

# Vermont Voices on Climate

## Vermont Climate Action Office

January through June 2025

### Report Overview

This is a summary of public outreach activities, including events attended, public meetings and focus groups conducted by the Vermont Climate Action Office with support from the Consensus Building Institute during the months of January through end of June 2025.

In addition to the continuing effort to speak directly with Vermonters by meeting people where they are, outreach also focused on public meetings spanning a broad range of locations to receive vital input for the Climate Council's 2025 update to the Climate Action Plan.

The important points conveyed by Vermonters across the State have had a direct impact on the decisions made by the Climate Council. We'd like to thank all of the councilors and members of the public who made the time to attend, listen, and share.

### Objectives of this climate action outreach are:

- **Provide information and knowledge** that helps people prepare for climate impacts, take action, and access programs that can benefit them.
- **Lift up the voices and viewpoints of communities** into the implementation of climate-related initiatives and the ongoing work of the Climate Action Office and other key entities, including the Vermont Climate Council, so that a diverse group of Vermonters can influence this work.
- **Build relationships and communication channels** that will help Vermonters work collaboratively on future climate action with the state.



**We thank the hundreds of Vermonters who engaged in conversations, focus groups, events and meetings!**

# Activities January to June 2025

## Outreach focused on:

**Attending events** throughout Vermont and hearing from Vermonters who aren't typically a part of climate policy discussions.

**Public meetings and focus groups** engaging Vermonters in the Climate Action Plan (CAP) update, the Measuring and Assessing Progress Tool, and the Cap and Invest Study.



## Community Events Attended

- Family Ice Fishing Festival - Barnard
- Sunrise Family Resource Center - Bennington
- Free Fishing Day - Grand Isle
- Africa Day - Burlington
- Family Jam Fest - Bennington
- Pride Festival - Morrisville
- Tree Planting at the Islamic Center - Burlington
- Juneteenth at the Rokeby Museum - Ferrisburgh

## Public Meetings

- Measuring and Assessing Progress (3)
- Cap and Invest Study
- Climate Action Plan Update: in-person meetings in Hardwick, Hinesburg, St. Albans, Bennington, Bellows Falls, Barre, and Rutland.
- Climate Action Plan Update: virtual meetings (2 general public, 1 youth)

## Focus Groups

- ACORN Focus Group for Measuring and Assessing Progress Tool - Middlebury
- Racial Justice Alliance Focus Group for Measuring and Assessing Progress Tool - Burlington
- Elder Caucus with Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO) - Barton
- UVM Eco Reps - Burlington



# Climate Action Plan Update - Spring Engagement

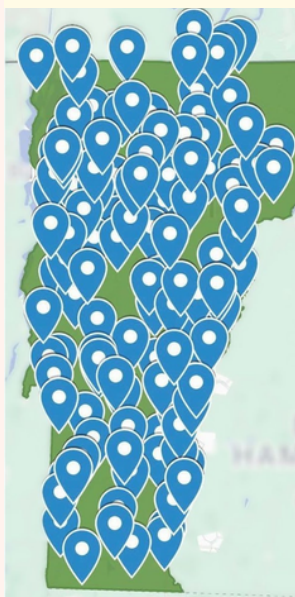


As the Vermont Climate Council worked to revise and complete the Climate Action Plan this spring, they sought to hear from the public. Vermonters of many walks of life from around the state shared their priorities for the plan.

Through a presentation and handouts, participants learned about the 50+ priority actions within Vermont's Climate Action Plan. They had the opportunity to provide vital feedback to the council through polls, written comments, a voting game, and audio recordings.

[Input Session Summaries](#)  
[Presentation Slides](#)  
[Video: Virtual Public Meeting](#)

Virtual event registrations



In-person events



## Vermonters spoke up and the Climate Council listened

**What was heard:** “Too many goals! Prioritize!” “Great ideas but too many. Whittle down to the most impactful, most likely to succeed and result in positive benefit and success.”

**What was done:** The Council narrowed down their [top ten priorities](#) out of the broader 52 priority recommendations; these include actions that had strong public support.

**What was heard:** “Need to ensure funding for actions” “So many of the priorities are around increasing funding, but there is not necessarily a noted path forward to that funding. [Be] more specific and clear...on funding sources.”

**What was done:** The Council made a new recommendation: “...the State should identify, authorize, and appropriate revenue from existing or new sources that will immediately support the creation or expansion of certain priority actions...”

**What was heard:** “There is no mention of geothermal networks in this draft. Thermal Energy Networks are CO2 free, use the [rights-of-way] of gas and power companies; have the same worker skills and tools and use off-the-shelf parts and technologies...”

**What was done:** The Council created a new recommendation in their top 52: “Utilities and their regulators should adopt standards and programs to support geothermal networks.”

**What was heard:** “The language used in these recommendations isn't accessible to many [Vermonters] it would be so helpful to put these in plain language.”

**What was done:** The Council added [an introduction](#) to the recommendations to better communicate the overall plan and its goals. In 2026, a plain language summary of the Plan will be released as well.

**What was heard:** “Please be mindful of the impacts of the proposed actions on low- and moderate-income Vermonters. The cost of living is high in Vermont and adding more financial burden will only make people angry at the government.”

**What was done:** The added introduction emphasizes the importance of affordability. They adjusted the Cap and Invest recommendation to highlight the importance of direct rebates and cost-saving incentives for Vermonters with low and middle incomes.

Throughout the Climate Action  
Plan Update (June 2024 to  
June 2025)...

**800+**  
Vermonters attended  
events

**250**  
Vermonters submitted  
written comment

## Family Ice Fishing Festival, Barnard - January

On January 25, 2025, hundreds gathered at Silver Lake in Barnard to learn how to ice fish. The Vermont Climate Action Office spoke with Vermont residents about their stories and perspectives on our changing climate; how it affects their day-to-day lives; and what we can be doing on a State and local level. Click below to hear some of their stories.

[Listen to Climate Stories from Vermonters](#)



## Sunrise Family Resource Center, Bennington - January

Dozens of Vermonters gathered at the Sunrise Family Resource Center and spoke about various issues and challenges facing their community. In particular, they discussed barriers that low-income Vermonters face when trying to access secure housing, transportation, and hard-to-find resources, food insecurities and accountability. They shared stories about the difficulties of work and public transportation timing not aligning, and about dealing with health issues from unsafe living conditions such as mold.



## What Vermonters are saying

More Hybrid car incentives!

This isn't New York City or some large metropolis and yet our housing costs are pretty damn close. Vermont is now a state for the rich and the homeless.



Need more and better weatherization incentives and for home solar. And education on these.

Need more warming and cooling shelters

Alternatives to electric vehicles and incentives for working Vermonters

Individuals are forced to recycle and compost, but what about businesses and corporations? Restaurants and events and state fairs?! There is no accountability and things are skewed and unfair.

Bring green jobs to Bennington! I want my kid to get into that and have a good future.

Why isn't nuclear power spoken of more?

Could there be smaller solar panels for mobile homes to offset costs?

I don't see or know how the state is making strides in accommodating people with disabilities, especially people with physical disabilities. This should be a priority.

Public transit needs a re-haul. Not enough hours or stops; many who ride have late shifts. Options for vans or small buses would be nice.

Is there a single place to find out about all of the programs the state has for us?

The motel program has health and safety issues. What are weatherization options for motel housing? For renters? Black mold. Harrassment issues from landlords. Discrimination against those with disabilities. More inspections and accountability for the quality of those spaces is needed.

## Measuring & Assessing Progress Tool - January to May

The Climate Action Office is beginning to develop a [tool to track progress on climate action](#). The project team held three public meetings and three focus groups to help inform tool development. Two of the three focus groups are reported on below; find notes on the first focus group in the Vermont Voices on Climate [October-December 2024 report](#).

[Public Meeting Notes](#)

[Racial Justice Alliance Focus Group Notes](#)

[ACORN Focus Group Notes](#)

[Final Public Presentation](#)

## Cap and Invest Public Meeting - March

Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources and Agency of Transportation are studying cap-and-invest as a strategy that could help meet Vermont's requirements for cutting climate pollution. Cap-and-invest programs work by placing a declining limit (cap) on greenhouse gas emissions and reinvesting the proceeds in climate action, such as energy efficiency, weatherization, and resilience.

From October through December, the study team sought input from the public and entities representing business, freight, rail, environmental, and equity interests. This February, a presentation shared the outcomes of the study.

[Watch the video](#)

[Learn about the Cap-and-Invest study](#)

## Upcoming Outreach Activities

The outreach plan for July through September 2025 includes:

- **Meeting Vermonters where they are** with a focus on conversations about resiliency.
  - Governor's Institute of Vermont in Lyndon
  - Wellness Day in Barton
  - Pride Festival in White River Junction
  - Old North End Ramble in Burlington
  - Vermont State Fair in Rutland
  - Jamaica Day in Jamaica
  - Moose Festival in Canaan
  - Farmacy Share Pick-Up in Middlebury
  - Final Fridays in St. Johnsbury
  - Fair Share Pick-Up in Burlington
  - Neighborhood Connections Wellness Day in Londonderry
- **Small-group conversations:**
  - Hold focus groups with flood-impacted, rural communities and linguistically diverse Vermonters about the Resilience Implementation Strategy .
- **Working with Community Based Organizations:** Convene community-based organizations and community action agencies for a virtual gathering to discuss the Resilience Implementation Strategy.

### [Read past Vermont Voices on Climate reports!](#)

