Summary of Draft Recommendations
Forest, Working & Natural Lands Task Group of the Vermont Climate Council

Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee Members and Staff Support

Subcommittee Members:

- **Jake Claro**, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

- **Billy Coster**, Co-Chair, ANR

- **Abbie Corse***, Co-Chair, The Corse Farm Dairy

- **Judy Dow**, Gedakina

- **Charlie Hancock**, North Woods Resource Group

- **Iris Hsiang***, Essex High School

- **David Mears**, Audubon Vermont

- **Lauren Oates***, The Nature Conservancy

- **Ryan Patch***, VAAFM

- **John Roberts**, Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition

- **Alissa White**, UVM

State Staff Support:

- **Alex DePillis**, AAFM

- **Alexandra Kosiba**, FPR

- **Judson Peck**, VAAFM

- **Bob Popp**, F&W

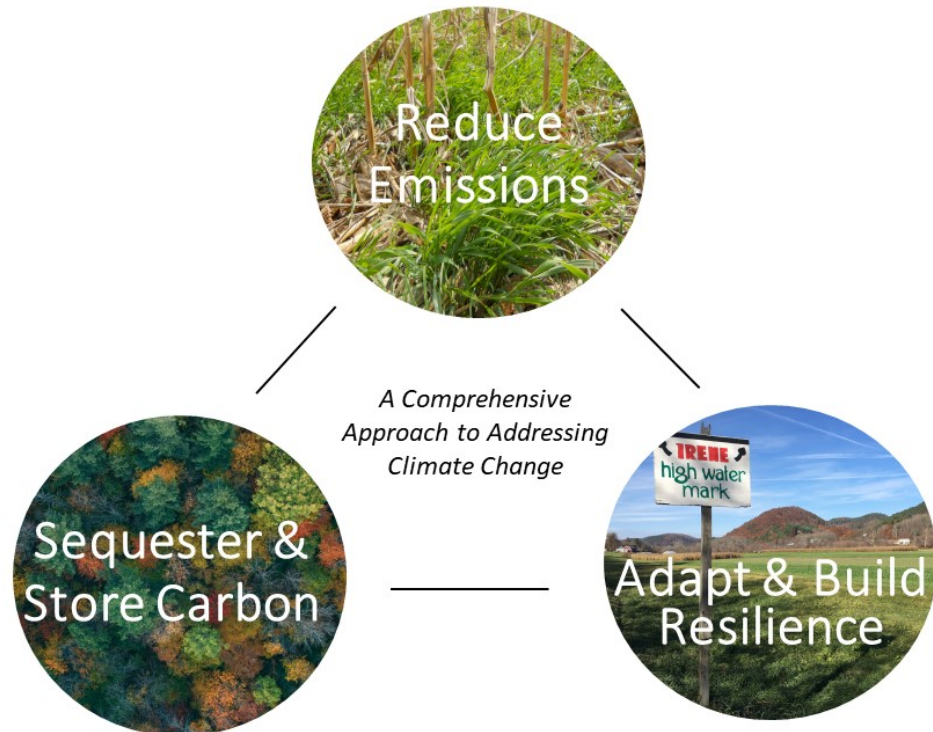- **Marli Rupe**, DEC

* Councilor or designee

Forest, Working and Natural Lands Task Group

- **Billy Coster**, ANR

- **Judy Dow**, Gedakina

- **Charlie Hancock**, North Woods Resource Group

- **David Mears**, Audubon Vermont

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Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee Focus

Reduce Emissions

A Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Climate Change
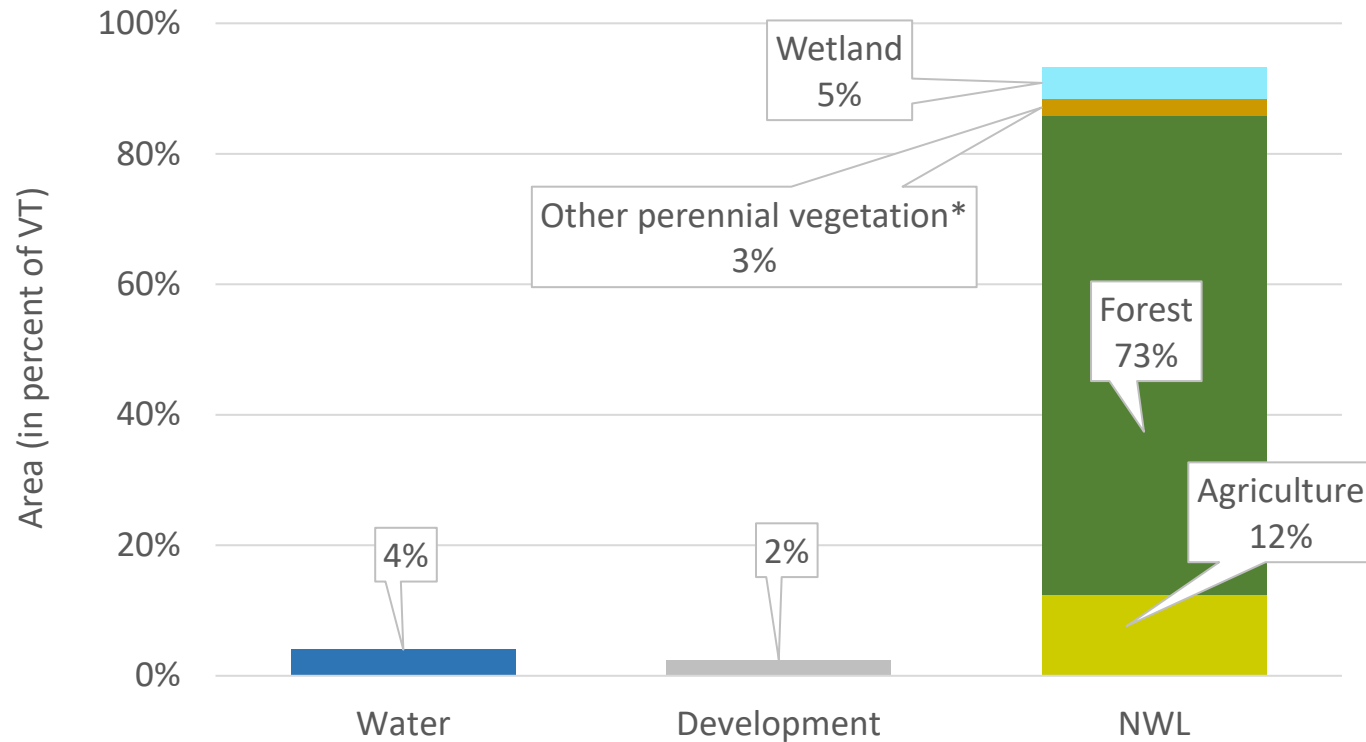
Sequester & Store Carbon

Adapt & Build Resilience

- **From statute:** *This subcommittee shall focus on the role Vermont's natural and working lands play in **carbon sequestration and storage, climate adaptation, and ecosystem and community resilience**. This subcommittee will seek to understand current initiatives in the agricultural and forestry sectors and the businesses that depend on them and to develop actions and policies that **restore wetlands; increase carbon stored on agricultural and forest land and in forest products; and support healthy agricultural soils and local food systems***

- **Focus areas:**
  - Develop a carbon budget for sequestration and storage
  - Decrease emissions and promote sequestration and storage in the agricultural and forestry sectors,
  - Maintain or increase sequestration and storage on Vermont's natural lands
  - Use nature-based solutions to improve climate adaptation and resilience
  - Promote local food and forest markets/systems, food sovereignty and security, and sustainable farm, forest, & water-based economies
  - Promote healthy soils, lands, and waters
  - Elevate equity across all focus areas

Natural & Working Lands (NWL) cover 94% of Vermont

*Other perennial vegetation includes grasslands, shrub/scrublands, and turf

Data source: 2016 National Land Cover Database; Images courtesy FPR

Agriculture & Ecosystem Pathways

SEQUESTRATION - Maintain and expand carbon sequestration and storage in Vermont's natural and working lands.

ADAPTATION - Sustain, restore, and enhance the health and function of Vermont's natural and working lands to help both natural and human communities adapt to climate change.

EMISSIONS - Support and empower Vermont's farmers, foresters, and land workers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their operations.
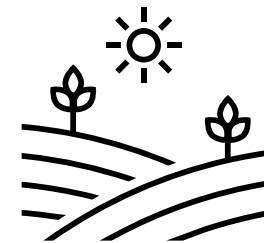
VIABILITY - Support and empower Vermont's natural and working lands owners, managers, and caretakers to enhance farm and forest viability and make informed decisions to increase resilience and adaptation to climate change.

ECONOMIES - Grow and connect local, sustainable natural and working lands economies, markets, and food systems, and provide equitable access to them.

LANDUSE - Shape land use and development that support carbon sequestration and storage, climate resilience and adaptation, and natural and human communities for a sustainable and equitable future.
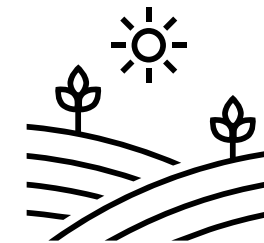
EDUCATION - Create accessible, equitable research, partnerships, and education; promote shared understanding; and invest in sustainable workforce development for the natural and working land sectors.
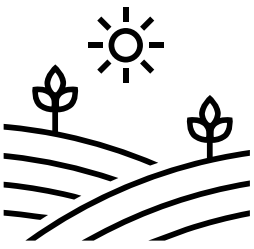
Sequester and Store Carbon

- Develop and implement programs which **incentivize** management practices that maintain or increase **forest carbon storage** and track carbon sequestration.

- Develop **Regional Carbon Offset Market** program with addresses issues of baselines, additionality, and leakage.

- Implement a **Payment for Ecosystem Services** (PES) program for forested and natural lands.

- Increase **tree coverage**.

- Create system for **tracking and accounting** metrics and indicators for forested and natural lands.
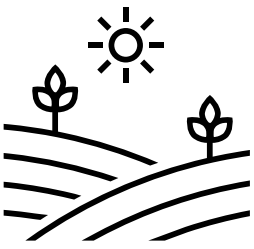
Enhance Climate Resilience and Adaptation

- Protect **forest health and biodiversity**.

- Promote and incentivize **Climate-Adaptation forest management** practices

- **Support research** efforts for better understanding of forest ecosystems, local climate change and impacts to forests and ecosystem services.

- **Manage** natural and working lands (public/private) **for biodiversity and resilience** (including info/assistance for landowners/managers).
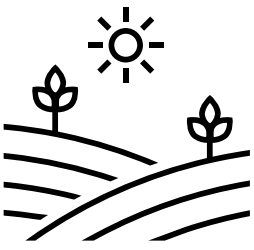
Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- Promote and **incentivize use of local wood products** over imported wood and/or non-wood materials with high embodied carbon footprints (steel, concrete).

- Through **procurement standards**, require that publicly funded building projects use local wood products that have been harvested under sustainable procurement standards over materials with a higher carbon footprint.

- Incentivize and support conversion of existing electric biomass energy to **combined heat/power** models (CHP); incentivize **greater efficiency** in existing or planned biomass generation facilities; harness opportunities **for district heating** models were applicable.

- **Reduce emissions** from forestry operations.
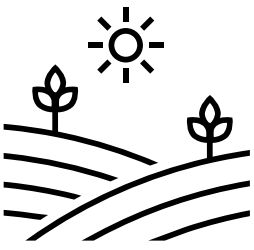
Enhance Viability in a Changing Climate

- Support robust funding for **Working Lands Enterprise Initiative** and VT **Farm and Forest Viability Program** – prioritize funding to businesses that have climate/low carbon goals

- Add a **climate lens** to existing funding and support programs

- Provide greater support and capacity for **energy transformation** on working lands enterprises for greater efficiency and increased business viability.
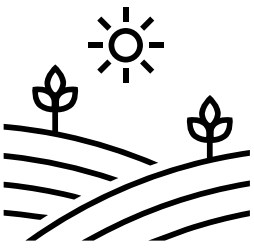
Grow Sustainable Markets and Economies

- Develop, expand, and sustain **local markets** specifically for food, agricultural, and forest products addressing food insecurity and access.
- Promote **workforce development** in all working lands sector along all points of the supply chain.

Shape Land Use that Mitigates and Adapts to Climate Change

- Increase the pace of **permanent conservation** to meet 30x30 targets modeled on Vermont Conservation Design.

- Increase technical assistance, capacity, education and resources to support private forestland owners and municipalities for **intergenerational transfer**.

- Improve **statewide forest planning** efforts on State and Federal Land.

- **Reduce forest fragmentation** through planning, regulation and incentives.

- Promote and incentivize **compact settlement**.

- Minimize and mitigate negative impacts of **renewable energy generation siting** on forest and natural lands.

Build Knowledge and Invest in Workforce

- Invest in **Climate Smart** conservation and forestry education, outreach, research, and technical assistance programs.

- Expand environmental, forest health and climate change **education at all grade levels.**

- Leverage, expand, fully fund and adapt **existing programs** that support the forestry sector.

Issues and Questions

A. **What ideas could really work well on the ground in Vermont and serve the goals of the Climate Council?**

B. **What key strategies or ideas might be missing?**

C. **What other guidance do you have for this Sub-committee?**