

# Vermont Climate Council

## Draft Priority Actions

April 2025

This draft document contains priority actions under discussion for recommendations and directives by the Vermont Climate Council to the legislature and executive branch agencies. The Council continues to debate these potential actions and seeks public input prior to making decisions on them. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

### *Public Engagement Opportunities:*

Vermont's Climate Action Office is holding public meetings in April to discuss these draft priority actions. For meeting details and other ways to provide comment, please see: <https://climatechange.vermont.gov/climate-action-plan-2025-update>

**The following are the Cross-Sector Mitigation draft priority actions covering Transportation, Buildings and Thermal, and Electricity.**

# Cross-Sector Mitigation

## Transportation and Buildings

**1) Through legislation and administrative action, join a cap-and-invest program, such as the New York Cap and Invest (NYCI) or Western Climate Initiative, covering emissions from Vermont's transportation fuels sector, and potentially other sectors, once necessary preparatory steps are taken:**

- **In preparation for joining, take necessary supporting steps including:**
  - Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) will develop a framework for the reporting of greenhouse gas emissions data from fuel suppliers and other significant emitters of climate pollution and recommend to the Legislature statutory by December 15, 2025 changes needed to support streamlined reporting requirements and a stepped implementation plan.
  - ANR, in collaboration with the Public Service Department and the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and collaboration with the Vermont Climate Council, will advance a technical study to determine the most appropriate and feasible mechanism(s) for addressing affordability concerns related to the implementation of a cap-and-invest program, including:
    - Distributing dividends from allowance sales directly to Low- and Moderate-Income households in close to real-time;
    - Using proceeds from allowance sales reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to provide direct incentives to support increasing energy efficiency and the adoption of low-carbon technologies, particularly for low- and moderate-income households;
    - Setting limits on allowance prices (i.e., a price ceiling) to provide certainty about maximum costs.
  - ANR and members of the Council will continue to monitor cap-and-invest programs in other jurisdictions, including New York, California, Quebec, and Washington. Updates will be provided at quarterly Council meetings.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation Transportation

### 2) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles by:

- i. Continuing to monitor and maintain Vermont's adoption of the California Advanced Clean Cars II (ACC II) and Advanced Clean Trucks.
- ii. Supporting vehicle electrification ensuring long-term, consistent funding for EV incentives to low- and moderate-income car purchasers which aligns with estimates provided for the VT Agency of Transportation's February 2024 [Clean Transportation Incentive Programs Report](#); as well as guidance from the February 2025 [Legislative Report on Vermont Clean Transportation Incentive Programs](#).
- iii. Supporting vehicle electrification investment for the equitable deployment of fast charging and Level 2 charging stations to levels needed to meet the modeling done in the Pathways 2.0 Report and as estimated in the Agency of Transportation's January 2025 [report](#).

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

# Cross-Sector Mitigation

## Transportation

**3) Invest in public, active, and shared transportation, such as transit, micro transit, passenger rail, biking and walking.**

- **Use VTrans' July 2024 Vermont Smart Growth, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and GHG Research Project Report and the November 2023 VT Agency of Transportation Carbon Reduction Strategy and associated GHG Sketch Tool to guide investments, in order to:**
  - Minimize the need for single occupancy vehicles, also known as reducing vehicle miles traveled which has important co-benefits such as cost savings to individuals and families, access to jobs, and health and environmental benefits.
  - Support compact settlement patterns which enable public, active, and shared transportation.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation

# Electricity

- 4) Support cost-effective load management, grid hardening, and optimization, e.g., through advanced metering, storage, targeted siting of generation, rate design, and distributed energy resource management systems statewide to enable customer programs and avoid or delay more expensive physical upgrades.**
- Continued Public Utilities Commission (PUC) oversight of utility load management programs, investments, and rate designs, and consideration of regulatory approval improvements for efficient generation and infrastructure siting.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation

# Electricity

- 5) Review and implement as appropriate recommendations from Act 179 study regarding evolution of community-level renewable energy programs, especially for low-income customers.**
- With community and customer input, utilities and/or Public Utilities Commission (PUC) should create procurement and customer enrollment programs to support community-based renewable energy projects. Consider cost-containment actions, funding avenues that are not electric customer supported, and how approval for community-based project siting occurs.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Electricity

**6) Deploy programs that ensure the electric grid supports customer electrification necessary to meet Global Warming Solutions Act goals, including service drops, transformers, smart panels, EV chargers, storage, etc. Highlight importance of cost-effectiveness and equity in design, implementation, and affordable funding.**

- Continued Public Utilities Commission oversight of utility programs; seek state or federal sourced funding; strive for deployment across utility territories with ability to participate for all customers, including rural/low-income.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

### 7) Adopt one or more sector-wide policy:

**Option A: Through legislation or administrative action, adopt a modified Clean Heat Standard, designed for gradual implementation, and containing a cost cap provision with a starting price.**

- The recommendation seeks to make progress now, within a program that is scalable over time, and that lives within a cost cap.
  - Gradual implementation: Implies that the mechanism would get as close as possible to Global Warming Solutions Act targets and that complementary policies will necessarily need to carry a larger proportion of Residential, Commercial and Industrial emissions reductions to meet GWSA targets, and
  - Containing a price cap provision with an explicitly-stated starting price.

*and/or*

**Option B: Through legislation and administrative action, join a cap-and-invest program.**

- See the combined Transportation & Buildings priority action on cap-and-invest

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.



# Cross-Sector Mitigation

## Buildings and Thermal

### 8) Secure funding for comprehensive weatherization focused on low- and moderate-income households.

Through legislation or administrative action, ensure 79,000 additional homes are comprehensively weatherized as soon as practicable, with a priority on low- and moderate-income households.

- The weatherization work should recognize energy efficiency broadly. It should include traditional energy efficiency measures, electrical, health, and safety measures needed to comply with codes, and needed infrastructure upgrades such as wiring and service panels to enable electric vehicle charging, the adoption of heat pumps for space and water heating, and other strategic electrification opportunities.
- Between 2000 and 2024, it is estimated that 41,000 Vermont homes were weatherized; current programs (funding and workforce) are able to weatherize approximately 4,000 homes per year at an average cost of \$11,000 per unit. Much of the recent funding has come from federal sources, which are unlikely to be renewed. The initial Climate Action Plan established a goal of weatherizing a total of 120,000 homes by 2030, which would require an investment of more than \$850 million along with more than a tripling of Vermont's weatherization workforce – putting this target out of reach.
- It is essential, however, that Vermont take steps to maintain and accelerate its current pace of weatherization in order to complete the additional 79,000 units as soon as practicable.
- This will require securing a sustainable source of funding, measures to develop a well-trained workforce sufficient to address the demand, as well as funding to eliminate barriers (e.g. required prerequisite home repairs including, but not limited to, vermiculite removal, knob-and-tube mitigation, etc.) that prevent or delay weatherization activities from occurring in low- and moderate-income homes.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation

### Buildings and Thermal

**9) Through legislation or administrative action, ensure X\* additional commercial, industrial, municipal, and non-residential buildings are comprehensively weatherized by 2030, and secure the funding needed to achieve the target.**

- Including “weatherization ready” project needs
- With priority for supporting/expanding existing programs (i.e. the Municipal Energy Resilience Program, Municipal Technical Assistance Program, Building Communities, etc.).

\*Waiting on modeling to inform this number

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation

### Buildings and Thermal

**10) Secure funding for electrification of space & water heating for low-and moderate-income households.**

- Develop programs for implementation regarding 200-amp service and related building upgrades, coordinated with weatherization, efficiency, and equipment incentive programs (EV chargers, heat pumps, storage, etc.), and ensure that any potentially related statewide program (such as Clean Heat Standard, if adopted, or enhanced weatherization efforts) includes building electrical upgrades in their design and funding models in order to enable decarbonization.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation

### Buildings and Thermal

**11) Conduct a study that considers the technological options and market feasibility for emissions-based equipment standards for various types of heating. The purpose is to better understand the feasibility and considerations of Vermont adopting thermal equipment emissions standard(s), either for oxides of nitrogen or, more broadly for GreenHouse Gases.**

- The legislature needs to fund the study
- The Agency of Natural Resources needs to file a report with the Vermont Climate Council by June 30, 2027
- The study shall consider:
  - adoption by other states,
  - the means by which equipment standards can influence market activity,
  - the most equitable approaches, and
  - how to secure the greatest emissions reductions

**Study is contingent on securing funding.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Sector Mitigation

### Buildings & Thermal

**12) Through legislative and administrative action, adopt a performance- based Clean Fuels Standard that implements a declining carbon intensity (CI) score eligibility requirement for residential, commercial, and industrial (RCI) fuels and can be implemented gradually alongside other complementary policies that would be necessary.**

- Alternate approach if recommended action is not deemed feasible (not performance based): **Through legislative and administrative action, institute a minimum percentage clean fuel blending requirement for all residential, commercial, and industrial liquid and gaseous fuels, utilizing an approved list of eligible clean fuels.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

**The following are the Cross-Cutting draft priority actions covering Education, Compact Settlement, Workforce Development, and Financing.**

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues Education

- 1) Build off existing resources and programs to create an open source, accessible, and interdisciplinary climate change curriculum for Vermont educators.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues Education

- 2) Amend the Vermont State Board of Education's Education Quality Standards to incorporate environmental and climate change education at all grade levels (consider folding under "Science" and "Social Studies" curricula).**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

- 3) Maintain funding for programs to educate Vermonters about their energy choice and funding options to increase energy efficiency in residential homes, including the energy Coaches and Navigator Program.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

- 4) Increase investment in municipalities to improve, expand and build new drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and other infrastructure to support compact development, especially growing away from climate hazards such as flooding, and ensure the assets' long-term operation and maintenance.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues Compact Settlement

- 5) Increase capacity for multimodal transportation planning and implementation in downtown and designated areas, such as making village centers permanently eligible for the downtown transportation fund that builds infrastructure needed to increase walking, biking and transit.

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues Compact Settlement

- 6) Continue to implement [Act 181\\*](#) and monitor for progress. Increase investment in compact settlements as needed.

\*<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.687>

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 7) **Advance the new initiative which aims to grow career pathways in climate change and clean energy fields, support new and existing workers, ensure job quality, strengthen workforce diversity, and train in service of collective alliance goal of 1 million new registered apprentices across 24- U.S. Climate Alliance states by 2035.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 8) **Support training from middle school through adult education programs for a wide variety of audiences, including through the weatherization training center and the many existing training programs.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.



4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 9) **Target outreach, training, support systems for existing Vermont residents to enter and stay in climate change careers, including farm and forestry, clean energy and resilience careers.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 10) **Increase the number of students who can be supported in the Career and Tech Ed system in the state including electrician, plumbing, building trades programs, agriculture and working land sectors.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 11) By tracking leading data indicators, monitor the impacts of decarbonization on the workforce and create programs to support impacted workers.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 12) Increase the number of registered apprenticeships that can be supported in the state by Vermont State University and the Department of Labor, especially in plumbing/HVAC, electrical, and weatherization.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Workforce Development

- 13) Support programs for people to start and build their own businesses in the trades, including those offered by sustainable business development and climate change career programs.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Cross-Cutting Issues

# Financing

- 14) Building off recent Climate Infrastructure Financing efforts, the Vermont State Treasurer, in consultation with the Climate Action Office and Climate Council, should explore opportunities to further leverage public and private capital to make needed clean energy, resilience and adaptation investments. This effort should focus on reducing hurdles facing Vermonters in accessing and affording cleaner and more energy efficient technologies, weatherization, and necessary infrastructure and resilience investments. It should seek to build off existing structures and institutions to leverage programs, partners and capital (e.g. credit unions and banks), as well as explore other potentially useful strategies (such as on-bill utility financing, bonding and insurance markets).**

- Stakeholders could include, but would not be limited to, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, together with bond banks, economic development associations, distribution and efficiency utilities, credit unions, and key state agencies, such as the Public Utility Commission, among others.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

**The following are the Rural Resilience and Adaptation draft priority actions for covering Community Capacity and Planning, Infrastructure and Built Environment, and Public Health.**

- 1) Increase State capacity to manage funding programs and provide technical assistance for the development and implementation of climate resilience plans, with a focus on maximizing the efficacy of Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, and augmenting existing programs with the Municipal Planning and Resilience Grant Program, the Municipal Climate Planning Framework and Guide, and the Municipal Climate Toolkit.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

- 2) Establish permanent, dedicated funding for Regional Planning Commissions to hire and retain staff for climate resilience planning work, hazard mitigation application development, and management of hazard mitigation grants on behalf of municipalities or other eligible grant recipients as well as cover overhead costs related to completing Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Community Capacity and Planning

- 3) Secure sustainable, long-term funding to expand and maintain a permanent Flood Resilient Communities Fund (Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund) for the design and implementation of local and regional climate change adaptation projects and community resilience. Funding may be used as local match for federally funded hazard mitigation programs as well as non-FEMA eligible hazard mitigation activities.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Community Capacity and Planning

- 4) Create and facilitate a business support network that connects and engages local economic development and small business support organizations for the purpose of developing and providing coordinated support for business and local economic resilience and disaster response.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Community Capacity and Planning

- 5) Integrating regional housing targets and ongoing mapping, including Flood Insurance Rate Map updates, River Corridors, and landslide hazards, identify areas that are suitable for new, climate safe housing, and increase funding mechanisms where communities are investing in development-ready infrastructure.

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Infrastructure and Built Environment

- 6) The State, through the Public Utility Commission and Public Service Department, should investigate resilience planning, including defining, valuing, measuring, and setting targets for grid resilience. Utilities should integrate resilience planning into their Integrated Resource Plans based on guidance resulting from this proceeding.

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Infrastructure and Built Environment

- 7) **Expand upon the Municipal Vulnerability Indicators tool to create a Municipal Vulnerability Index that can be used by state agencies and others as a resource to assist in prioritizing infrastructure resilience investments across the state based on specific vulnerabilities or combinations of vulnerabilities. Ensure it includes currently missing data such as historic utility outage data, to the extent available, and the Agency of Natural Resource's Environmental Justice mapping tool, when complete.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Infrastructure and Built Environment

- 8) **Create a transportation flood resilience funding program to design and construct transportation projects identified as high priority locations via use of the most relevant risk and vulnerability assessment tools.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.



## Infrastructure and Built Environment

4/4/2025 draft

- 9) **Replace aging electric and communication infrastructure with the most appropriate resilient alternative when cost effective. For example, for aging and unreliable lines, evaluate improving resilience by relocating lines underground or through other options, where demonstrated to be feasible and cost effective to ratepayers.**
- Planning frameworks, valuation tools, and metrics resulting from the Resilience Investigation (Case No. 25-0339-PET) being conducted by the Public Utility Commission should be used to inform this evaluation.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Infrastructure and Built Environment

4/4/2025 draft

- 10) **Increase investment in municipalities to address prioritized vulnerabilities by improving, expanding, and building new drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and other infrastructure to support compact development, including asset management tools to support long-term operation and maintenance.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Infrastructure and Built Environment

- 11) Building upon the State Hazard Mitigation Planning and Hazard Mitigation Project Review processes, develop a framework similar to the State Transportation Improvement Program that creates a fiscally constrained plan to identify prioritized state investments in resilience projects.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation Public Health

- 12) Provide increased capacity to strengthen messaging and awareness of local and state emergency preparedness, response, and recovery structures.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation

### Public Health

- 13) Provide funding and technical assistance to municipalities and local partner organizations to support adaptation and preparedness planning in communities, with specific focus on disproportionately affected and vulnerable populations; including the identification, adaptation, and equipping of facilities to serve as community resilience hubs that serve as places for learning, collaboration, resource access, and refuge in response to climate-related hazards and other community needs.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation

### Public Health

- 14) Provide funding for resilience equipment, supplies, and services (including trees and other vegetative shade, window treatments (i.e. screens, shade, thermal barriers), efficient air conditioning (or heat pumps), fans, air purifiers, mechanical ventilation (e.g. Energy Recovery Ventilator), water intrusion and moisture mitigation & management, backup power, private drinking water testing and treatment, etc.) that help reduce the health impact of climate-related hazards for income-qualifying households.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

- 15) Provide state-contracted community mental health services partners more capacity to address anxiety, depression, distress, and trauma caused by climate change and climate-related disasters.**

DRAFT

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

**The following are the Agriculture and Ecosystems draft priority actions covering Reducing and Sequestering Emissions, Supporting Adaptation, and Climate-Resilient Land.**

## Reduce and Sequester

**1) Increase funding, enhance, and adapt existing State of Vermont programs that support greenhouse gas emissions reductions, soil carbon sequestration, and/or climate adaptation and resiliency on working lands\*. Coordinate with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programming to accelerate the implementation of federally funded climate mitigation and resilience practices in Vermont.**

- Enhance and adapt programs to better incorporate nature-based solutions as well as Traditional, Ecological and Indigenous Knowledge.
- Example State programs include, but are not limited to: Agency of Agriculture Farms and Markets (AAFM): Agriculture-Clean Water Initiative Performance (Ag-CWIP), Best Management Practice (BMP), Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Farm Agronomic Practice (FAP), Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip (GWFS), Pasture and Surface Water Fencing (PSWF), Vermont Pay for Phosphorus (VPFP), The Vermont Farmer Ecosystem Stewardship Program (VFESP); land acquisition, river corridor easements, wetland conservation, County Forester Program, Maintaining and Creating Resilient Forests.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Reduce and Sequester

**2) Utilize best practices to account for carbon sequestration and emission reductions from agriculture.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Ag and Eco

### Reduce and Sequester

- 3) Fund and implement Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programs for lands to encourage landowners and land and water caretakers to implement practices that improve soil health, crop and forest resilience, increase carbon storage, increase stormwater storage capacity, and reduce runoff. Fund existing agricultural PES programs and expand to include or develop new programs for forestry.**

**Note:** Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programs recognize and reward land and water caretakers for practices that enhance ecological function and community well-being, rooted in both traditional stewardship values and modern land management. These programs do not include carbon markets or trading.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

4/4/2025 draft

## Ag and Eco

### Support Adaptation

- 4) Leverage the power of peer learning to advance climate resilience by funding a Request RFP that provides funds to support Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Districts, farmer organizations, and non-profit organizations with the specific objective of allowing them to reach other farmers and do farmer-to-farmer education about improved soil and manure management strategies that enhance climate resilience.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Ag and Eco

# Support Adaptation

- 5) Create a dedicated climate impact emergency recovery fund for farms and forestry operations (or ensure the agriculture and forestry sectors are given specific considerations in general state climate impact recovery fund) to ensure that they can viably recover from climate induced disasters.**
- The fund should be simple to access, deploy sufficient funds quickly following a disaster, be flexible, equitable, and proportional to meet the diverse needs of the farming and forestry community, and be sustained over time with predictable and consistent funding.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Ag and Eco

# Support Adaptation

- 6) Dedicate robust funding for farm and forest supply chain resilience and state food security, including significant investment in storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure. Prioritize investments in farm, food, and forestry businesses, cooperatives, non-profits, tribes, and community projects that have climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation goals.**
- Funding should include a minimum dedicated base funding of \$1.5 million for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI), \$18 million over a three-year period for the Agriculture Development Grant program, \$500,000 in base funding for Crop Cash Plus and Farm Share, dedicated appropriations for distribution and food hub operations and infrastructure, and appropriations for research, development, and market expansion opportunities for local wood products processing and manufacturing in Vermont.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.



## Ag and Eco

# Support Adaptation

- 7) Improve funding opportunities and create equitable access for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farm, food, and forest organizations and businesses by developing multi-year unrestricted BIPOC-centered grants and loan programs. This includes uplifting and resourcing the work of the Vermont Abenaki and other Indigenous Peoples in the State, Land Access and Opportunity Board (LAOB), and other BIPOC peoples and organizations in Vermont.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Ag and Eco

# Support Adaptation

- 8) Promote and incentivize the use of agricultural and sustainably harvested wood-based construction materials (subject to existing certification criteria or procurement standards to be developed) over imported wood and/or non-wood materials with high carbon footprints (such as steel, concrete, etc.).**
- This could include using state procurement standards to require that publicly funded building projects use chain-of-custody certified wood products (mass timber, cellulose insulation, etc.) and prioritize building materials—such as sustainably harvested wood—that align with climate goals and ecological values, while reducing reliance on high-carbon, non-renewable materials like steel and concrete.
  - Continue to research and develop the life-cycle accounting of these products for the greatest impact.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Ag and Eco

# Climate-Resilient Land

- 9) State agencies should utilize financial incentives, siting polices, and regulations to incentivize, support, and preferentially site solar and wind energy capacity on new buildings, parking lots (by installing solar roofs), in compact settlement areas, including renewable energy and charging facilities at rental housing, as well as in previously disturbed / developed areas.
- Use disincentives to avoid forest clearing, particularly clearing of ecologically sensitive forest blocks, and conversion of active agricultural land, particularly prime agricultural soils.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Ag and Eco

# Climate-Resilient Land

- 10) State agencies should prioritize and incentivize (through various financial mechanisms) nature-based climate solutions (NbS), Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) by considering how to incorporate them into assessments, planning efforts, prioritization frameworks, and funding programs to address climate change impacts.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Climate-Resilient Land

- 11) State land management agencies should continue to adapt their management of lands using nature-based climate solutions (NbS) to address climate impacts, increase ecosystem resilience, enhance biological diversity, and improve water quality. State land management agencies should enhance technical assistance and resilience funds to support the financial capacity of other land and water caretakers to achieve these goals.**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Climate-Resilient Land

- 12) State agencies and the legislature should promote healthy, connected river corridors, floodplains, and wetlands, prioritize restoration and conservation, and incentivize water storage in headwaters and natural areas to promote flood resilience and biodiversity through expansion of wetland, floodplain, riparian forest and/or river corridor easements that better compensate land and water caretakers for restoring, managing and conserving these natural water storage areas (including opportunities presented by Act 121).**

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

**13) State agencies should work with partners to promote strategic and equitable statewide landscape connectivity and the conservation of forest blocks, farmland, and other managed lands through planning and implementation toward 30x30 goals, in alignment with Act 59. This work should use the best available data and mapping, including Vermont Conservation Design, while braiding in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Knowledge (IK).**

- Conservation planning and implementation should allow at least 9% of Vermont's forest to become (or be maintained as) old forest, specifically targeting 15% of the matrix forest within the highest priority forest blocks—including National Forests—to achieve this condition and ensure the protection of sacred sites.
- At the same time, protecting farmland and managed forestlands from development through land conservation and protection programs is essential to ensure these land uses continue to provide climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience benefits. Existing State land use protection programs—such as the Vermont Farmland Conservation Program and Forest Conservation Easements—should be enhanced to improve farmland access and the protection of agricultural soils and working forests.

**The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.**

## Ag and Eco Technical Assistance

4/4/2025 draft

- 14) Enhance education, outreach, research, and technical assistance programming to encourage farmers, foresters, and other land and water caretakers to adopt strategies that increase climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. State agencies should work with and fund partners and higher education, such as University of Vermont (UVM) Extension and Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDs).**
- These efforts should be incorporated into current programs, braiding Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Knowledge (IK), recognizing the value these bring to better understanding and taking care of the land. Initiatives should be designed to represent diverse perspectives while addressing a diversity of audiences and age groups. Simplify and assist with application processes for funding and support programs.

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.

## Ag and Eco Climate-Resilient Land

4/4/2025 draft

- 15) Fund and undertake as soon as possible the study previously requested by the Vermont Climate Council on the use of biomass for utility-scale electric energy facilities. In addition, use the guidance previously provided by the Council to the Vermont Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regarding biomass.**
- The Council's biomass addendum is here:  
<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Biomass%20recommendations%20-%20Final%20Approved%20Version%20-%20December%202023.pdf>

The Council continues to debate this potential action and seeks public input prior to making decisions on it. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by Councilors, who have a range of views on them.