flooding



Invasive
Species

Climate Toolkit

- In-development.
- Toolkit with resources for municipalities to assess their climate emergency preparedness, evaluate their financial capacity to address infrastructure resilience, and prioritize investment in that infrastructure.
- This will include a broad approach, including public health, frontline and impacted communities, and strategies for supporting a just transition, as well as methods for reaching rural communities.

People & Communities

Climate Justice & Equity

Farms & Food

Natural Environment

Built Environment


Energy


Climate Toolkit - Example of homepage when developed.


Climate Toolkit


Overview


Climate Action Areas


People & Communities 

Climate Justice & Equity 

Natural Environment 

Farms & Food 

Built Environment 

Energy 

Climate Need

Climate Toolkit

Tool Type

All



Climate Action

All

Apply


AVCC TINY GRANT PROGRAM
Type: Data
Climate Action: Engagement, Transportation
This is a short description of the resource. It should only be 1 to 2 sentences.

Learn More





NREL RESILIENCE ROADMAP
Type: Planning
Climate Action: Transportation
This is a short description of the resource. It should only be 1 to 2 sentences.

Learn More



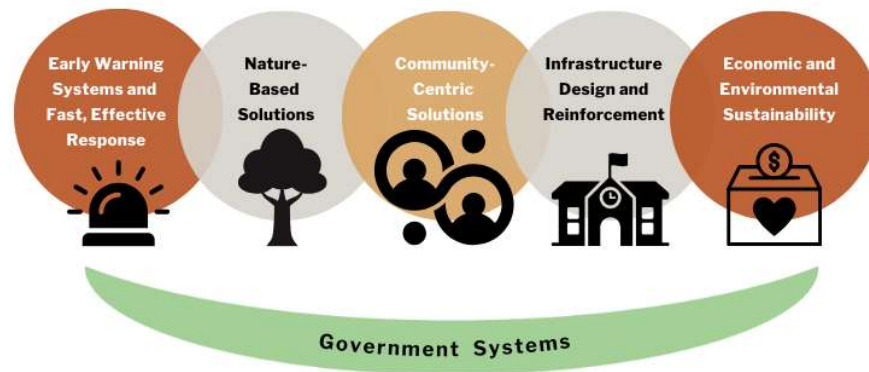
URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM
Type: Financial
Climate Action: Engagement, Forests & Trees
This is a short description of the resource. It should only be 1 to 2 sentences.

Learn More



Resilience Implementation Strategy

On January 3, 2024 Governor Phil Scott and Treasurer Mike Pieciak announced a joint effort to develop a comprehensive Resilience Implementation Strategy by July 1, 2025. The Strategy will build off the considerable work done to date across State Government to identify and prioritize climate resilience needs and evaluate the sufficiency of currently available funding.



Rural Resilience & Adaptation Pathways, Strategies & Actions

5 pathways

- ▶ Increase capacity for climate resilience planning and implementation, and address inequities of under-resourced communities (5 strategies, 18 actions)
- ▶ Proactively and strategically invest to enhance resilience in transportation, communications, water/wastewater, and energy infrastructure statewide (4 strategies, 55 actions)
- ▶ Support the reduction of municipal, school district, residential, university, and hospital fossil fuel use in rural areas through equitable best practices that address the unique challenges of rural communities (2 strategies, 33 actions)
- ▶ Change Vermont land-use policies so current and future land development will be adaptive and resilient to climate change (5 strategies, 46 actions)
- ▶ Ensure that all people have access to safe, accessible, energy efficient, and affordable housing (3 strategies, 11 actions)

DRAFT Pathways for Adaptation and Building Resilience in Communities and the Built Environment proposed for 2025 update

- ▶ Information for decision making.
- ▶ Increased technical assistance for decision and action.
- ▶ Increased self-reliance at the household, municipal, and state levels.
- ▶ Recognition of housing as an essential element of community resilience.
- ▶ Detailed physical master and capital improvement planning of compact settlements, coupled with capital investment and financing strategies, at local and state levels.
- ▶ Full integration of conservation, working lands, and development planning to effect climate resilience and adaptation.
- ▶ Integrate actions required by recent statutes related to planning, housing, flood safety, and conservation.

Disaster Frequency

- ▶ 13 weather-related Federal disaster declarations since 2019
- ▶ “FEMA’s [database](#) lists 20 major disaster declarations for Vermont during the study’s timeframe (2011-2023), the vast majority from severe storms leading to floods. That means that despite Vermont’s modest size — it ranks 45th in land area for states — only Arkansas, Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and California were issued more federal disaster declarations.” - [VT Digger, 7/29/24](#)
- ▶ Hard to plan for future resilience and adaptation when you’re in response and recovery mode.
- ▶ Currently have 233 buyouts that have been submitted to FEMA for funding under Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Swift Current
- ▶ Another 50 or so that have expressed interest and are in the application development process.
- ▶ Another 31 properties awarded under Flood Resilient Community Fund.

Impacts on housing 2023 flood

- ▶ \$26.3 million was provided to 3,614 households.
- ▶ Of this amount, \$24.5 million in housing assistance was paid to 3,172 households
- ▶ There were 16 single family households and 2 multi family households listed as “destroyed”
- ▶ 83 households received the maximum FEMA award
- ▶ Displacement support was not provided to families impacted by the 2023 flood. This type of FEMA award was new following the July 2023 flood.
- ▶ Provided by Jason Gosselin, AHS

Impacts on housing 2024 flood

- ▶ \$10.5 million was provided to people impacted by the early July 2024 flood, and \$1.5 million was provided to people impacted by the late July flood.
- ▶ From this amount:
 - ▶ \$7 Million was provided to support Housing assistance in the early July flood, while \$1 million was provided to support housing assistance in the late July flooding
 - ▶ The \$7 million was provided to 1,398 households, and the \$1 million was provided to 279 households.
 - ▶ 14 households received the maximum FEMA award about of \$42,500 from the early July flooding, while 2 households received the maximum amount from the late July flooding.
 - ▶ 3 single family residences and 10 multi family residences from the early July flooding are categorized as destroyed. It is unknown how many were destroyed from the late July flooding.
 - ▶ 1,372 households received displacement support from FEMA from the early July flooding totaling \$2 million. It is unknown how many households received displacement support from FEMA from the late July flooding, but that total is \$296k
 - ▶ Provided by Jason Gosselin, AHS

Rural Resilience & Adaptation

- ▶ Because the Global Warming Solutions Act establishes greenhouse gas emissions targets that the Climate Action Plan must meet and uses the plan to establish the mechanisms to achieve those targets, and because it creates a mechanism by which the state can be sued if those targets are not met, resilience and adaptation does not have the same priority within the Council
 - ▶ Emissions > ACTION Resilience & Adaptation > STRATEGIES
- ▶ Progress has been made on adaptation and resilience tools.
- ▶ Municipal hazards and mitigation actions identified through Local Hazard Mitigation Plans updated every 5 years.
- ▶ Much of the adaptation and resilience work is enabled by hazard mitigation grants.
 - ▶ Flood Resilient Communities Program, BRIC, HMGP
 - ▶ Disaster-dependent
- ▶ Requires in-depth, consistent, and long-term direct engagement with towns.
- ▶ Direct technical assistance is most effective, though access to those programs through state agencies could be simplified and more predictable.
 - ▶ RIVERS, MTAP, MERP
- ▶ Changes in federal priorities, programs, funding.

Create synergy among recent statutes.

- ▶ Integrate actions required by recent statutes related to Act 250/future land use planning, housing, flood safety, and conservation.

