

**Vermont Office of Climate Action  
Agency of Natural Resources  
Vision and Work Priorities  
October 28, 2022**

## **Background**

Vermont's Act 153(2020) – the Global Warming Solutions Act, or GWSA – establishes an ambitious timeframe and scope of work to advance climate action in Vermont. The first objective was the development of the Initial Vermont Climate Action Plan ("Plan") which was developed by the Vermont Climate Council, with significant support from state staff, and adopted on December 1, 2021. The Plan identifies specific initiatives, programs, and strategies necessary to achieve the State's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction requirements, enhance carbon storage and sequestration, achieve net zero emissions by 2050, and build resilience and adaptation in our natural systems and built environment. A key recommendation of the Plan was the creation of a Climate Action Office.

## **Vision**

The policies, programs and tools needed to implement climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience strategies will require a long-term intergovernmental structure to coordinate and manage this statewide effort. The Vermont Office of Climate Action will coordinate and provide significant expertise and capacity on state-led climate initiatives, as well as the monitoring, assessment and tracking of climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience activities necessary to evaluate progress over time in achieving the requirements of the GWSA through implementation of the Plan. To carry out this work, the Office will work closely with staff across ANR, other state Agencies, the state climatologist, and key stakeholders. This coordination will be critical from the onset to ensure the programmatic functions of the Office are additive and supportive of existing climate action work in state government. We acknowledge the importance of the public's role, specifically those of frontline and impacted communities, in enabling climate action. Activities conducted by the Office should encourage broad citizen participation. The Office commits to fostering partnerships in pursuit of effective delivery of climate solutions for all Vermonters.

**How:** The Vermont Office of Climate Action will be a division within the Agency of Natural Resources Central Office, focused on three core areas:

### **1. Climate Program Coordination:**

- Support and coordinate strategy development and implementation for climate action across the following areas:
  - Mitigation;
  - Fostering resilience and adaptation of communities; and
  - Natural and working lands resilience, adaptation, and sequestration/storage.
- Inventory and track effectiveness of major climate initiatives;

- Evaluate collaboratively the greenhouse gas impact of existing climate policies and new climate policy proposals;
- Prepare the annual *Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast* reports;
- Build on existing economic impact analyses of climate change policies and identify opportunities to improve efficacy and cost-effectiveness.
- Oversight and management of the state's CO<sub>2</sub> Budget Trading Program and Vermont's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) within ANR's jurisdiction.
- Coordinate and collaborate with other states, the federal government, and other jurisdictions to maximize the impact, efficacy and cost-effectiveness of climate action initiatives.
- Coordinate rulemaking, new climate action regulations, and assist with public engagement on climate action with lead agency.
- With the input of other state agencies, identify necessary additional studies or research, manage RPFs and contracts for that work.

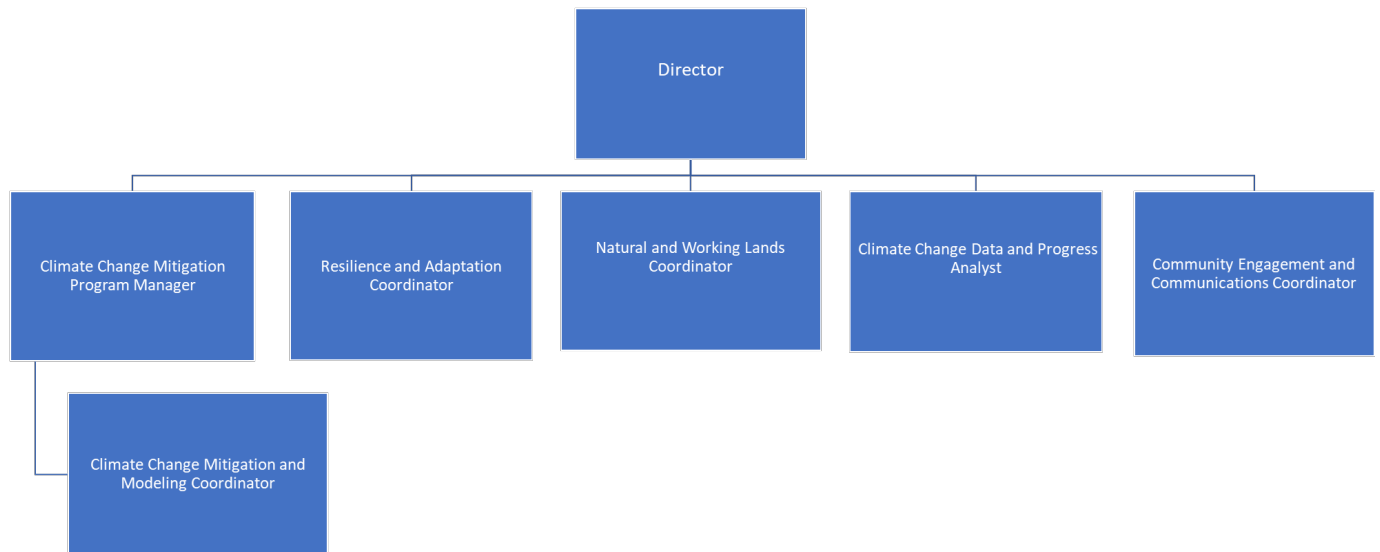
## **2. Support On-going Implementation of the GWSA:**

- Coordinate interagency team to develop and implement state-led climate initiatives;
- Continue to provide basic admin support and facilitation services the Vermont Climate Council, consistent with the requirements of the GWSA. Role of CAO direction with VCC will evolve over time;
- Participate on subcommittees as technical leads;
- Lead annual reporting to the Executive and Legislative branches on the Council's activities and the State's progress towards meeting the GHG emission reduction requirements of the GWSA; Contract for support services to develop and implement future version of the Climate Action Plan;

## **3. Community and Stakeholder Engagement:**

- Carry forward communications and engagement with Vermonters to support program design of various state-led climate initiatives ensure all residents of the State benefit fairly and equitably by implementing the public engagement strategy developed for the Climate Action Plan;
- Specifically seek to engage with:
  - Those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including low-income communities, indigenous peoples, and communities of color and other communities;
  - Those in industries or with jobs that will be impacted by public policies supporting decarbonization.
- Develop outreach materials on behalf of all programs of the Office to support engagement with Vermonters, in addition to key stakeholders such as the Legislature, the Vermont Climate Council, and other state Agencies.
- Maintain state climate website
- Represent Vermont at USCA, (list all the place you think this will happen).
- Develop tools, templates and processes for inclusive engagement around climate action.

**Who:** A mix of existing and new positions will be used to form the Vermont Office of Climate Action and support this ongoing work. Not all the positions will be filled immediately, providing additional capacity to further consider needs once the office is stood up. The following organization chart highlights both the new and existing positions that will be included in the Office:



**Role across Government:** The Vermont Office of Climate Action will support a state vision for climate action across state government. To do so, it will work closely within the Agency of Natural Resources and across state Agencies to understand the actions state government are taking to make measurable progress to meeting the requirements and goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act. To further advance coordination across state Agencies, an Inter-Agency Advisory Board will be stood up that meets regularly. It is a priority to stand up this advisory board early in the process as they will be critical to the development of the Office. It is envisioned to include senior level officials from the various agencies engaged in climate action.

The objectives of this group will be the following:

1. To provide a space for proactive coordination on climate action across state government.
2. Articulating where policy and financial implications overlap around climate action to ensure resources are maximized.
3. To support the monitoring of progress over time in meeting the state's climate goals.
4. Identification and framing up of gaps where the climate action office might prioritize support.
5. Development of state positions on issues related to climate change.

It will include the following governmental agencies:

- PSD
- AOT
- ANR
- VEM
- AAFM
- BGS
- AHS (DCF and VDH)
- ACCD
- State Climatologist