

# Vermont Climate Action Plan

## DRAFT CLIMATE ACTIONS

*invitation for public comment*

**We need to cut climate pollution in half by 2030 to meet the target in Vermont's Global Warming Solutions Act.** This means moving away from fossil fuels and switching to clean, efficient energy in our transportation systems, buildings, businesses and communities. We also need to prepare for and reduce the impacts of a changing climate so that Vermont is resilient and thrives into the future.

The Global Warming Solutions Act calls for a Vermont Climate Action Plan by December 1, 2021. The Vermont Climate Council is developing the plan with assistance from the Agency of Natural Resources and the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. Working through five sub-committees, a set of draft climate actions have been drafted. The Climate Action Plan will be informed by the Comprehensive Energy Plan being developed by the Department of Public Works which focuses on energy sector challenges and opportunities.

Vermonters are invited to add ideas and share their views now on solutions to prioritize. Input from the public will be used by the sub-committees to help set the priorities for climate action in Vermont via in person events and an online survey. Once the initial plan is released December 1, there will be additional opportunities to weigh in on priorities and learn more about taking action in keeping with the plan goals. [Learn more at https://climatechange.vermont.gov](https://climatechange.vermont.gov).

**The following is a summary of the draft climate actions being considered for the initial plan. Solutions will be prioritized based on the ability to meet the Global Warming Solutions Act requirements, justice and equity, delivery of multiple benefits and technical and economic feasibility.**





### Efficient Transportation Systems and Vehicles

- ➔ Join the TCI Program (TCI-P). Also, enact a complementary policy that goes further to ensure equity outcomes (consider firewall fund, expanded equity board, minimum/significant investment in LI, rural, overburdened and underserved communities).
- ➔ Pursue federal funding to reduce emissions from transportation, prioritizing low income, rural and underserved Vermonters.
- ➔ Direct federal investments to multi-modal transportation in downtowns and village centers.
- ➔ Spur the adoption of electric vehicles by expanding charging programs and incentive programs that factor in equity.
- ➔ Adopt Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) and Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) standards for cars and trucks to cut air and climate pollution and require automakers to deliver ZEVs to Vermont.
- ➔ Offer options for low-income Vermonters to access more efficient vehicles and alternative transportation by expanding funding to programs such as Mileage Smart and Replace Your Ride.
- ➔ Design and implement a vehicle efficiency price adjustment linked to new purchases. Factor income and business use into the rate and offer fee relief.
- ➔ Increase availability of transit, micro-transit, bike, walking and car sharing by requiring creation of a sustainable transportation plan and resources for Vermont communities.
- ➔ Identify transportation vulnerable to climate impacts and close non-critical infrastructure.
- ➔ Design and locate new transportation systems to reduce the need for driving and withstand climate impacts.
- ➔ Develop a transit network that provides access and mobility after transit disruptions.



### Better Buildings and Homes

- ➔ Put in place building energy codes and labels and rental property efficiency standards.
- ➔ Spur the shift to low-carbon fuels by applying a performance standard to fossil fuel heating providers.
- ➔ Provide energy companies and contractors incentives to move to heat pumps, pellet stoves, wood chip boilers, biofuels and renewable energy.
- ➔ Fund energy efficiency programs in new affordable housing developments.
- ➔ Expand weatherization programs.
- ➔ Provide low-cost financing for multi-family and older buildings to shift to clean energy and weatherize.
- ➔ Establish a dedicated State fund to purchase or local match the buyout of hazard prone properties.
- ➔ Update existing building codes to address climate impacts and develop building standards to guide design and construction.
- ➔ Create educational resources for contractors, municipalities and property owners on resilient design and construction.
- ➔ Offer builder workforce training and development in rural communities.
- ➔ Increase investments in private market and non-profit owned affordable housing.
- ➔ Improve rental properties by assisting property owners to rehabilitate existing, underutilized buildings.
- ➔ Support efforts to eliminate housing discrimination.
- ➔ Increase funding for homeless prevention and rehousing.
- ➔ Assess the impact new developments would have on achieving climate pollution reduction and resilience goals.



### Clean, Reliable Energy

- ➔ Implement a 100% Renewable Energy Standard to replace the current 75% target.
- ➔ Support and expand renewable energy operations.
- ➔ Provide utility customers with incentives to reduce energy use during peak hours.
- ➔ Promote energy storage in combination with renewable energy adoption to increase resilience and improve grid efficiency.
- ➔ Encourage electrification by offering lower rates for off peak energy use hours.
- ➔ Expand energy conservation and fuel switching programs such as weatherization and converting to heat pumps.
- ➔ Support the creation of local Community Resilience Zones that deliver energy generation and storage and communications during and after extreme weather events.
- ➔ Reduce fossil fuel in municipalities starting with collecting energy use data for public buildings, vehicle fleets and utilities.
- ➔ Use local energy planning to replace fossil fuels and support local energy committees to be part of energy planning and implementation.
- ➔ Develop best practices for reducing municipal fossil fuel use (i.e. data collection, local energy plans, energy committees).



### Resilient Working and Natural Lands

- ➔ Expand State of Vermont programs that cut emissions and promote the capture of carbon in soils.
- ➔ Promote carbon capture in soils and forests, increase vegetation and forests and protect rivers and wetlands through a Payment for Ecosystem Services program.
- ➔ Reconnect and restore river corridors and floodplains such as adding berms and riparian buffers.
- ➔ Increase funding for forest and natural land conservation in the State's 2022 budget.
- ➔ Track the rate of forest fragmentation and conservation, develop a leadership team and dedicate funding to reverse forest loss.
- ➔ Conserve 55,000 acres per year from 2021-2030 and fund efforts to connect landscapes and increase resilience to climate impacts.
- ➔ Support education and capacity building for the land trust community to conserve lands critical for a resilient, connected landscape.
- ➔ Invest in farmland conversation to protect natural and working lands from development.
- ➔ Align natural resource management programs with climate goals through river corridor easements, wetland restoration and tree planting.
- ➔ Provide Climate Smart education, outreach, research and technical assistance programs for working and natural lands.
- ➔ Support Traditional Environmental Knowledge, workforce development and environmental and climate education at all grade levels.
- ➔ Foster energy transformation and energy efficiency on working lands including methane capture and energy generation on farms.
- ➔ Develop, expand and sustain local markets, infrastructure and distribution for food, agriculture and forest products.
- ➔ Create a Local Food Access Funding program.



### Strong Rural Communities

- ➔ Reduce risks for those impacted by climate change and an energy transition, focusing support on towns most affected.
- ➔ Create local climate planning tools including a Flood Resilience Toolkit, Development Ready Atlas to guide zoning based on climate risks and a data center where information can be deposited, accessed and shared.
- ➔ Expand funding for local and regional energy planning and adaptation, resilience and carbon cutting projects.
- ➔ Establish climate training and education for those involved with planning and zoning.
- ➔ Create a statewide Redevelopment Authority to bank land and underwrite risk, address blight, vacancy and toxic lands, improve building flood resilience and plan new neighborhood infrastructure.
- ➔ Increase communication and energy resilience by evaluating threats, investing in upgrades that enhance resilience and deploying technology to improve the energy grid.
- ➔ Boost capacity and resources for new town forests including covering acquisition, planning and stewardship costs.
- ➔ Incorporate river corridor resilience considerations in permitting for water and wastewater facilities.
- ➔ Develop a Vermont Dam Inventory to link flood data with ecological information and Emergency Action Plans.
- ➔ Improve municipal permitting by coordinating across authorities to evaluate the impacts of climate change.
- ➔ Fund research, data collection and digital maps to generate insights on how development will affect climate goals and resilience.
- ➔ Fund a natural resource staff to implement climate policies in each Regional Planning Commission.



### Low-Carbon Products and Processes

- ➔ Cut methane emissions from wastewater treatment facilities by reducing combustion and identify opportunities to capture and use biogas.
- ➔ Reduce emissions by limiting the transportation of waste by adding processors and removing water and optimizing the energy efficiency performance of wastewater equipment.
- ➔ Offer wastewater facilities without energy audits with free ones and financial support to municipalities to implement priorities.
- ➔ Install detection systems in facilities with large refrigeration systems to avoid the leak of ozone depleting (HFC) chemicals.
- ➔ Launch a refrigerant (HFC) end of life program to promote proper disposal and to switch to alternatives in existing equipment.
- ➔ Consider new legislation requiring refrigeration manufacturers to cover the cost of refrigerant recovery or disposal.
- ➔ Explore ways to reduce emissions from gases used in semiconductor manufacturing.