



Vermont Voices on Climate Change

Vermont Climate Action Office

JANUARY – MARCH 2026

Report Overview

This is a summary of outreach activities conducted by the Vermont Climate Action Office with contractual support from January through the end of March 2026. Quotes from Vermonters are not intended to represent the views of the Climate Action Office.

Outreach focused on sharing the new Climate Action Plan through public meetings, attending a conference for farmers, and hosting focus groups to continue to educate the public about climate action and speak with residents from across the state.

Cover photo by Caleb Kenna



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Objectives

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.



Virtual Public Meetings

January 6 and 12, 2026

The Climate Action Plan serves as a roadmap to reduce climate pollution, prepare the state for increasing extreme weather, and guide Vermont's role in addressing the impacts of a changing climate. Councilors highlighted top priority actions selected from more than 200 recommendations, including flood resilience, compact settlement, weatherization, Cap-and-Invest, electrification and grid resilience, and workforce development. They also held a panel discussion about how the plan is serving as a launching pad for work in their organizations and communities, as well as the hurdles that need to be addressed to keep making progress. [Read the full summary.](#)

View the recordings:

- [January 6, 2026 Meeting](#)
- [January 12, 2026 Meeting \(with American Sign Language\)](#)

"Funding and expert project support is critical for implementation of Climate Action Plan in small, poor communities."

Event participant

"How about recruiting and training young Vermonters to create and maintain energy-efficient systems and devices for and in Vermont?"

Event participant

"We've been trying to work as a green energy committee but it feels like we're running on fumes and goodwill."

Event participant

"Opportunity to push forward emergency management: planning, response, recovery mitigation. NOT just for towns that get hammered all the time."

Event participant



NOFA-VT (Northeast Organic Farming Association)

Winter Conference, Colchester, VT February 14-15, 2026

This year's conference focused on building resilience across Vermont's food systems. It brought together a community of individuals whose shared mission is to support each other in becoming caretakers of the land by working with nature, rather than against it, while also fostering an atmosphere of learning, collaboration and shared ideas.

Climate Action Office spoke with farmers, businesses, and organizations to learn how they prepare for, adapt to, and even find opportunities despite a changing climate.

One thing we learned was how small farmers can now utilize an online bank to help offset the barriers such as limited capital for farm improvements or recovery after climate-related disasters. This organization strives to develop deeper connections and strengthen community while specifically lending funds to impact-oriented farms, food businesses, and other sustainability-focused organizations.

We also spoke with volunteers from the Stream Team who work together to help monitor and improve water quality throughout Vermont. In addition, we learned about innovative approaches to managing pests and invasive species on farms, and witnessed meaningful collaboration between business, individuals and organizations working toward a stronger and more sustainable future for Vermont.

Between workshops and speakers, live music and local food, there was a genuine sense of camaraderie to face an uncertain future together in community.

"The state did a great job with BEGAP after the 2023 flooding, but it still took months for farmers to receive payment. The problem is that it's not really designed with farmers in mind; the endless forms and reporting. Farmers have unique needs and a unique timeline. If they get hit with a flood, they need to be replanting the next week. Timing of the disasters is huge for farmers; whether it's in the middle of the season vs. the end of the season matters immensely. It needs to be administratively doable. There's promise and there's progress and we're hopeful."

Farmer at NOFA-VT Conference



Community Conversations on Resilience Implementation Strategy

In Collaboration with Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity's (CVOEO) Community Ambassadors **February 28, 2026**

On February 28, 2026, the Community Engagement Team at the Climate Action Office hosted four focus groups with linguistically diverse Vermonters in partnership with CVOEO. The forums engaged speakers of Swahili and Kibembe, French, Mandarin, and Dari and Pashto. These communities were identified through reflection on prior engagement efforts and through conversations with community ambassadors about where additional outreach and awareness-building were needed.

A collaborative approach shaped every stage of the process. The engagement team worked closely with community ambassadors to design agendas, prepare presentation materials, and identify spaces where participants would feel most comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives.

Before the forums took place, the engagement team met with community ambassadors to review key topics and discussion points, including climate change and resiliency. Community ambassadors helped adapt materials by offering culturally relevant explanations, examples, and framing that resonated with participants' lived experiences and backgrounds. According to one facilitator, this approach helped make complex topics easier to understand while creating space for participants to connect the discussions to experiences from their countries of origin and their lives in Vermont.

Community ambassadors also played an important role in identifying gathering spaces that felt welcoming and accessible to participants. Based on their relationships and experiences within the communities, venues such as the CVOEO conference hall, community gathering spaces hosted by families within the communities, and virtual participation options were selected to support comfort, accessibility, and participation.

This collaborative process, from designing materials to selecting venues, helped foster thoughtful discussion and meaningful participation throughout the forums. We are grateful to the community ambassadors for their partnership, their time spent reviewing materials, and their leadership in creating culturally relevant ways to engage linguistically diverse communities across Vermont.



"To be better prepared for climate-related emergencies, the state should build stronger relationships with community members, provide information directly through trusted community spaces, and invest in community-level expertise so people feel informed, connected, and ready to respond when disasters occur."

A Pashto-speaking community member

Upcoming Outreach Activities

Outreach and engagement activities will continue throughout the upcoming summer quarter. Our priority is to understand Vermonters' opinions and priorities when it comes to state investments in reducing climate pollution, and on energy-related programs and policies. This work will align closely with engagement for Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan which is required to be updated in 2028. This plan is closely aligned with the Climate Action Plan but also includes energy system planning for grid infrastructure, how to meet energy demands, and how to keep electric rates down. It also has a focus on clean and renewable energy development. Planned activities include:

- Speaking with Vermonters at community events in rural areas we have not yet engaged.
- A statewide survey coupled with in-person and virtual focus groups.

Another project will support business planning for climate resilience. To better understand needs and barriers for this type of planning, we will speak with business owners and business support organizations at the Southern Vermont Economic Development Conference.

Contact Information

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