

**Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee
of the Vermont Climate Council
November 21, 2024 Meeting – Agenda**

Location:	The meeting was recorded and posted online here .
Subcommittee Members Present:	Billy Coster, Jaiel Pulskamp, Earl Hatley, Stephen Leslie, Judy Dow, Andrew Milliken, Senja Erickson
State Agency Staff Present:	Marli Rupe, Judson Peck, Liz Amler, Evan Horne
Minutes by:	Evan Horne

10:00 a.m. Welcome, Approve Agenda, Approve Minutes, Updates

- Billy Coster welcomed the subcommittee and shared the agenda.
- Minutes were approved as written.

10:05 a.m. Input Session Recap and Discussion

- Billy Coster provided an overview of the input sessions that were held.
- Jaiel Pulskamp noted a slideshow shared during the Climate Council meeting the day prior that helped summarize what was heard.
- Billy Coster noted it's important to consider the feedback to inform the subcommittee's work.
- Judy Dow noted that the high maintenance costs required for heat pumps are missing from the input session summary.
- Andrew Milliken shared he appreciated the overall positive feedback and the support for nature-based solutions.
- Stephen Leslie noted he heard a lot about protecting public forests and promoting old-growth forests. He also shared he heard a fair amount about Use Value Appraisal (UVA) and the need for regional or watershed planning.
- Billy Coster shared he heard some good feedback about the need for local forest products and how that work can fit into building resilience to climate change.
- Stephen Leslie reiterated Billy's comment about sustainable, local forestry and that it's not an either-or situation. We can have that while supporting old-growth forests.

10:20 a.m. Public Comment #1

- Annette Smith shared concerns about the proposed Lyndon biomass plant.
- Cheryl Joy Lipton also shared concerns about the proposed Lyndon biomass plant and land use planning in river corridors.
- Early Hatley shared concerns over the proposed Lyndon biomass plant and its potential emissions.

10:25 a.m. Discussion on Revised Pathways, Strategies, and Actions

- Billy Coster shared the plan with the subcommittee to discuss pathways, strategies, and actions.

- Judy Dow asked how new actions would be considered, noting the new recommendation of no new biomass.
- Jaiel Pulskamp shared the possibility of an in-person meeting on December 5.
- Billy Coster shared that each subcommittee should prioritize no more than 15 actions and clarified Judy's question.
- Jaiel Pulskamp asked to save the discussion around biomass until later under that agenda item.
- Judson Peck provided an update for task group 1, which is focused on reducing GHG emissions and sequestering carbon. Judson shared they reached out to climate forester Ali Kosiba.
- Stephen Leslie shared that there were no major new updates besides what was already shared.
- Judson Peck asked if each task group gets five priorities.
- Billy Coster answered Judson Peck's question that balancing the priorities that way makes sense.
- Judy Dow noted that some task groups were working with more recommendations, and there might need to be more prioritized actions from one task group than another.
- Andrew Milliken expressed concern about incomplete prioritization if we use the single-action approach.
- Jaiel Pulskamp suggested and emphasized that the subcommittee could combine and consolidate actions to ensure priorities get through. There is also a list of steps the subcommittee could take to go through the prioritization process that might narrow the scope a bit more.
- Andrew Milliken walked through the priority action groups from task group 3, which is focused on supporting climate-resilient land use practices.
- Judy Dow shared the reasoning behind some of the language used, such as "braiding" instead of "blending" and "caretaker" instead of "stewards."
- Jaiel Pulskamp shared the context behind Natural Resource Conservation Districts and their work to get specific resources from the federal NRCS, noting she is unsure how to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into that existing framework. Jaiel wants to protect the TEK work and ensure this is thoughtfully and strategically incorporated.
- Early Hatley shared that he has had experience working with NRCDs on braiding TEK.
- Andrew Milliken continued sharing the priority action groups from task group 3.
- Judy Dow and Earl Hatley again emphasized the intentionality of inclusive language and the inclusion of all Indigenous people.
- Judy Dow also expressed concerns about using incentives, sharing that clean air and water should be incentive enough.
- Jaiel Pulskamp highlighted the reality of costs and the current economic state that makes it difficult without incentives.
- Earl Hatley noted the need for incentives for farmers to make that transition but highlighted the need for greater funding.
- Andrew Milliken shared other priority action groups.

- Earl Hatley emphasized adding water quality, which seemed missing from the previous plan.
- Judy Dow shared her personal experience as to why adding water caretakers was necessary.
- Billy Coster shared some recommendations to add to action group 3.
- Earl Hatley shared concerns over runoff from logging and the need to promote old growth on public-owned lands.
- Jaiel Pulskamp noted that some of these actions might need to be more specific, using beavers and their role in the ecosystem as an example.
- Earl Hatley and Judy Dow both appreciated the call out of beavers and their benefit on the landscape.
- Andrew Milliken shared the remaining action groups from his task group.

11:30 a.m. Public Comment #2

- Rick Enser emphasized the need to be clear on the management of biodiversity.
- Mike Bald shared concerns about the use of pesticides on the landscape in Vermont and encouraged folks to stop using them.
- Jim Taylor shared concerns about clearcutting and the use of pesticides under and around power lines.
- Michael Covey shared his disappointment that members of the subcommittee are considering ending timber harvest on state land and noted the benefits of young forests and shrub habitats.
- Earl Hatley shared his concerns about protecting sacred sites across Vermont.

11:35 a.m. Discussion on Biomass Pathways, Strategies, and Actions

- Jaiel Pulskamp shared some background on the current status of biomass.
- Judy Dow shared actions from the previous actions regarding biomass that appeared in the matrix for the last climate action plan from the Ag and Eco subcommittee.
- Billy Coster shared information on the process for the Council to adopt actions. The Council chose not to adopt those actions for the last plan.
- Judy Dow recommended including new recommendations for biomass in the update of the Climate Action Plan.
- Billy Coster joined Jaiel Pulskamp's suggestion of asking for funding for studies around biomass and put that at the top of the subcommittee's priorities.
- Judy Dow asked for the health study done within the 1-mile radius of the McNeil plant.
- Billy Coster noted he would look into that study. Billy shared there is value in wood fuel in Vermont, which is the cornerstone of the Clean Heat Standard and other state laws being considered.
- Jaiel Pulskamp shared that this conversation will continue at the next subcommittee meeting in person and on Zoom.

11:50 a.m. Public Comment #3

- Cheryl Joy Lipton shared that it doesn't seem right to use the Clean Heat Standard as a reason for the continuation of biomass. Cheryl Joy Lipton also shared some background

on biomass from the previous Climate Action Plan. Cheryl Joy Lipton also shared concerns about how public comment is incorporated.

11:55 a.m. Next Steps

12:00 p.m. Adjourn

- Jaiel Pulskamp adjourned the meeting.