

Written Comments: Climate Action Plan Update

February 2025

Topic Areas Color Coding: ●Buildings & Thermal, ●Transportation, ●Electricity, ●Natural & Working Lands, ●Equity & Justice, ●Flood Resilience, ●Policy, ●Housing, ●Biofuels, ●Affordability, ●Health

Alex Zakaras, Burlington

Topic areas: ●Buildings & Thermal, ●Electricity, ●Biofuels

“Hi, and thanks in advance for considering this comment. I'm writing to urge you to eliminate biomass from your list of renewable energy sources. Other New England states are ahead of us on this: they're already phasing out biomass from their renewable energy portfolios (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut). There's no reason for us to be behind the science on this. Also, I would urge you to strengthen your support for thermal energy networks: there's a lot to be done to incentivize the development of thermal energy exchange networks, which can help generate the clean energy we need and reduce strain on the electrical grids as we move to electrify, electrify, electrify. Thanks very much!”

Kimberly Hornung-Marcy, Williston

Topic areas: ●Biofuels, ●Electricity, ●Health

“Please support limits on all fuels that burn and help us move off them as fast as possible. We want to leave our children a world worth living in, not one full of non-stop climate disasters. We need to move to cleaner greener ways to heat/cool buildings, produce electricity and move around (transportation). Fossil fuels and biofuels all produce Co2, and Critical and Hazardous air pollutants as defined by the EPA. Some fuels like gas and renewable natural gas produce large amounts of methane in extraction, production and moving them through pipes. Methane is 80 times more warming than Co2 for the first twenty-five years of its' release. Biofuels are often the same or worse than fossil fuels for life-cycle carbon and methane emissions. Biomass, wood, is the least efficient and most toxic fuel for human health currently burned in large quantities in Vermont. I am not against logging for products that continue to sequester carbon like building materials. But when you burn a tree, you instantly return large amounts of carbon to the atmosphere. A tree left standing is one of the best sequesters of carbon and the older the tree, the more carbon it sequesters. So the tragedy of cutting and burning that tree, is it ceases to be part of the solution and becomes a huge driver of climate change. We do not have the 100-200 years to wait for a new tree to grow to the size of the harvested tree. The burned tree instantly adds large amounts of Co2 to the atmosphere driving the floods, wildfires and other disasters that now cost billions of dollars. And driving up health care costs and suffering. This point, that wood is not renewable, is made very clear by this letter from 1,000 IPCC scientists. <https://www.woodwellclimate.org/letter-regarding-use-of->

[forests-for-bioenergy/](#) Wood is the most inefficient of all fuels we burn, this means you have to burn more of it to generate a kilowatt of electricity compared to other fuels. That fact plus the reality that it contains a lot of moisture means biomass generates more Co2 than other fuels. See this article for Co2 comparisons: <https://www.pfpi.net/carbon-emissions/> Biomass or wood also generates the highest levels of critical and hazardous air pollutants as defined by the EPA. Comparison of pollution rates between wood and gas/diesel <https://www.pfpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/PFPI-air-pollution-and-biomass-April-2011.pdf> Biomass produces more PM2.5 than any other fuel currently used in Vermont. PM2.5 is not considered safe in any amounts by medical science. It is connected with making asthma, COPD, and heart issues worse. It is also now connected to making dementia, and mood disorders worse. Vermont ranks #5 nationally for asthma, this is tragic and costs the state and its' resident thousands of dollar in health care costs and suffering. We all know people with asthma, dementia or depression. These are people we care about. We need to get off burning all fuels to protect them from PM2.5 but especially the burning of biomass in large biomass plants like McNeil and Ryegate. According to the state report McNeil gave off 6.5 tons of PM2.5 in 2022. It was burning 76 tons of wood an hour when operating. This is tragic as the trees burned are releasing large amount of Co2, almost half a million tons of it in 2022. But those trees are no longer sequestering carbon. We don't have time to wait for new trees to grow for 100-200 years. I am not against logging, building and other wood products continue to sequester carbon. I am only against burning trees. Put a moratorium on adding biomass burning plants or expanding current plants in place. Do the study of biomass. It is clear it is the worst of all fuels. What we want instead are air and ground source heat pumps and Geothermal networks that use ground source heat pumps and heat sharing and are very efficient at heating/cooling buildings. We want the electric grid to depend on solar, wind and battery back up. We want as many homes as possible to be weatherized. Vehicles need to get off of burned fuels and use electricity and batteries as well. All these systems, have lower maintenance, are cheaper to run, and do not produce greenhouse gasses or air pollution when used. They offer hope that the young people we care about will be able to breathe clean air and live in a world that has stopped unnatural warming.”

Emily Whalen, Essex Junction

Topic areas: •Transportation, •Electricity, •Biofuels, •Equity & Justice

“My comments/requests for VT's climate action plans: Please keep biofuels of any kind (liquid biofuels, biomass, RNG, green hydrogen) out of our Climate Action Plan. There is no place for biofuels in Vermont’s clean energy future. We need to stop burning things and buying high-emission fuels out-of-state, draining our energy dollars. The McNeil Generating Station is the single largest source of carbon emissions in Vermont. Green hydrogen should only be used for on site energy storage for solar and wind generation facilities, to regenerate electricity when it is needed. We need to invest in affordable clean energy public transit systems in both rural and urban areas to reduce the use of resource-intensive cars and support individuals and businesses reliant on public transit, particularly BIPOC, migrant, low income elderly, and disabled Vermonters already disproportionately reliant on public transit. We have to provide electricity ratepayer protection for low- and middle-income Vermonters in order to ensure a just transition as we “electrify everything.” The PUC is preparing a report to the legislature on the options; 350VT will urge the PUC to adopt specific, strong protections in what the PUC recommends.”

Natalee Braun, Essex Junction

Topic areas: •Transportation, •Electricity, •Natural & Working Lands, •Equity & Justice

“Dear Climate Council members, I urge you to take strong action to protect Vermont’s environment and invest in a sustainable future. We must protect all public lands, allow at least 9% of forests to become old growth, stop logging on public lands, and expand habitat corridors. A just transition is needed for those working in forest management. We also need better, more affordable public transit in both rural and urban areas. Many Vermonters depend on transit that doesn’t meet their needs. Investing in clean public transit will cut emissions and support the individuals most in need. Finally, I encourage the State, utilities, and financial institutions to work together to meet our renewable energy goals and make these solutions accessible to all. Prioritizing local, low-emission energy solutions like weatherization, community solar and wind, and non-combustion thermal networks will be essential to this process.”

David Paarlberg-Kvam, Shelburne

Topic areas: •Equity & Justice, Workforce

Attachment: [Guiding Principles for a Just Transition 2021 Draft](#)

“Please ensure that the Climate Action plan is aligned with the Just Transition principles developed by the Climate Council's own Just Transitions Subcommittee. It is important that the needs of the frontline communities are addressed and it is important that the solutions recommended by the Vermont Climate Council are equitable. Some people are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than others. Additionally, we will need to ensure workers in the fossil fuel and biomass industries can meaningfully transition their jobs and continue to support their families as we move to clean energy. This will supply the workforce necessary to make the complete transition to renewable and clean energy across the state.”