

Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council September 24, 2021 Meeting

- Date/Time: September 24, 2021 8:30 AM
- Location: Meeting was hosted virtually on Zoom with a physical location at the ANR offices in Montpelier. Meeting was recorded and [posted online](#).
- Subcommittee Members Present: Abbie Corse, Billy Coster, Alissa White, Ryan Patch, John Roberts, Charlie Hancock, Iris Hsiang, Jake Claro, Judy Dow, David Mears, Lauren Oates
- State Staff Members Present: Marian Wolz, Jane Lazorchak, Ali Kosiba, Marli Rupe, Bob Popp, Judson Peck, Alex DePillis, Pat Field (CBI)
- 8:30 AM Greeting
- 8:35 AM Review of Agenda and Minutes
- Agenda and Minutes were approved
- 8:38 AM Recap of Forestry and Environmental Stakeholder Meetings
- A central theme of Forestry sector discussions was the role of active management versus passive management in the strategies.
 - Carbon credits came up as a notable point of disagreement amidst the stakeholders present at both meetings.
- 8:42 AM Review of Spreadsheet “What’s Missing” & Disagreements – facilitated by Pat Field, notes taken by Marli in a copy of the full Spreadsheet.
- **Process discussion:** Marli and Judson pulled together all information in one document, it was shared around noon on Thursday 9/23. Additional comments since that time were compiled by Abbie in a newer copy of the spreadsheet, which will be reviewed by the Subcommittee in this meeting, workshopped all together and then sent over to the full Council clearly identified as a draft. This document will continue to be discussed and refined by Subcommittee after it is shared with the full Council.
 - Lauren Oates shared some thoughts on river corridors via email afternoon of 9/24. Subcommittee asked clarifying questions on this proposal and discussed. Lauren reiterated the importance of statewide permitting jurisdiction for equity, human health, and environmental concerns, and the Subcommittee supported the proposal with minor language changes.
 - **Process:** Subcommittee started working through concerns and comments in the Spreadsheet, starting with Pathway A. If easy fixes were possible, the approved changes were captured during the discussion and will be included moving forward, if not the actions were left highlighted for future discussion.
 - Subcommittee discussed incentives for forested buffers on agricultural land and supported a minor re-write.

- Subcommittee discussed role of biomass in climate solutions and how to clarify language to focus 1) on supporting smaller and residential sustainable wood & natural materials-based heat systems, and 2) on reducing the harm from existing biomass electricity generators. Suggestion of decoupling these two recommendations, and possibly additionally supporting recommendations around sustainable sourcing and life-cycle analyses for biomass energy. Further discussion needed, this conversation flagged for the equity screen.
- Subcommittee continued working through spreadsheet and cleaning up flagged actions that had already been included in revisions.
- Discussion of new action supporting local planting – could be facilitated by the Vermont Conservation Districts, or local community-based actions. Addition of this recommendation was supported by the Subcommittee.
- Discussion of so-called “invasive” species and how to edit language to support TEK and the shared Subcommittee goal of management over time to achieve ecological balance across multiple ecosystems. Subcommittee supported revised language
- Discussion of PES: payment for practices vs payment for outcomes. Developed language that satisfied this concern.
- Discussion of sewage and septic and whether it was relevant to this Subcommittee, suggestion to refer it to rural resilience but no conclusion on whether to refer it or keep it in this Subcommittee. Flagged.
- Subcommittee continued discussing concerns over wording in various individual line items and addressed those concerns with re-writes.

10:00 AM Public Comment #1

- Public comment received by Zack Porter, Scott Sanderson

10:10 AM Review of Spreadsheet “What’s Missing” & Disagreements (continued) – facilitated by Pat Field, notes taken by Marli in a copy of the full Spreadsheet.

- **Process:** Discussion continued on items highlighted throughout the spreadsheet, with discussion moving from Pathway B to Pathway C.
- Subcommittee expressed minimal contention with items in Pathway C, aside from a few re-writes, some concerns around expressly supporting solar and opportunity for other renewable sources to be incorporated, and the continued concern over the role of biomass, which was again flagged as a point for additional discussion
- **Process:** Pathways D, E and G had fewer points of contention than Pathway F, so Subcommittee moved into discussion of Pathway F first and intended to discuss D, E, and G if any time was left over.
- Subcommittee discussed meaning of river corridors and role of recommendations related to flood resilience of developed communities, particularly questions around short-term improvements to infrastructure as compared to long term recommendations for relocating development away from locations likely to flood.

- Subcommittee discussed Current Use and Charlie’s proposed changes which developed three separate but related actions (based on the discussion of the group on Wednesday). Subcommittee discussed and was largely satisfied with the re-write.

10:45 AM 5-minute break

10:50 AM Review of Spreadsheet “What’s Missing” & Disagreements (continued) – facilitated by Pat Field, notes taken by Marli in a copy of the full Spreadsheet.

- Subcommittee discussed a recommended action around a municipal “right to refuse” purchase of land. Without strong support for this idea, Subcommittee decided to strike this action.
- Subcommittee discussed recommendations related to Act 250 and arrived at general agreement on the final wording.
- Subcommittee discussed tax credits for ecosystem services and concluded that this would fit better under PES.
- Subcommittee discussed State Revolving Fund and its current vs proposed role.
- Subcommittee discussed pollinator plantings in solar fields and concluded that the Subcommittee wished to promote pollinator plantings across landscapes, including private lands, through increased funding and education, but not just on solar fields.
- Abbie and Jake will work together on developing additional Food Security-related actions. Additional actions may be developed around reductions of herbicides and pesticides and tracking for said actions.

11:15 AM Discussion of Next Steps, Slideshow

- Spreadsheet will be shared with full Council as it is put together with a caveat that it is an initial set of draft recommendations for high-level review. This draft will not be shared with the Legislature. The Subcommittee will get feedback from the Council, continue working on the plan, run actions through the Prioritization matrix and Equity Screen recommendations, and re-share recommendations with the Council in October. The Final copy will be developed for December, at which point it would be shared more broadly including with the Legislature.
- Co-chairs have a slideshow template and will build and present the slideshow for Tuesday 9/28. Co-chairs asked Subcommittee to weigh in on important topics to bring before the full Council, that they either feel strongly about, anticipate concerns from the full Council on that they want to address, or are interested in additional direction on. One topic of interest was Life Cycle Analyses, and the role of focusing on impacts within VT in addition to considering what occurs outside of state boundaries.

- 11:35 AM Introduction of Kiah Morris – Equity consultant
- Kiah will become involved in upcoming meetings and assist with Equity Screenings of the recommended actions. She is happy to connect individually with Subcommittee members in the interim and encourages them to reach out.
- 11:38 AM Upcoming Prioritization and Equity Screening (Jane Lazorchak)
- Prioritization matrix is under construction and Jane will share next week in the 10/1 Subcommittee meeting. Kaya will share the Equity Screening tool at the same meeting. An Agenda will be developed to make space for those discussions.
- 11:50 AM Public Comment
- Public comment received by Jennifer Ramstetter and Zack Porter.
- 12:00 AM Meeting Adjourned