

Climate Action Input Session: Municipal Stakeholders

Tuesday, November 19, 11:00-12:30pm

Summary of Input

Hosted by the Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Agriculture and Ecosystems, and Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittees of the Vermont Climate Council

Overview

The Vermont Climate Council is updating the state's Climate Action Plan. Subcommittees of the Council are holding a series of virtual public meetings to get input on their initial ideas for the update.

This document summarizes input during a session on November 19, 2024, focused on supporting the climate resilience of municipalities, with a focus on hearing from employees, officials, and volunteers of Vermont municipalities. Around 80 people attended the 90-minute Zoom meeting. A participant list is included below.

This document is not a transcript of the session, but rather an overview of themes and ideas that participants provided verbally, in the chat, or subsequently over email to Vermont's Climate Action Office.

The session began with a presentation on the Climate Action Plan updating process and recommendations from the Council's Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Cross-Sector Mitigation, Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittees.

- View presentation [slides](#).
- View the input session [recording](#).

Summary of input

High-level summary

- Relying primarily on volunteers for such a massive, important transition is not sufficient
- Insufficient and inconsistent data creates difficulties for municipalities in goal setting and tracking

Detailed summary

Below is a more detailed summary of input provided verbally during the conversation and in the chat grouped by subcommittees' focal areas.

Agriculture & Ecosystems

- There should be a strategy to reduce or eliminate tree cutting for biomass energy generation
- Food security and local food systems are becoming increasingly important as the climate changes.
- Supporting our farmers as things get more unpredictable and crops face issues like floods and droughts will be crucial to keep agriculture afloat.
- Current Use (Use Value Appraisal) program requires 10-year date on wood harvesting, could be an interesting data source for consideration.
- When it comes to the most responsible ways to manage land and sequester carbon, volunteers have to do their own research and figure it out. State guidance on these things would be really helpful so we have an easier way to take steps.

Rural Resilience & Adaptation

- For existing buildings, we need the state to give municipalities the power to regulate heating and efficiency.
- The reliance on volunteers leads to unequitable ability of municipalities to undertake important projects.
- Legislative boards can be dismissive of recommendations or work from volunteer groups.

Cross-Sector Mitigation

- There needs to be consistent funding and support to Regional Planning Commissions to do work regarding data. The statewide data doesn't disaggregate well to the municipal level.
- The state should provide a standard way for municipalities to measure their climate impact. There are many methodologies, and it leads to results that are hard to compare.
- We need to recognize how unsustainable our lifestyles in the northern hemisphere are, how do we convey that to our communities?

- All new builds should be required to use renewable energy for heating and hot water. Its being done in South Burlington and Burlington. Adding new fossil fuel infrastructure that will take decades to phase out is unsustainable.
- While initial costs are nominally higher on homes with renewable energy, they are significantly less expensive to operate. It is a matter of equity, as everyone should have access to a healthy home. Burlington and South Burlington also require new buildings be solar PV (photovoltaic) and EV (electric vehicle) ready.
- Ensuring new housing is efficient and has access to public transit is key to affordability.
- Residential Building Energy Standards/Commercial Building Energy Standards need increased enforcement at the state level so there is consistency across communities.
- Considering mass timber for construction instead of concrete and steel could reduce the construction sector emissions and be viable in our heavily wooded state.
- Education on the dire nature of the situation is important. Consumer habits, like large vehicles and overconsumption, are a huge barrier.
- Getting data from fossil fuel companies to understand how much is being used would be really helpful.
- There is valuable data available, like in the [Transportation Sustainability Tracking Tool](#), but it needs to be regularly updated and maintained. It should be expanded to be statewide.

Participants

Scott McCormick, Sophi Veltrop, Ann Janda, Henry Amistadi, Liz Amler, Susan Yost, Ann Kuendig, Martha Harrison, Brandon Garbacik, Jane Kartsch, Kazmira Nedeau, Cathyann LaRose, Laurie Smith, Doug Bergstrom, Joanne O'Connor, Joyce Manxhester, Jeremy Roy, Maggie O'Brien, Catherine Crawley, Jennifer Durgin, Jeremy Roy, Katharyn Hassan, Sophia Donforth, Mike Morin, Andrew Chalnick, Paula Iken, John Reid, Edward Barber, Anand Fedele, Mary Ormrod, Marian Wolz, Nathan Fowle, Megan Litwhiler, Ann Lundquist, Lynne Fitzhugh, Christopher Yuen, Krista Karlson, Morgan Wilbur, Thomas Leitz, Chris Company, Ann Lawless, Heidi Britch-Valenta, Andrew Shapiro, Andrew McKeever, Tara Parks, Allie Webster, Deirdre Holmes, Stephen Dotson, Gig Zboray, Dustin Bowman, Keith Osborne, Bob Atchison, Sharon Harkay, Karen Horn, Billy Coster, Alice Peal, Neva Cote, Jaiel Pulskamp, Marlena Valenta (facilitator), Ann Janda (facilitator), Callie Fishburn (facilitator)