

## **Ag and Ecosystems Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council November 7, 2024 Meeting – Agenda**

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Location:	The meeting was recorded and posted online <a href="#">here</a> .
Subcommittee Members Present:	Billy Coster, Jaiel Pulskamp, Earl Hatley, Ryan Patch, Stephen Leslie, Alissa White, Judy Dow, Andrew Milliken, Jake Claro
State Agency Staff Present:	Marli Rupe, Judson Peck, Liz Amler, Evan Horne
Minutes by:	Evan Horne

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

- Billy Coster shared the agenda for the November 7 meeting. Task group 3 will switch with task group 1 in the presentation order. Meeting minutes were approved for the previous subcommittee meeting.
- Billy Coster gave an overview of the status of the subcommittee and reviewed the timeline moving forward.
- David Plumb from the Consensus Building Institute shared his role in facilitating the subcommittee meeting. David shared that the Climate Council is expecting the full list of pathways, strategies, and actions and prioritized actions for their December 16 meeting.
- Judy Dow asked if actions that aren't prioritized do not get included, feeling that actions got lost in the previous plan.
- David Plumb clarified that no pathways, strategies, or actions are excluded. There are just actions that get lifted up, but nothing gets lost. The Council will only remove something if there is a pathway, strategy, or action that doesn't make sense to be in there or if they don't want to move forward with it. David emphasized that his role is to make sure nothing gets lost and that the Council is aware of everything. The Council's prerogative is to make certain decisions when they have everything from the subcommittees.
- Judy Dow expressed that the Council emphasized consensus, but it did not appear to be the case in certain circumstances.

10:05 a.m. Task Group 3 Priorities and Discussion

*Incentivize climate-resilient land use practices that support the role of natural and working lands in flood prevention, biodiversity, conservation, and related goals*

- Andrew Milliken shared the revised priority action groups for this task group and introduced new actions.
- Judy Dow shared that some of the actions had notes saying completed or advancing and would like more information to make decisions on these.
- David Plumb and Liz Amler shared more information on the cross-cutting task groups, addressing Andrew's concern about actions related to compact settlement.
- Earl Hatley expressed concern about plans that don't braid and weave indigenous knowledge. Earl would like existing plans to be reviewed and open to BIPOC communities to provide input.

- Ryan Patch appreciated the task group for synthesizing so much into clear and actionable recommendations. Referencing the task group's emphasis on Vermont Conservation Design (VCD), Ryan commented that agriculture is seen as harmful to biodiversity by many folks in planning processes, but agriculture is very much a part of making a community resilient, and that open farm and agricultural lands play a significant role in a biodiverse future.
- Andrew Milliken appreciated Ryan's comment highlighting VCD, a natural communities-based design that doesn't include agricultural lands, and the need for strategic conservation of agricultural lands.
- Judy Dow emphasized that people need to stop putting the economy over the land and make sure we consider different wording than "human management."

10:35 a.m. Public Comment #1

- Jeremy Roy asked a clarifying question about the information presented to the Climate Council. Jeremy shared that it's great to hear as many perspectives as possible to make the best decisions for these complex challenges.

10:40 a.m. Task Group 2 Priorities and Discussion

*Support adaptation, viability, recovery, economies, and workforce*

- Jake Claro shared an update and revised priorities for this task group.
- Stephen Leslie shared supporting information and thoughts for this task group, emphasizing relocation, being land caretakers instead of managers, braiding TEK/IK with new technology, and the need to protect old-growth forests.
- Earl Hatley wanted to reiterate the Abenaki nation is urging the state and US Forest Service to protect forests and sacred sites. Earl shared that there needs to be different processes other than management and products.
- Andrew Milliken shared that his task group included protecting old growth and sacred sites. Andrew also shared that we need to reconsider agricultural lands that repeatedly flood as opportunities for restoration.
- Alissa White shared there is an action under their task group regarding mapping and resilience zones.
- Jake Claro shared that there is tension around farm and forest viability terminology. He encouraged the subcommittee to look at the complete list of actions to reconsider how we could move forward together.

11:10 a.m. Public Comment #2

- No public comment.

11:15 a.m. Task Group 1 Priorities and Discussion

*Reduce and sequester GHG emissions from ag and forestry practices.*

- Ryan Patch presented updated and revised priorities for this task group. One highlight was that to report a complete agriculture GHG inventory, ANR should report emissions and removals from agricultural lands as estimated by the State Inventory Tool LULUCF model alongside GHG estimates from the SIT agriculture model.

- Alissa White shared that many existing programs built around water quality are effective in getting practices on the ground for farmers and addressing mitigation of emissions and carbon sequestration. We don't necessarily need new programs but to build upon what's there. Alissa also shared that updating the inventory is important for the subcommittee to push forward, considering scientific and international consensus.
- Jake Claro shared that he'd like to be clear in identifying funding constraints for current programs and the amount needed for further adoption of climate-smart practices. Jake also asked if there needs to be an amendment to the GWSA to incorporate the proposed inventory methodology.
- Ryan Patch shared that there are very clear allowances for both emissions and sequestration to be counted. So, there is a good argument that nothing needs to be changed in the GWSA to allow this amendment to happen to the inventory.
- Jaiel Pulskamp noted that, in many cases, farmers must have money before implementing conservation practices—we need a way to get money in the hands of farmers to do conservation work. Jaiel shared we should also implement more organic practices based on research from the Organic Farming Research Foundation.
- Earl Hatley shared concerns about PES, carbon trading, and the commodification of nature.
- Ryan Patch shared that PES in Vermont is not carbon trading. When farmers exceed environmental stewardship thresholds, they are paid additional money for that work. Ryan shared that the obfuscation of carbon trading with PES in Vermont is taking away from the excellent work that farmers are doing.
- Billy Coster provided further clarification around the statute related to the GHG inventory, which allows for changes over time.
- Ryan patch supported Billy's clarification, noting the complexities in changing the inventory and the reason for the time that it is taking.
- Andrew Milliken highlighted the need to consider co-benefits in all the powerful work already being done by water quality organizations.

11:45 a.m. Public Comment #3

- No public comment.

11:50 a.m. Next Steps

- Billy Coster shared the next steps for the subcommittee, noting they have two meetings left to do the needed work before passing it off to the Council.
- David Plumb shared that Billy's vision makes sense, asking subcommittee members to read through the entire list of actions. Instead of going line by line, subcommittee members need to pull out the priority items that may need more conversation. David highlighted the need to also carve out some time for the biomass discussion. David continued discussing input sessions and said that the more subcommittee members could attend, the better. Input sessions are an opportunity to engage in some dialogue and don't have to strictly be listening.

12:00 p.m. Adjourn