



3. Executive Summary

Taking Action on Climate Change

The Vermont Climate Council adopted the *Initial Vermont Climate Action Plan* in late 2021. In the nearly four years since the Initial Plan was finished and this *Vermont Climate Action Plan 2025* was written, Vermont has experienced a series of climate disasters.

Many Vermonters are still reeling from the disastrous floods that occurred across the state in the summers of 2023 and 2024. Vermonters are also experiencing other impacts of a changing climate, including:

- increased health risks, particularly for vulnerable Vermonters, from more days with poor air quality from wildfire smoke and high heat
- impacts on farm and forest workers' livelihoods from changing temperatures and precipitation
- reduced drinking water quality and harmful algae blooms that limit access to lakes and ponds
- damage to electricity infrastructure and power outages from winter ice storms and freezing rain

These are the consequences of climate pollution. They are relentless and will continue to worsen.

In 2020, the General Assembly made clear with the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA or Act 153) that Vermont has a responsibility to reduce our harmful climate pollution. The GWSA required the creation of the Vermont Climate Council (the Council) and directed us to prepare a Climate Action Plan (CAP).

The CAP is updated every four years. It identifies the strategies and programs necessary to achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions levels at three milestone dates: January 1, 2025; January 1, 2030; and January 1, 2050. The annual *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast* tracks compliance with these targets. Because data for certain sectors lags, the official inventory for any compliance year is published more than two years after the milestone date.

The proposed actions in this 2025 update to the CAP are intended to meet the 2030 milestone. By January 1, 2030, Vermont must achieve GHG emission levels of no less than 40% below Vermont's 1990 emissions. The CAP also addresses other obligations of the GWSA to create a more resilient Vermont and support a just transition in the way climate actions are taken.

Council's Charge and Work

The 23-member Council is made up of eight administration officials and 15 members appointed by the Legislature to represent various sectors and interests. We are charged with the following tasks to achieve Vermont's GHG reduction requirements and build climate resilience:

- Identify, analyze and evaluate climate strategies and programs, including their cost-effectiveness and impact.
- Adopt the *Initial Vermont Climate Action Plan* and update it at least once every four years.
- Prepare Vermont's communities, infrastructure, economy and environment to adapt to current and future effects of climate change.
- Track progress towards meeting the GHG emission reduction requirements and increasing resilience.

Subcommittees

The GWSA, in addition to creating the Council, established four subcommittees and charged them to assist in the work needed to develop the CAP. The four subcommittees identified by the GWSA are: Rural Resilience and Adaptation; Cross-Sector Mitigation; Just Transitions; and Agriculture and Ecosystems. The GWSA also allowed the Council to create additional subcommittees. To address the technical complexity and data needed for this effort, we created a fifth subcommittee: Science and Data.

The core function of the subcommittees is to evaluate and recommend draft initiatives, programs and strategies for the Council to review, refine and compile into the CAP. As described in the GWSA, subcommittees should support the Council in developing recommendations which also:

- Prioritize strategies for climate action that are cost-effective, technologically feasible, fair and just.
- Reflect the relative contribution of GHG emissions from different areas of the economy in overall emissions reductions.
- Minimize negative impacts on rural communities, individuals with low and middle incomes, and frontline and impacted communities.
- Ensure that all regions of Vermont benefit from GHG emissions reductions.
- Support economic sectors and regions that face the greatest barriers to emissions reductions, especially rural and economically distressed regions and fossil fuel-based businesses and industries.
- Support climate-friendly industries, technologies and training that provide jobs and new business opportunities.
- Support natural and working lands to reduce GHG emissions, take up and store carbon, and increase resilience.
- Maximize Vermont's involvement in interstate and regional initiatives and programs designed to reduce GHG emissions, and build upon state, national and international partnerships and programs.

To ensure the subcommittees have a range of expertise and lived experience needed to fulfill their charges, members have been recruited from the Council and from the public. The intent is for subcommittees to have the knowledge and skills necessary to create the work, represent diverse geographic areas of Vermont, and be able to speak to specific challenges presented by climate change.

Throughout the development of these recommendations, the Just Transitions Subcommittee supported the CAP update by providing input and feedback on how the plan actions should be made to benefit and support all residents of the State of Vermont in a fair and just way. The subcommittee promoted broad and diverse public engagement and made sure that Council and subcommittee meetings discussed topics from multiple points of view and focused on equity. There was an intentional effort in the recruitment process to bring on subcommittee members with diverse lived experiences, including from communities disproportionately harmed by climate change. The Council continues to work on diversifying its subcommittee membership and is dedicated to collaborating with everyone living in Vermont to ensure that equity is woven into every step of this and future CAP updates.

The recommendations for climate action put forward in this CAP reflect the collective work of the subcommittees. The recommendations were handed off to the Council in December 2024, at which point we began our review. The result is the set of actions contained in this document, which fulfill the requirements of the GWSA.

The recommendations are organized around four areas of climate action:

Cross-Sector Mitigation: Reducing planet-warming emissions

Agriculture and Ecosystems: Building resilience and adaptation in Vermont's natural and working lands

Rural Resilience and Adaptation: Building resilience and adaptation in Vermont's communities and built environment

Cross-Cutting Solutions: Education, workforce, finance and funding

Engagement

We understand that a complete rethinking in every area, at every level, is needed to meet the goals of the GWSA. Ongoing engagement with Vermonters is essential to receiving broad-based input on possible approaches to climate action and to better understanding the barriers to taking action. One important lesson from the Initial Plan was the need to involve Vermonters continuously and include their input throughout the entire update process. To achieve this in the CAP update, we started the engagement process in early 2024 and continued until the CAP was finished in June 2025. Community input was shared with us every three months via [Vermont Voices on Climate engagement reports](#).

We hosted events throughout the development of the CAP to share information, answer questions, hear new ideas, consider community priorities, and receive feedback on the work in progress. These sessions focused on different themes from the various subcommittees and, at key moments, community-based organizations and Regional Planning Commissions supported and collaborated on these events. The timing intentionally lined up with key decision-making and drafting periods of the planning process.

From June 2024 to May 2025, more than 850 public participants took part in a virtual or in-person input session. In addition, approximately 250 Vermonters or Vermont-based organizations submitted written comments by email or through the Public Comment Portal during the public input process.

After April 2025 engagement on the draft plan, the Council and Steering Committee met many times in May and June to consider input from public meetings and public comment and revise the emerging plan. Detailed considerations and changes can be found in Chapter 5 Public Engagement.

Priority Actions

In this CAP, we present a significant and broad set of recommendations intended to guide climate action over the next four years. At the heart of our efforts is a commitment not only to reduce emissions, but also to ensure Vermont remains a vibrant, healthy place for current and future generations.

In all, this 2025 update to the CAP identifies more than 250 recommended actions (see [Appendix 2](#)). In the chapters that follow, we highlight 52 priority actions. Below is a shortlist of the 10 highest priority actions, created in direct response to public input. The 10 actions are not listed in priority order; rather, they are equally important, as a collective suite of actions.

10 Highest Priority Actions

These 10 highest priority actions identify immediate steps needed to reduce climate pollution and make Vermont more resilient to climate-related hazards.

Make Vermont more resilient

- Expand and maintain a permanent Flood Resilient Communities Fund
- Invest in municipal infrastructure to support compact development

Support climate-informed land use

- Expand and adapt existing Vermont programs that achieve climate goals on farms and in forests
- Promote equitable landscape connectivity and conservation for 30x30 and 50x50 goals (Act 59)

Reduce climate pollution

- Weatherize homes, focusing on low- and middle-income households
- Take preparatory steps now and join a cap-and-invest program as soon as a viable option is available
- Support utility programs that ensure the electric grid supports customer electrification and resilience
- Reduce GHG emissions from vehicles and buildings through electrification

Identify funding and also support the needed workforce

- Identify revenue sources to immediately support these priority actions
- Implement the U.S. Climate Alliance's Climate-Ready Workforce Initiative and related actions

Moving the Plan Forward

Over the next four years, as the recommendations in the CAP move forward, the Council encourages the legislative and executive branches to be mindful of the following criteria when designing policies and programs:

- Minimize financial hardship of Vermonters living on low and middle incomes through the intentional design, prioritization, and pacing of programs, and ensure those in need receive timely financial support.
- Balance investment in emissions reductions and adaptation measures to strengthen resilience against current climate impacts.
- Ensure adequate capacity for state agencies to advance the actions (e.g., new staff, funding, technology).
- Identify revenue sources that are compatible with climate actions (e.g., raising the cost of electricity is not compatible with the adoption of climate-friendly electric heating and transportation options).
- Ensure necessary supporting technologies are being funded and implemented (e.g., residential electric panel upgrades, expanded availability of electric vehicle charging infrastructure).
- Support and develop enough trained workers to implement the actions.
- Take into account the costs of not acting, including Vermonters' continued dependence on price-volatile fossil fuels for home heat and transportation and the cost of rebuilding after all-but-certain future climate disasters.

This updated CAP includes actions that will reduce emissions now. It also contains critical steps we need to take on more complex efforts that will serve Vermont in the medium and long terms. Similarly, the plan urges the Legislature and administration to find funding sources that can be immediately put towards climate action while at the same time taking steps to secure sustainable, long-term funding for climate action.

As we undertake this work, we recognize that Vermont has a history of innovation to draw and build upon. The can-do ethos of Vermonters sees us through not only challenges but opportunities—including the opportunity to act together and nimbly as a small state.

While the Legislature, the Agency of Natural Resources, and other agencies of state government work to advance the actions put forward in this plan through legislative action and rulemaking, the Council will continue to do its work to move the plan forward. We will:

- Monitor and track the progress of CAP actions.
- Identify and champion additional work needed to make CAP actions possible.
- Convene Climate Council meetings on a quarterly basis to engage with the public.
- Bring subcommittees together as needed to support the work of the Climate Council.

These efforts and other related work will be reflected in the next update to the Vermont Climate Action Plan, scheduled to be delivered in July 2029.