

Vermont Voices on Climate

Vermont Climate Action Office

April 1 - June 30, 2024

Report Overview

This is a summary of public outreach activities conducted by Vermont's Climate Action Office with support from the Consensus Building Institute during April, May, and June 2024. Reports from previous periods are available: [July-September 2023](#), [October-December 2023](#), and [January-March 2024](#). Additional information about climate action across the state of Vermont can be found in the Climate Action Office's monthly email updates: [April](#), [May](#), [June](#).

Objectives of this climate action outreach are:

- **Provide information and knowledge** that helps people prepare for climate impacts, take action, and access programs that can benefit them.
- **Lift up the voices and viewpoints of communities** into the implementation of climate-related initiatives and the ongoing work of the Climate Action Office and other key entities, including the Vermont Climate Council, so that a diverse group of Vermonters can influence this work.
- **Build relationships and communication channels** that will help Vermonters work collaboratively on future climate action with the state.

April, May, June 2024

6

Events Attended

3

Meetings with Community-
Based Organizations

4

Public Meetings



Activities

Outreach Focused on Three Areas:

1. **Attending events** and meeting Vermonters who don't typically engage in climate policy discussions. We attended 6 events (*see list to the right*).
2. **Meeting Community-Based Organizations**, including Community Action Agencies and a diverse group of community-based groups convened by the Climate Action Office.
3. **Holding public virtual meetings**, including two meetings to engage the public in Vermont's Resilience Implementation Strategy and two meetings to launch the update to Vermont's Climate Action Plan. More than **270 Vermonters** attended the meetings.

Events Attended

- Vermont Afghan Alliance Lunch (Burlington)
- Capstone Community Impact Annual Gathering (Hyde Park)
- Summer Jam Family Fest (Bennington)
- Essex Car Show (Essex Junction)
- Juneteenth Celebrations (Burlington & Winooski)
- First Annual Lamoille County Pride Festival (Morrisville)

What Vermonters are saying

Public meetings

Detailed summaries are available for the [Climate Action Plan Update Kick-Off](#) and [Resilience Implementation Strategy](#) virtual events. Participants provided substantive input on the two planning efforts, as well as suggestions for involving Vermonters in the process.



What Vermonters are saying *(continued...)*

Meetings with Community-Based Organizations

The Climate Action Office hosted two virtual meetings for Community-Based Organizations from across the state.

The first meeting, on April 4, 2024, focused on ways to reach diverse Vermonters and incorporate voices into climate action planning. Specific feedback included:

- Let's not reinvent the wheel. **Existing forums and groups can act as a conduit**, such as Hunger Councils in each county.
- Several organizations invited the Climate Action Office to come participate and set up information tables at events such as food distribution days.

The second meeting, on April 19, 2024, solicited the organizations' views on the development of Vermont's Resilience Implementation Strategy. Key points of feedback included:

- There should be more focus on **emergency relief efforts during flooding events**.
- **Food is a component of infrastructure resiliency**. We need strong infrastructure, transportation, and community in place. Hunger Councils helped in flood response because they're based right in counties. Pantries were seeing firsthand what the need was between farmers and shelters.
- **Greater support is needed for farmers who are farming in climate friendly ways**.
- **Honor indigenous communities** more in this process and look back in our indigeneity to learn about the ways we've already adapted.
- Resilience comes from building community partnerships.

Events across Vermont

The Climate Action Office spoke with Vermonters at a range of events. See page 5 of this report for a detailed account of attending the Essex Car Show.

At the Vermont Afghan Alliance, people spoke about long commutes to work and the lack of public transport.

At the Capstone Community Impact Annual Gathering, weatherization team leads spoke about options for renters (they exist!) and challenges such as vermiculite remediation.



What Vermonters are saying (*continued...*)

Events across Vermont (*continued...*)

At Bennington's Summer Jam Family Fest, hosted by Sunrise Parent Child Center, one participant encouraged the state to find solutions for condos and clustered housing that today are stuck with existing systems based on propane. Another participant was enthusiastic about future hydrogen-fuel cars.

The Climate Action Office set up a whiteboard for ideas at the Lamoille County Pride Festival and received recommendations including:

- More public transportation. Better bus stops, more attractive, sheltered from rain, with art.
- More Lake Champlain cleanup.
- We are not learning about climate change in school. This is a problem!
- Electric vehicles (EVs) are WAY too expensive, even with rebates. We can't afford heat pumps.
- Need more charging stations before I would consider getting an EV.
- All new buildings should have solar.
- More protection for working lands. Include farmers in the conversations about conservation.
- Raise taxes on construction of homes over a certain size. Raise taxes and regulate second homes. Regulate [short-term rentals] and second homes. Make towns build affordable units in all new development.
- The State should develop a toolkit for updating municipal plans and regional plans to integrate climate action.
- Give more capacity/resources to the Regional Planning Commissions to support climate work.
- More conservation of forests. Keep waterways clean.
- More pesticide regulations.
- We need all hands on deck!



What Vermonters are saying (continued...)

A Day at the Essex Car Show

June 16, 2024

Hundreds of people turned out to enjoy the dozens of Tuner, Classic and Modern Cars on display. I spoke with many people who are not typically keen on government interference and some who downright detest the state's efforts to help slow the effects of climate change.

One participant and his family talked about generations of his family living in Vermont and how it's only recently that they are really struggling and considering moving to southern, more affordable, states. He blames the government and regulation. He acknowledged that some good might come out of climate action, but was adamant that "what they are doing is essentially changing the population and landscape of Vermont because regular folks like us can no longer afford to live here." He talked about his family working and caring for the land for over a hundred years.

Most folks that I spoke with said they felt state government wasn't listening to Vermonters like them, leading to anger and apathy. "The liberal agenda is killing us" is a general blanket statement that I heard often. I invited folks to contact the Climate Action Office and to speak about what they felt, but only two people took a flier.

To be sure, everyone agreed that the climate in Vermont is changing and that making communities more resilient to the changing climate is important. Still, most people felt that government laws and policies are only going to hurt them in the long run.

I also heard comments about making government initiatives less confusing: less paperwork and rigidity when trying to "help", and consideration for the fact that not all people have the same views on these issues. They didn't like feeling accused of being a bad person because of their viewpoints.

I spoke with a woman whose car ended up winning a prize, much to her surprise. She told me that most EV owners that she knows have several other cars "just in case" so frankly it kind of "kills the point [of] going green."

I was invited back which was nice! It's important that we hear these voices.

Kashka Orlow

Upcoming Outreach Activities

The outreach plan for July, August, and September of 2024 includes three lines of activities.

- **Meeting Vermonters where they are:** Come see us at the following events...
 - Memphremagog Festival, Newport, July 26
 - Old North End Ramble, Burlington, July 27
 - Vermont State Fair, Rutland, August 13 & 15
 - All Brains Belong Community Health Education Fair, Montpelier, August 24
 - Vermont First African Landing Day, Burlington, August 24
- **Small-group conversations:** Follow-up session with community leaders in linguistically diverse Vermont communities. In collaboration with Vermont's five Community Action Agencies, lay the groundwork for conversations with Vermonters who live on low incomes.
- **Working with Community Based Organizations:** Coordinating with partners to participate in events and activities.



Vermont Voices on Climate: Past Reports

- [July, August, September 2023](#)
- [October, November, December 2023](#)
- [January, February, March 2024](#)