VERMONT

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Agency of Natural Resources

To:	Julie Moore, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)
From:	Jane Lazorchak, Director, Climate Action Office (CAO) Marian Wolz, Resilience and Adaptation Coordinator, CAO
Date:	July 20, 2023
Re:	Ongoing Resilience and Adaptation Work in the CAO

The policies, programs and tools needed to implement climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience strategies require a long-term intergovernmental structure to coordinate and manage this statewide effort. The Vermont Climate Action Office is positioned to coordinate and lead in the implementation of 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 Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). To carry out this work, the CAO will work closely with the Interagency Advisory Board (IAAB) and other partners, including other state Agency staffs, the state climatologist, and key stakeholders, such as the Vermont Climate Council.

With the CAO being created in the FY23 budget, work to date has largely been focused on standing up the office and advancing the remaining statutory obligation of the GWSA. As the work shifts from administration to the implementation of programmatic work, the office is well-positioned as a division within the ANR Secretary's Office, to support and coordinate interagency strategy development and implementation for climate action across the following areas: 1) mitigation; 2) fostering resilience and adaptation of communities; and 3) natural and working lands resilience, adaptation, and sequestration/storage. Specific to resilience and adaptation work within the CAO, the work has been focused on building the necessary tools needed to communicate climate vulnerabilities and risk while investing in the structure needed to coordinate the work and respond with a unified vision across government.

Technical Analysis/Tool Development

- Development of the Measuring and Tracking Progress Tool database for climate action focused on communicating state actions for mitigation, resilience, adaptation and the public's role in developing these actions. Key to this database will be the development of adaptation and resilience metrics and indicators developed in collaboration with our state partners and informed by community engagement.
- Development of a geospatial tool called the Municipal Vulnerability Index (MVI), intended to indicate municipalities' vulnerability to climate change based on a range of social, economic, and biophysical factors. The tool will be used to identify where communities are most vulnerable to climate change, with a focus on pressures that climate change will place on communities, economy and

jobs, and environment, and including sectors such as transportation, electric grid, housing, emergency services, and communications infrastructure.
- Multi-level implementation support of the MVI through a grant to Regional Planning Commissions, with the intention of incorporating the MVI into municipal planning processes, and project implementation and decision making.
- Development of the Municipal Climate Toolkit intended to provide a centralized source for the information relevant for designing and implementing climate action measures or strategies across topic areas such as the built environment, natural environment, energy, farms & food, people & communities, and climate justice. The Toolkit will also serve as a hub of information on financial and technical assistance across all areas of climate action and will provide opportunities to connect with state agencies and other engaged practitioners for technical advice and expertise.
- Development of a resilience and adaptation investment analysis in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Gund Institute and FEMA. This analysis will speak to the deferred damage cost savings of investing in resilience and adaptation strategies.

Strategy, Policy, and Program Development
- CAO is currently working collaboratively with members of the IAAB and staff in the ANR to review resilience and adaptation strategies and action status from the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to:
    - Identify other programmatic work that supports building resilience and adaptation in the state but was not identified in the CAP; and
    - Prioritize support from the CAO to add to and complement those programs.
- Alignment of the Vermont CAP with the State Hazard Mitigation Plan update due to be finalized in fall of 2023.
- Formulating a formal partnership between the CAO and Vermont State Climate Office at the University of Vermont through a MOU which speaks to the sharing of research capabilities, among other synergies. The full scope of responsibilities associated with this partnership is continuing to emerge but will be a high priority over the next few years.
- Collaborating with Northeast states to develop a net-zero framework that states can incorporate into state climate planning to meet net-zero requirements which is central to lifting up natural and working land solutions which have the co-benefit of resilience.

By prioritizing a suite of resilience and adaptation programs, we expect to develop the programmatic work of the CAO in this space. While that suite of programmatic priorities will be developed in the coming months, expected to be key components in the CAO include:
- land conservation planning and acquisition
- flood resilience efforts through river corridor planning and wetland restoration
- urban and community forestry initiatives
- compact settlement and smart growth efforts
- agricultural practices that have co-benefits for resilience, adaptation, and mitigation