**Vermont’s Climate Action Plan Requirements and Goals**

On September 22, 2020, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 153, also known as the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) which established the Vermont Climate Council and set forth several greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction requirements for the State to meet. The Council is charged with developing the Vermont Climate Action Plan (this document) which must provide recommendations aimed at preparing Vermonters for climate change impacts.

**GWSA Requirements (Including requirements of plan)**

The GWSA established the creation of the Vermont Climate Council, a twenty-three-member body comprised of eight members from the Governor’s Administration, eight members appointed by the Speaker of the House, and seven members appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees. The Council is charged with:

* Creating an inventory of all existing programs that impact greenhouse gas emissions and their efficacy;
* Evaluating and analyzing the technical feasibility and cost effectiveness of existing strategies and programs and identifying, evaluating, and analyzing new strategies and programs that are based upon emerging scientific and technical information;
* Analyzing each source or category of sources of greenhouse gas emissions and identifying which strategies and programs will result in the largest greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the most cost-effective manner;
* Identifying, analyzing, and evaluating public and private financing strategies to support the transition to a reduced greenhouse gas emissions economy and a more resilient State; and
* Evaluating and analyzing existing strategies and programs that build resilience, and identifying, evaluating, and analyzing new strategies and programs to prepare the State’s communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.

The Act also requires the creation of a Climate Action Plan by December 1, 2021, and every four years thereafter, that includes specific initiatives, programs, and strategies that will:

* Reduce GHG emissions from the transportation, buildings, 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, adaptation, 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 produces that contribute to climate change; and
* Build and encourage climate adaptation and resilience of Vermont communities and natural systems.

In addition to the development of a Climate Action Plan, the Council is charged with recommending necessary legislation to the General Assembly concerning:

* adopting market-based or alternative compliance mechanisms as part of the State’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies;
* changes to land use and development, including to chapter 151 of Act 153 and 30 V.S.A. § 248, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote resilience in response to climate change;
* statutory authority necessary to implement the Plan; and
* any other matter the Council deems appropriate.

**Emissions Reduction Requirements in the GWSA**

The Act requires reductions in Vermont’s GHG emissions tied to three time periods: 2025, 2030, and 2050. Pursuant to the State’s membership in the United States Climate Alliance and commitment to implement policies to achieve the objectives of the 2016 Paris Agreement, Vermont is required to reduce its GHG emissions by no less than 26% below 2005 GHG emission levels by January 1, 2025.

Pursuant to the State’s 2016 Comprehensive Energy Plan, Vermont is required to reduce its GHG emissions by no less than 40% below 1990 GHG emission levels by January 1, 2030 and no less than 80% below 1990 GHG emission levels by January 1, 2050.

The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is required to adopt rules consistent with the Plan and the GWSA provides for a cause of action if the Agency fails to engage in rulemaking or adopt rules that fail to achieve the required emissions reductions.

**Measurable resilience, adaptation and sequestration goals developed by the Council**

In addition to the GHG emission reduction requirements set forth in the GWSA, the Climate Council developed a series of resilience and adaptation goals tied to certain pathways discussed later in this Plan. While the goals are only capturing some portion of the work needed to achieve resilience, adaptation, and sequestration objectives, their development was intended as a starting point to set benchmarks for work on those climate priorities. Further work needs to be done to refine this set of goals and to develop ways to measure these goals, but these are a starting point for measuring progress for proposed climate change initiatives, programs, and polities. The Measuring and Assessing Progress section of this plan will speak to how to further refine measurement tools for adaptation and resilience goals.

The goals outlined below were developed tied to three time periods: 2025, 2030, and 2050 for the pathways listed under Pathways for Adaptation and Building Resilience in the Built Environment. Measurements for success towards these goals have not been developed but will be developed early in 2022 to ensure these goals are measurable and trackable by the Vermont Climate Council.

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| **Pathway: Increase local, regional, including community and civic networks (local volunteer efforts, non-government organizations, faith-based groups, etc.), and state agency capacity, for resilience planning and implementation, and address inequities of under-resourced communities.** |
| **2025:** Tools and resources for assessing community vulnerability to climate change impacts have been created and made available to RPCs, local planning commissions, civic networks, and state agencies. |
| **2030:** 100% of municipalities have sufficient human resources to have a completed vulnerability assessment and preparedness plan. |
| **2050:** All Vermont's communities have prepared for the impacts of climate change; they adapt daily functions and needs to be responsive to unavoidable climate impacts, and maintain critical services, and minimize disruption, during major weather events. |
| **Pathway: Proactively and strategically invest to enhance resilience in****transportation, communications, water/wastewater, and energy infrastructure statewide.** |
| **2025:** Climate threat and threat aspects have been assessed, and climate-resilient design standards for infrastructure projects have been created and are incorporated into planning of publicly funded critical infrastructure projects. |
| **2030:** Infrastructure projects are designed, evaluated, and constructed to meet climate resilient design standards. A metrics framework is in place to measure the impact of these projects. |
| **2050:** Rural communities are minimally disrupted by climate impacts to infrastructure. |
| **Pathway: Change Vermont's land-use policies so current and future land development will be adaptive and resilient to climate change impacts by promoting compact development, enhancing the capacity of natural and working lands, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.** |
| **2025:** The portion of residential and non-residential development and redevelopment that is within an eligible state designated area has increased. |
| **2030:** The portion of residential and non-residential development and redevelopment that is within an eligible state designated area has increased over 2025 and has been built to flood standards. No new development or redevelopment occurs outside the state designated area that exacerbates risk to structures in the river corridor. |
| **2050:** Vermont’s people and communities work in harmony to support the adaptive capacity of Vermont’s natural, working, and settled lands with no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions from new development. |
| **Pathway: Ensure that all people have access to safe, accessible, energy efficient, and affordable housing in location-efficient, compact, and mixed-use neighborhood areas with diverse housing types and equitable access to jobs, services, schools, recreation and diverse transportation options.** |
| **2025:** Total, livable housing units has increased and diversified in cost and size to meet the needs of Vermont's population. |
| **2030:** Vermont’s people and communities work in harmony to support the adaptive capacity of Vermont’s natural, working, and settled lands with no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions from new development. |
| **2050:** 100% of Vermont households earning the AMI by county spend less than 45% of their income on total cost of housing and transportation (including energy expenditures) combined. |