

Vermont Climate Council 2025 Update to Vermont's Climate Action Plan

**Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee
Natural Lands and Water and Forestry Input Session**



Vermont Climate Action Plan

Dennis Curran

- **2020** Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA)
- **July 1, 2025** Climate Action Plan Update due; updated every 4 years
- Plan is a roadmap for how to achieve objectives set by GWSA
- **The Update focuses on:**
 - Cutting Climate Pollution (aka. emissions reductions & sequestration)
 - Adaptation & Resilience in Built and Natural Environment
 - Natural and Working Lands Solutions
 - Public Health and Housing

Vermont Climate Action Plan Update

Vermont Climate Council & Subcommittees

Spring and Summer 2024

Council orients update and subcommittees begin work

Fall 2024

Task Groups draft updates to Pathways, Strategies, and Actions.

Subcommittees submit recommendations to Council in **December**

Winter 2025

Council compiles a draft updated plan

Spring 2025

Council revises and finalizes plan based on public input.

Plan delivered by July 1, 2025

Engagement and Outreach



Public kick-off meetings



Eight input sessions: Cross-Sector Mitigation, Rural Resilience, Agriculture & Ecosystems, Municipalities



We are here!



Public consultation on draft plan

Community engagement throughout!

Meeting Vermonters where they are; partnering with community-based orgs; focus groups, etc.

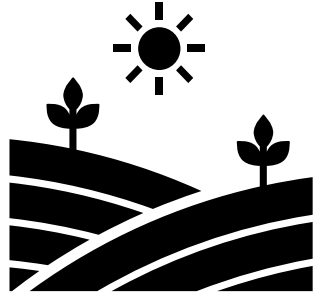
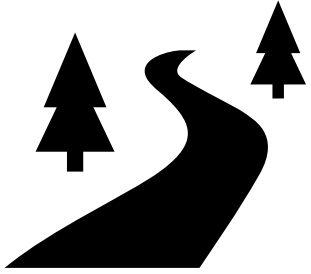


Subcommittee focal area:
the role Vermont's natural and working lands play in carbon sequestration and storage, climate adaptation, and ecosystem and community resilience

**GHG
Reduction and
Sequestration**

**Support
Adaptation,
Viability,
Recovery,
Economies, and
Workforce**

**Climate-
Resilient Land
Use Practices**



Today, we are focusing on:

- reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon sequestration
- supporting adaptation and economic viability for foresters, landowners, and other land and water caretakers
- promoting climate-resilient practices across Vermont's forests and natural lands



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Land Use Land Use Change & Forestry (LULUCF)

Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast: 1990 - 2021

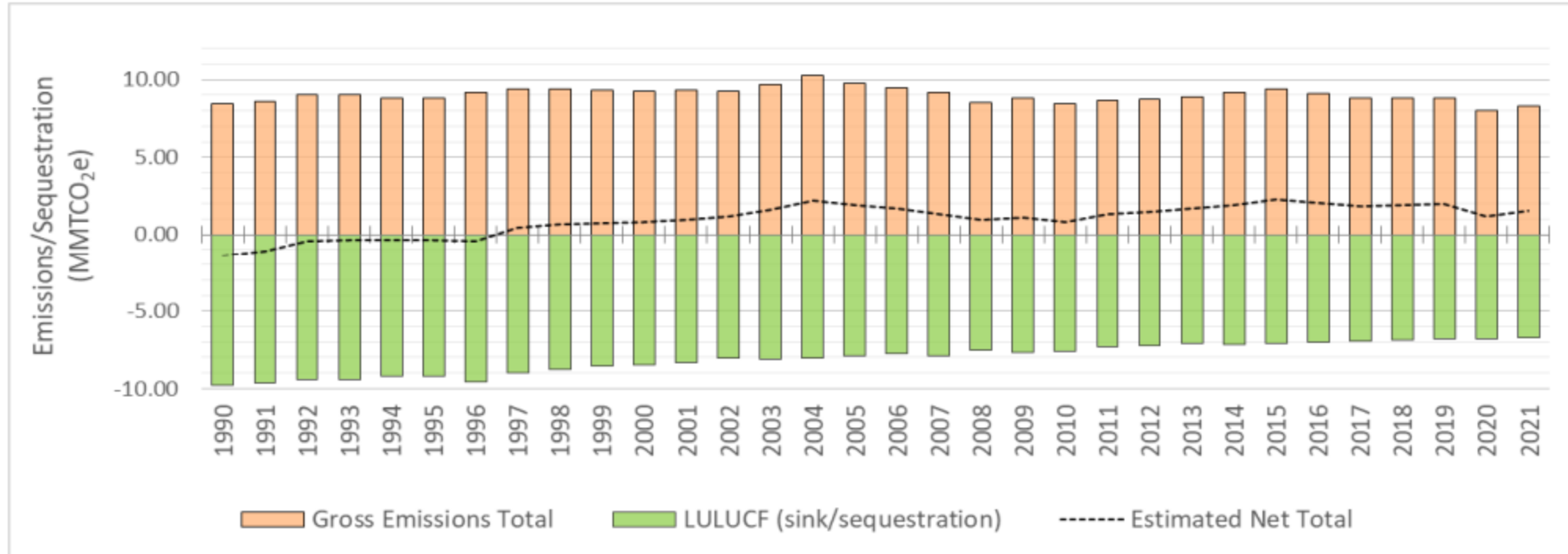


Figure 15: Estimated gross emissions, total sequestration, and net GHG levels in Vermont from 1990-2021.

Mitigation – GHG Reduction and Sequestration

Pathway 10 & 23: Maintain and expand Vermont's natural and working lands' role in the mitigation of climate change through human interventions to reduce the sources and enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.

- Implement edge-of-field practices that increase herbaceous and **woody vegetation**, e.g. riparian forest buffer (e.g. CREP).
- Implement **agroforestry** and silvopasture practices that integrate woody vegetation in agricultural production.
- Expand Capital **Equipment** Assistance Program (CEAP) program to extend beyond water quality and incorporate climate change criteria.
- Implement **natural resource restoration** practices that support climate mitigation and resilience, including river corridor easements, wetland restoration, and afforestation practices with consideration to agricultural land loss.
- Create a system for tracking and **accounting metrics** and indicators for natural and working lands.
- Develop and implement a **PES program** for forestland owners including water filtration/cycling, carbon sequestration, etc.
- Develop and implement programs which incentivize **management practices** which maintain or increase forest carbon storage.



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Support adaptation, viability, recovery, economies, and workforce

Pathway: Adaptation – Sustain, restore, and enhance the health and function of Vermont's lands and water to help both natural and human communities adapt to climate change

- Increase technical assistance, capacity, education, and resources to support private and municipal farm and forestland owners, planners, and managers for climate change adaptation.

Pathway: Viability – Support and empower Vermont's natural and working lands owners, managers, and caretakers to enhance farm and forest viability and to make informed decisions to increase resilience and adaptation to climate change.

- Support and enhance local food markets for greater viability, mitigation, and resilience benefits.
- Foster partnerships at all levels (state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector): essential to recognizing, capacitating, and building strategies for landowners to address climate change and enhance community resilience.
- Expand funding for existing programs dedicated to farmland access, forestland ownership, and conservation, and leverage this funding to increase land access through flexible and new ownership financing mechanisms, policies, and models.

Support adaptation, viability, recovery, economies, and workforce

Pathway: Economies – Grow and connect local and sustainable natural and working lands’ economies, markets, and food systems while ensuring and providing equitable access to said economies, markets, and food systems for Vermont's people.

- Develop, expand, and sustain local markets specifically for food, agricultural, and forest products in ways that ensure food sovereignty and security and provide for all Vermont’s peoples.
- Strengthen all aspects of working lands’ supply chains and the associated infrastructure to support them.
- Ensure equitable access to local foods, culturally relevant foods, land, funds, grants, and technical assistance for people who have been historically marginalized and come from impacted communities.
- Develop a Vermont food security and sovereignty plan, centered around a thriving food system, and inspired by community-based responses to food insecurity and disruptive events.

Pathway: Support and empower Vermont’s farmers, foresters, and land workers to capacitate renewable energy and building product transitions.

- Promote and incentivize use of local wood and agricultural products to reduce embodied carbon footprint.

Support adaptation, viability, recovery, economies, and workforce

Pathway: Education – Create accessible, equitable research, partnerships, and education; promote shared understanding; and invest in sustainable workforce development for the natural and working lands sector.

- Provide funding for climate-related education at all levels, outreach, research, and technical assistance programs.
- Develop and promote climate-related educational materials for private landowners to empower them to make climate-informed decisions about their land and waters.
- The language in Vermont agencies must be reviewed and updated to be more equitable.



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Climate Resilient Land Use Practices

Increase technical assistance, capacity, education, and resources to support private and municipal farm and forestland owners, planners, and land and water caretakers for climate change adaptation; promote and incentivize Climate Adaptation forest management practices.

Example Action:

Enhance and support funding for technical assistance, educational materials, and outreach to farmers, foresters, and land and water caretakers (e.g., fully fund partners and higher education to support climate adaptation training)), municipalities, and other landowners (e.g., fully implement Act 171). Technical assistance should include a diversity of perspectives. Monitor effectiveness of the technical assistance on a regular basis.

Promote funding for nature-based solutions (NBS) and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)/indigenous knowledge (IK) efforts and incorporate NBS and TEK/IK into state planning efforts.

Example Action:

Develop financial mechanisms (e.g. a revolving loan fund, green bank, loan guarantees, pension fund investments, etc.) to de-risk capital investment in and support for NBS projects informed by TEK/IK.

Climate Resilient Land Use Practices

Manage natural and working lands and waters for biodiversity, forest health, water quality and climate resilience.

Example Action:

Through direction to VT Fish & Wildlife and VT Forests, Parks and Recreation, establish primary land management objectives of protecting and improving forest health, water quality and biodiversity on state lands and waters, and private lands enrolled in Use Value Appraisal; and promote adoption of these objectives through outreach to regional and municipal planners. Objectives shall be informed by traditional ecological knowledge.

Utilize nature-based solutions to increase flood resilience of the natural and built environments, reduce future development in floodplains and floodways and educate state and municipal planners. Promote healthy, connected river corridors, floodplains, and wetlands.

Example Action:

Expand support and education for riparian buffer and floodplain enhancements to easements with a goal of increasing the amount of vegetation and biodiversity in riparian areas and floodplains.

Climate Resilient Land Use Practices

Invest in strategic and equitable conservation in order to increase the pace of permanent conservation towards 30x30 targets (described in the federal report “Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful”), with Vermont Conservation Design acting as the guiding plan for prioritization of efforts.

Example Action:

Through permanent conservation coupled with both active and passive restoration efforts and incentives on both public and private lands, allow at least 9% of Vermont's forest to become (or be maintained as) old forest, specifically targeting 15% of the matrix forest within the highest priority forest blocks identified in Vermont Conservation Design including National Forests to achieve this condition. Protect sacred sites.

Avoid, minimize, and mitigate the negative impacts of renewable energy generation on natural and working lands.

Example Action:

Incentivize and consider mandating solar and wind capacity on new buildings as well as in previously disturbed or developed areas and avoid and minimize forest clearing for renewables through incentives and other siting polices, rules, and regulations



Group Discussion

- What resonates most?
- What might be missing?
- What are some important details that shouldn't be neglected?
- Who (else) should we hear from?

Next Steps

Stay involved!

- Sign up for the [Climate Action Office's newsletter](#) (link in chat)
- Attend a subcommittee meeting or another input session: climatechange.vermont.gov/calendar
- Share your thoughts!
 - [Climate Action Plan public comment form](#) (link in chat)
 - Leave a voice message at 802-404-2729