

# Community Resource Packet

1st Annual Community Resilience Forum

Bennington County



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# Vermont Council on Rural Development's Climate Economy Initiative: Relevance and Accessibility for Bennington County, Vermont



**Vermont Council on Rural Development**

Unleashing the power of Vermonters to create a better future

9 Bailey Ave, PO Box 1384, Montpelier VT 05601-1384 | 802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org | www.vtrural.org

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the support of the locally-defined progress of Vermont's rural communities. VCRD is a dynamic partnership of federal, state, local, nonprofit and private partners. Actively non-partisan with an established reputation for community-based facilitation, VCRD is uniquely positioned to sponsor and coordinate collaborative efforts across governmental and organizational categories concerned with policy questions of rural import.

Since its inception in 1992, VCRD has worked in over 90 communities in Vermont and built a profile of rural policy leadership that is grounded by work in local communities and extends to collaborative partnerships with the highest levels of state and federal programs.

## **Context: VCRD in Bennington County**

VCRD has conducted multiple community visits, each resulting in detailed reports that shed light on the region's aspirations, challenges, and potential:

- [Dorset Community Report](#) (2020)
- [Pownal Community Report](#) (2017)
- [Bennington Community Visit](#) (2012)
- [Manchester Community Visit](#) (2013)

These engagements have been instrumental in fostering community-driven action plans, tailored to the unique needs and strengths of each community within the county.

## **Climate Economy Initiatives**

The Climate Economy Initiative is designed to help communities and leaders build and implement priority actions that increase economic vitality and affordability in a time of climate change. The ultimate goal is to help model change by implementing energy efficiency, transportation system transformation, renewable energy generation, working lands development, and entrepreneurship and business incubation to spur economic progress.

## Resilient Communities

Climate change brings with it the threats of increased flooding, erratic weather patterns, and other environmental challenges. The Climate Economy Resilient Communities Program offers communities tools and resources to build resilience against these threats by supporting three to five communities per year working on local climate solutions through a community engagement process, strategic planning, and/or project implementation. In 2023, Arlington Energy Committee was supported through this program to progress their Greenhouse Gases Tracking tool (currently in the final stages of development), with the goal to document current use, project future uses, make informed town decisions toward reducing overall Greenhouse gasses, and ultimately sharing a tool for other small towns to do the same.

## Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund

VCRD launched the Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund in 2021 to support local innovators developing solutions that move Vermont closer to its climate and energy goals. The objective of the fund is to support projects for which a small grant could have a meaningful impact. To date, small grants have been awarded to 43 local innovators. The Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund has supported a diversity of projects such as new draft-stopping window inserts, solar parking lot streetlights, e-bikes at local libraries, an EV police cruiser, construction of a public regenerative “food forest,” energy audit incentives for local businesses, and more. To learn more about projects that were funded in 2021, click on the icons in the [interactive map](#) and read the [2021 Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund Report](#).

## Climate Catalyst Leadership Program

This program brings together local leaders from [Vermont communities](#) for a year-long process focused on building peer connections, strengthening leadership skills and providing project development support. Participants work on implementation of a local project as a focus of their program participation. The goal is to move projects from concept to reality while investing in leaders who provide multi-faceted service to their communities.

## Accessibility: How Can Bennington County Engage?

Here's how Bennington County can dive in:

1. Stay Updated: VCRD regularly hosts summits, workshops, and other events centered around the climate economy. Attending these events can provide insights, networking opportunities, and access to potential funding sources. Sign up for the monthly newsletter [here](#).

2. **Climate Economy Resilient Communities Program:** Communities within the county could proactively seek to join this program with the next open application period in the late fall of 2023. It offers a supporting role in building community resilience.

3. **Community Forums and Visits:** Request to participate in VCRD's community visits. These forums are platforms for broad dialogue, brainstorming, and collaborative action.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development's Climate Economy Initiative supports communities to create a vision for a sustainable, prosperous future. By coming together across disparate programs, towns, and entities, Bennington County can not only address the pressing challenge of climate change but also usher in an era of economic rejuvenation and community resilience.



# Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFAM) - Strengthening Climate Change Resilience in Bennington County



The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFAM) has initiated a series of programs that not only promote sustainable agricultural practices but also bolster resilience against the challenges of climate change. For Bennington County residents, these programs offer both immediate and long-term benefits, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for the community. Here's a breakdown of each program's impact on Bennington County and the significance of their role in climate change resilience:

## Farm Agronomic Practices Program (FAP)

- **Impact:** This program directly combats erosion and land degradation resulting from extreme weather events by paying farmers for practices that improve soil quality and reduce runoff. Healthier soils can absorb and retain more water, reducing flood risks.
- **Why It Matters:** Enhanced soil quality translates to more productive farms, which can boost the local economy. Moreover, with reduced runoff, local waterways are protected, ensuring clean water for all residents. As climate patterns shift, having robust soil health is a frontline defense against unpredictable weather patterns.

## Best Management Practices Program (BMP)

- **Impact:** The BMP program provides funding and services to construct structural improvements on farms that can prevent damage during extreme weather events, ensuring the continuity of local food production.
- **Why It Matters:** A resilient agricultural sector is crucial for food security. By ensuring that farms remain operational even after extreme weather events, the BMP program safeguards local food sources and contributes to the county's economic stability.

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- **Impact:** CREP aids in carbon sequestration and provides a natural barrier against flooding by paying farmers to take land near surface waters out of production and establish vegetative buffers.
- **Why It Matters:** Beyond combating climate change through carbon capture, vegetative buffers enhance local biodiversity. This biodiversity acts as a buffer against pest outbreaks and diseases, ensuring a balanced ecosystem even as climate challenges intensify.

## Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP)

- **Impact:** This program provides financial assistance for farmers to purchase innovative equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and fosters sustainable farming practices.
- **Why It Matters:** Modern, efficient equipment reduces the carbon footprint of the agricultural sector. By supporting this transition, Bennington County takes proactive steps towards climate change mitigation, ensuring a cleaner environment for future generations.

## Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip Program (GWFS)

- **Impact:** This program covers 90% of the costs associated with establishing perennially vegetated grassways, which are designed to prevent soil erosion and improve water quality, especially vital in times of changing rainfall patterns.
- **Why It Matters:** Soil erosion can lead to loss of arable land, reducing the county's agricultural potential. By preventing this, the GWFS program ensures long-term agricultural productivity and food security.

## Pasture and Surface Water Fencing Program (PSWF)

- **Impact:** PSWF provides technical and financial assistance to farmers looking to install practices and infrastructure that exclude livestock from surface waters. By preventing livestock from accessing waterways, this program reduces contamination risks and ensures healthier aquatic ecosystems.

- **Why It Matters:** Clean waterways are essential for both human consumption and ecological balance. This program's efforts directly contribute to the health and well-being of the entire community.

## **Vermont Farmers Ecosystem Stewardship Program (CSP-Assist)**

- **Impact:** This program provides incentive payments to farmers applying to the Conservation Stewardship Program administered by the NRCS, which encourages farmers to adopt environmentally beneficial practices that aid in climate change mitigation.
- **Why It Matters:** Collaborative and sustainable farming practices ensure that the entire community is aligned in its efforts towards a resilient future. As more farmers adopt these practices, the cumulative effect on the environment and climate resilience becomes more pronounced.

## **Vermont Pay for Performance Program (VPFP)**

- **Impact:** The VPFP program enrolls farmers into a web application that tracks phosphorus reductions from improved ecological practices on the farm, paying based on total reductions. By compensating farmers based on phosphorus reductions, this program combats nutrient-driven climate challenges like algal blooms.
- **Why It Matters:** Algal blooms can devastate local aquatic ecosystems, affecting both aquatic life and human activities like fishing. By addressing the root cause, the VPFP program ensures a balanced and thriving aquatic environment.

The VAAFMs programs are intricately linked to building a resilient Bennington County capable of withstanding the challenges of climate change. Understanding why these initiatives matter is the first step in investing in a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future for Bennington County and its residents.



# Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) Strengthening Climate Change Resilience in Bennington County

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was established to serve the seventeen towns and villages within its jurisdiction. The primary mission of the BCRC is to work with and on behalf of these municipalities to foster economic prosperity, build resilient communities, and enhance the quality of life for the region's residents.

## Key Programs and Services:



### Emergency Management Planning

The BCRC provides comprehensive assistance to towns in the development and implementation of emergency management plans, hazard mitigation strategies, and bylaws related to flood hazards and river corridors.

- **Intended Impact:** To ensure that towns have robust plans in place to respond to emergencies, mitigate hazards, and manage flood-prone areas effectively.
- **Why It Matters:** Proper planning and mitigation strategies can save lives, protect property, and ensure that communities can recover quickly from unforeseen events, especially in the face of increasing climate-related challenges.

### Stormwater Master Plans

These plans focus on managing and controlling stormwater runoff, which can lead to flooding and water quality issues.

- **Intended Impact:** To reduce flooding risks and improve water quality by effectively managing stormwater.
- **Why It Matters:** As climate change leads to more frequent and intense rainfall events, managing stormwater becomes crucial to prevent property damage, protect water sources, and ensure the safety of residents.

## Transportation Planning

The BCRC offers various programs to improve transportation infrastructure, from roads and bridges to culverts. This includes grant programs, permit support, and inventories.

- **Intended Impact:** To ensure safe, efficient, and resilient transportation networks that can withstand the challenges posed by climate change.
- **Why It Matters:** Reliable transportation is vital for economic activity, access to services, and overall community well-being. As extreme weather events become more common, having resilient infrastructure is paramount.

## Brownfields Redevelopment Program

This program focuses on the redevelopment of brownfields, which are properties that may be complicated by the presence of hazardous substances or contaminants.

- **Intended Impact:** To transform potentially hazardous sites into safe, productive properties that benefit the community.
- **Why It Matters:** Redeveloping brownfields protects the environment, reduces blight, and promotes economic growth. It also prevents the sprawl of development, preserving green spaces and working lands, which are vital for climate resilience.

## Notable Projects:

- **Lauzon Machine and Engineering:** A testament to the effectiveness of the Brownfields Redevelopment Program, showcasing how once-contaminated sites can be transformed into assets for the community.
- **Former Bennington High School – Benn Hi:** Another successful redevelopment project that underscores the potential of repurposing old structures for new uses, contributing to community revitalization.

The BCRC's programs are intricately linked to building a resilient Bennington County capable of withstanding the challenges of climate change. Understanding why these initiatives matter is the first step in investing in a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future for Bennington County and its residents.

# Batten Kill Watershed Alliance: Building Community and Climate Resilience

Nestled within the verdant landscapes of Vermont, the Batten Kill and its tributaries form an intricate tapestry of waterways that have shaped the region's ecological, cultural, and economic narrative. The Batten Kill Watershed Alliance (BKWA), established in 2001, stands as a sentinel, safeguarding this precious watershed. As we grapple with the escalating challenges of climate change, the alliance's endeavors to ensure the health, vitality, and sustainability of the Batten Kill system have never been more pertinent.

## Our Mission

BKWA's mission is centered on promoting good stewardship practices for the Batten Kill and its tributaries. Through active engagement in river habitat restoration projects and consistent outreach to all stakeholders, the alliance aims to foster community resilience, bolster climate change resilience, and mitigate flood risks. This mission serves as the guiding light for all of BKWA's initiatives, ensuring that every effort aligns with the overarching goal of creating a sustainable and resilient Batten Kill ecosystem.

## Trout Habitat Restoration

The Batten Kill has long been celebrated for its trout-rich waters. The BKWA's Trout Habitat Restoration initiative is a testament to the alliance's commitment to preserving this legacy. This initiative is meticulously designed to enhance the habitats where trout thrive, ensuring their continued presence in the Batten Kill.

## Impact

- The restoration efforts have rejuvenated the aquatic ecosystem, fostering a balanced environment that is resilient to the shocks of climate change. The result? Thriving trout populations that are a testament to the river's vitality.

## Why It Matters

- A flourishing trout habitat is not just about preserving biodiversity; it's about sustaining a legacy. It supports local fishing communities, bolsters tourism, and contributes to a resilient ecosystem capable of withstanding the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change.

## River Dynamics

Rivers are living entities, constantly evolving and adapting. The BKWA's focus on river dynamics is a proactive approach to ensure the river's long-term health, resilience, and adaptability.

### Impact

- By enhancing river dynamics, the alliance has fortified the Batten Kill against extreme weather events and changing climatic patterns. The river now boasts enhanced flood resiliency and a more robust aquatic ecosystem.

### Why It Matters

- A river that flows with harmony and balance is a lifeline for its surrounding communities. Proper river dynamics reduce the risks associated with flooding, safeguard properties, and ensure that the river remains a vibrant hub of ecological and community activity.

## Riparian Tree Planting

Trees are nature's sentinels. The BKWA recognizes their intrinsic value, embarking on tree planting initiatives along the banks of streams and rivers. These trees stabilize banks, reduce erosion, and stand as natural guardians against floods.

### Impact

- Beyond their role as flood barriers, these trees are silent warriors in the fight against climate change, sequestering carbon and enhancing the region's air quality.

### Why It Matters

- In an age where climate change is a looming reality, trees are invaluable allies. They not only fortify the region against floods but also contribute to broader climate resilience, ensuring that the Batten Kill watershed remains a haven of ecological balance.

## Public Engagements

Knowledge is empowerment. Through public presentations, workshops, and interactive sessions, the BKWA bridges the gap between scientific knowledge and community awareness, fostering a well-informed populace that understands the nuances of river conservation.

### Impact

- These engagements have sown the seeds of community stewardship, cultivating a collective consciousness that values and protects the Batten Kill.

### Why It Matters

- An informed community is the backbone of resilience. When individuals understand the stakes, they become active participants in conservation, ensuring a collective, cohesive approach to building resilience.

### Outreach

Through newsletters, educational materials, and community interactions, the BKWA reaches out, spreading the message of stewardship and the importance of proactive conservation.

#### Impact:

- This outreach has fostered a community that is not only aware but also actively involved in safeguarding the Batten Kill.

#### Why It Matters:

- Conservation is a collective endeavor. By nurturing a community that values and actively participates in stewardship, the BKWA ensures that the Batten Kill remains a cherished legacy for generations to come.

### Collaborative Approach

The BKWA's emphasis on collaboration ensures that it harnesses the resources and expertise of various entities, from private individuals to federal institutions. Partnerships amplify the impact of conservation efforts and ensure a comprehensive approach to watershed management. Supporting the BKWA means investing in a future where the community is better equipped to face the uncertainties of climate change, ensuring that the Batten Kill remains a symbol of resilience, natural beauty, and ecological health.

As members of the Community Resilience Forum, you are at the forefront of shaping a resilient future. The Batten Kill Watershed Alliance's endeavors resonate with the ethos of resilience, community stewardship, and proactive conservation. By supporting the BKWA, we are not just preserving a river system; we are crafting a narrative of resilience, community empowerment, and ecological balance. In the face of climate change, such alliances are our beacon, guiding us towards a future where our communities and ecosystems thrive in harmony. Let's champion this cause, ensuring that the Batten Kill remains a symbol of resilience, natural beauty, and ecological health.

# Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Championing Sustainable Land Management and Conservation



The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) stands as a testament to the United States' commitment to sustainable land management and conservation. With roots dating back to the Dust Bowl era, the NRCS has evolved to address the multifaceted challenges of modern agriculture, land degradation, and climate change. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century,

the NRCS's dedication to ensuring sustainable land use, promoting conservation practices, and fostering resilient ecosystems remains unwavering.

## History of the NRCS:

Established in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), the NRCS was born out of a dire need to address the severe soil erosion caused by the Dust Bowl. Over the decades, its mandate expanded to encompass water quality, wildlife habitats, and broader ecological concerns. Renamed the Natural Resource Conservation Service in 1994, the agency has consistently championed the cause of conservation, working hand-in-hand with farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to implement sustainable land management practices.

## Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):

The CSP is designed to reward agricultural producers and landowners for maintaining high standards of conservation and for adopting further sustainable practices. It offers both technical and financial assistance to ensure that land remains productive and sustainable.

### Impact

- Through CSP, thousands of acres of land have been managed sustainably, ensuring soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitats are preserved.

### Why It Matters

- In an era of rapid environmental change, sustainable land management is crucial. CSP ensures that agricultural practices align with conservation goals, leading to a win-win situation for both producers and the environment.

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers, helping them address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, and enhanced wildlife habitats.

### Impact

- EQIP has facilitated the implementation of conservation practices on millions of acres, leading to tangible environmental benefits and sustainable agricultural practices.

### Why It Matters:

- Balancing agricultural productivity with environmental conservation is a challenge. EQIP bridges this gap, ensuring that agricultural practices are both productive and environmentally friendly.

## Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP)

The EWPP is designed to help communities address watershed impairments that pose imminent threats to lives and properties. It offers both technical assistance and funding to restore the watershed.

### Impact:

- Through EWPP, numerous communities have been safeguarded against natural disasters and watershed impairments, ensuring the safety of both residents and the environment.

### Why It Matters

- Natural disasters and watershed impairments can have devastating effects on communities. EWPP ensures that communities are resilient and can bounce back after such events.

## Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities

The CSAF initiative is NRCS's response to the challenges posed by climate change. It promotes practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and ensure sustainable land use.

### Impact

- Through CSAF, agricultural and forestry practices have been realigned to address the challenges of climate change, leading to reduced carbon footprints and enhanced land resilience.

### Why It Matters

- Climate change is the defining challenge of our era. CSAF ensures that agriculture and forestry are part of the solution, not the problem.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service, with its rich history and forward-looking initiatives, stands at the forefront of conservation efforts in the United States. Its programs, rooted in science and community engagement, ensure that the land we depend on is managed sustainably and resiliently. As stakeholders in the future of our environment, it is imperative that we understand, support, and champion the efforts of the NRCS. Their work not only ensures the health of our land but also paves the way for a sustainable and resilient future for all.



# Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) and the Agency of Natural Resources Climate Action Office: Strengthening Bennington County's Resilience

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) and the Agency of Natural Resources Climate Action Office are at the forefront of Vermont's commitment to environmental conservation, sustainability, and resilience. Their combined efforts, especially in Bennington County, are a testament to Vermont's dedication to confronting the multifaceted challenges of climate change, ensuring a resilient future for its residents, and preserving the state's rich natural heritage.



## History and Role in Climate Change Resilience and Flooding

The VTDEC, a Department of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, has a rich history of safeguarding Vermont's air, water, and land resources. Over the years, its mission has evolved, adapting to the changing environmental landscape and the increasing challenges posed by climate change.

The Climate Action Office, established under the Agency of Natural Resources, zeroes in on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing resilience to climate change impacts, and ensuring that Vermont remains a leader in the fight against global warming.

Both agencies have recognized the profound implications of climate change, especially in the context of increased flooding risks and changing weather patterns. Their collaborative efforts in Bennington County and beyond aim to bolster community resilience, promote sustainable practices, and ensure the well-being of Vermont's ecosystems and residents.

## Diving Deep into Tactical Basin Planning

Tactical Basin Planning is a comprehensive approach that brings together local stakeholders, state agencies, and regional partners to address water quality challenges in specific watersheds. The process is structured as:

1. **Assessment:** Identifying and prioritizing water quality issues.
2. **Planning:** Designing strategies and actions to address these issues.
3. **Implementation:** Carrying out the planned actions.

4. Measurement: Evaluating the effectiveness of the actions.

## Spotlight on Projects

- Stormwater Infrastructure Mapping: This initiative in Bennington mapped stormwater infrastructure, leading to actionable recommendations that became crucial for the town's stormwater master plan.

- Culvert Replacement: A forward-thinking approach where undersized culverts were replaced with larger ones. This ensures they can manage increased water flow during heavy rainfall, significantly reducing road washouts' risk.

## Programs and Initiatives in Bennington County

### Resilience & Adaptation

#### VEM Flood Resilient Communities Fund

- Impact: Provides funding to communities for projects that enhance flood resilience.
- Why It Matters: Ensures communities can recover quickly from flooding events, safeguarding both property and lives.

### Clean Energy & Energy Efficiency

#### Vermont Community Energy Dashboard

- Impact: An online platform that tracks and encourages renewable energy projects.
- Why It Matters: Empowers communities to take charge of their energy future, promoting sustainability and reducing carbon footprints.

### Transportation & Land Use

#### Go! Vermont

- Impact: A resource that promotes sustainable transportation options.
- Why It Matters: Reduces greenhouse gas emissions and encourages healthier, more active lifestyles.

## Understanding Best Practices and Funding Opportunities

To further elucidate the efforts of the VTDEC and the Climate Action Office, it's essential to delve into the best practices they advocate for and the funding opportunities available to support these practices. The following table provides a concise overview of these practices, their impact on the community, and the funding sources that bolster their implementation.

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Available Funding</b>
Stormwater Management	Reduces runoff, combats flooding, and ensures water quality.	Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid, Ecosystem Restoration Program.
Riparian Buffer Planting	Prevents erosion, filters pollutants, and provides a habitat for wildlife along riverbanks.	Watershed Grants, Trees for Streams Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.
Culvert Replacement	Minimizes the risk of road washouts during heavy rainfall and facilitates aquatic organism passage.	Better Roads Program and Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid.
Floodplain Restoration	Restores natural floodplain functions, reducing flood risks and enhancing ecosystem health.	Ecosystem Restoration Program, Watershed Grants, and State Wetlands Program.

The combined endeavors of the VTDEC, the Climate Action Office, and the Vermont Clean Water Initiative are instrumental in shaping a resilient and sustainable future for Bennington County. Their initiatives not only address the immediate challenges posed by climate change but also lay the groundwork for long-term environmental and community well-being. For the residents of Bennington County, understanding, supporting, and participating in these initiatives is not just about preserving the environment; it's about ensuring a prosperous and secure future for all.

# Bennington's Resilience Blueprint: Strategies & Insights from White River NRCD

The White River Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD) is proud to present this resource guide to the Bennington County Community Resilience Forum. As one of the 14 distinguished Natural Resources Conservation Districts in Vermont, our roots trace back to the 1939 Soil Conservation Act. Originally established to aid farms in combating soil erosion, our mission has since expanded. Today, we assist all resident land stewards in enhancing their environmental stewardship through the implementation of conservation practices and environmental education on a wide array of natural resource topics. Our services span across natural resource education, outreach, and support, catering to landowners, stewards, residents, municipalities, and organizations in 23 towns across Orange, Windsor, and Addison counties.



White River  
Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
District

## Historical Context:

Conservation districts have a storied history that can be traced back to the 1930s. Originating from the Dust Bowl era, these districts were formed to tackle severe soil erosion and other land degradation challenges. Hugh Hammond Bennett, the founder of the Soil Conservation Service (which later became the NRCS), recognized the overlap between the work of conservation districts and flood resilience as early as 1936. Over the decades, conservation districts have been pivotal in shaping land use planning and policy development. With their roots in grassroots movements, these districts have catalyzed positive environmental transformations at the local level.

## Transitioning to Modern Challenges:

While the historical roots of conservation districts are deeply embedded in soil conservation, the challenges of the modern era demand a broader perspective. Climate change, urbanization, and changing land use patterns have brought forth new challenges. Addressing these requires a multi-faceted approach, combining the lessons of the past with innovative solutions for the future. This is where Community Resilience Focus group members can play a pivotal role, focusing on key areas to enhance their community's overall resilience.

## Understanding Community Resilience

Community resilience embodies a community's collective capacity to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from adverse situations. Enhancing such resilience demands a multifaceted strategy, and the White River NRCD is dedicated to contributing to this cause.

## Focus on Local Working Groups and Opportunities for Locally Led Conservation

- **Purpose:** Local working groups play a crucial role in shaping local funding pools, ensuring that federal funds, especially those from the NRCS, are effectively utilized within the community. These groups, along with other locally led conservation initiatives, provide a platform for community members to voice their concerns, share insights, and actively participate in the decision-making process.
- **Engagement:** Active community involvement is paramount. Engaging with local stakeholders, understanding their needs, and incorporating their feedback is essential for the success of conservation efforts. Their insights, especially regarding staple needs and perennial food production, are invaluable in shaping future planning and conservation strategies.
- **Locally Led Conservation:** Emphasizing locally led conservation ensures that the unique needs and challenges of each community are addressed. By empowering local stakeholders and leveraging their expertise, conservation efforts can be tailored to have the maximum positive impact on the environment and the community.

## Addressing Flooding and Climate Change

- **Holistic View:** Beyond the immediate concern of flooding, it's crucial to grasp the broader challenges posed by climate change and its ramifications on various sectors, notably agriculture.
- **Agricultural Resilience:** Farms can be pivotal pieces of flood resilience infrastructure when managed with soil health at the center. By minimizing soil compaction, maximizing water infiltration, and augmenting plant biodiversity, farms can become both economically sustainable and resilient to flooding. Healthy soils can absorb and retain more water, reducing the risk of flooding during heavy rainfall events.

Moreover, diverse ecosystems on farms can act as buffers, further mitigating flood risks.

## Soil Health as a Cornerstone

- **Importance:** Soil health is the linchpin when discussing landscape functions. Robust soil can counteract many challenges, including flooding.
- **Public Role:** The public can be instrumental by urging decision-makers and funders to adopt holistic and integrated strategies. This encompasses supporting farms that strike a balance between economic viability and environmental sustainability.

## Overcoming Programmatic Challenges

- **Current Landscape:** A plethora of programs and policies exist, many of which overlap and occasionally conflict. This results in inefficiencies and squandered resources.
- **Desiloing Programs:** It's imperative to dismantle silos and ensure that programs targeting similar audiences collaborate and communicate. This encompasses not only environmental or agricultural programs but also housing, food, and other community support initiatives.

## Conservation Districts – Bridging the Gap

- **Unique Position:** Unlike many agencies, conservation districts are not confined to silos. They engage with a diverse range of stakeholders and possess a holistic understanding of the community's needs.
- **Advocacy:** Conservation districts can be instrumental in championing integrated and comprehensive strategies, ensuring that community voices resonate and that resources are deployed effectively.

The White River NRCDC remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering resilient communities. Through active community engagement, informed policy development, and collaboration, we envision a future where our community not only withstands challenges but thrives amidst them. We invite the Bennington County Community Resilience Forum to join hands with us, leveraging our combined expertise for the collective betterment of our community. Together, we can pave the way for a sustainable and resilient future.

# Land Care Cooperative: A Vision for Sustainable Agriculture and Community Resilience

For years, Land Care Cooperative owner-member farmers, scientists, local institutions, and allies have been building up "Watershed Contracting," a bottom-up change program and business model for effectively healing our watershed homes and practicing neighborly economics and economic democracy.



Catchment Contracting is rooted in community care and cooperation, landscape-feedback science, harnessing the power of money creation "of, by and for the people," to hire organized, competent land stewards to heal land at the "cost of production plus profit," solidarity, and data cooperativism.

Alongside working-class, yeoman farmer, peasant, and Indigenous peoples around the world, this model rejects the enclosure and financialization of nature for sale as carbon credits and other "ecosystem services and biodiversity credits" to Wall Street speculators and polluting corporations and provides a viable community alternative to healing the land through Community and Locally Led economic development.

This session will squarely address the critical strategy and governance questions of both; "where will the money come from," and "where does money come from?"



## The Vermont Ripsower: A Testament to Innovation

One tool innovated by the LCC is the Vermont Ripsower. The VT Ripsower was developed in the milking parlors and pastures of working Vermont farms over the last 18 years. We use it as one component within a strategic framework to heal land, grow topsoil, increase biodiversity, infiltrate and hold water, feed livestock, pollinators and other wildlife, and grow nutrient-dense food.

### Soil Health and Structure

- The VT Ripsower is used to physically loosen soil, plant diverse forbs, and introduce biostimulants, helping catalyze soil aggregation and deep root growth. to enhance infiltration rates accessing deeper minerals and water.

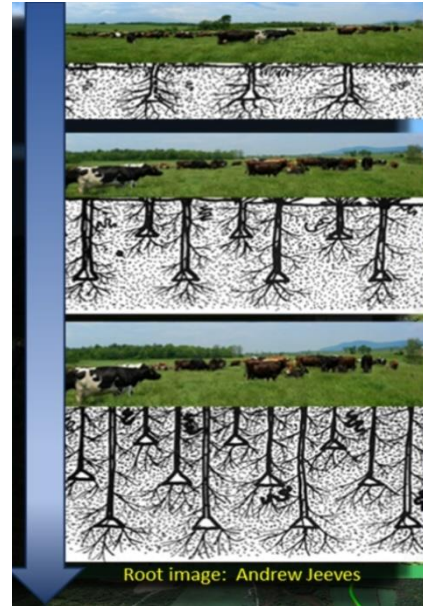


## Water Management

- Used within a holistic land care management program, the Ripsower contributes to maximizing infiltration, reducing surface water flooding risks, and enhances the soil's water-holding capacity, offering resilience during droughts.

## Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

- The Ripsower promotes the growth of diverse plant species, crucial for soil health, pollinator food and habitat, and overall landscape function.



## Economic and Livestock Benefits

- The Ripsower can support the growth of high-quality forage, leading to better livestock performance and reduced costs for farmers.

## Community Engagement and Education

The Land Care Cooperative's work combined with their innovative tools like the VT Ripsower, offers a holistic approach to healing the land community (including our human community and our local economies). Their efforts align with the goals of creating a sustainable and resilient future, not just for the land but also for the community it nurtures.





# LAND CARE COOPERATIVE

Presents

## The Vermont Ripsower



Thanks for your request for a quote and information about the Vermont Ripsower.

The VT Ripsower is for land stewards working to grow top-quality forages as they minimize inputs, grow topsoil, infiltrate every drop, and heal the land.

The VT Ripsower interplants deep-rooted flowering forbs into pastures for high yield and quality feed for livestock, soil organisms and pollinators.

The VT Ripsower shatters compacted soil layers, maximizes infiltration of precipitation and groundwater recharge, and contributes to farm and community security from flood, drought, fire, heat and hunger.

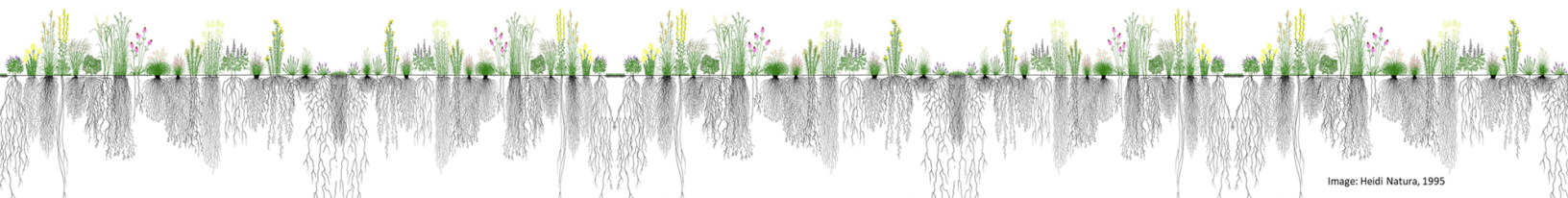


### The VT Ripsower simultaneously

- Interplants diverse blends of forbs - or any seed blends - into pastures
- Primes seed in-furrow with liquid biostimulants and biofertilizers
- Shatters compacted soil

The VT Ripsower was conceived and refined on Vermont grazing dairy and beef farms over the last 18 years to meet our specific local needs.

Used with knowledge and skill, the VT Ripsower is a biodiversity and soil-health “defibrillator” in a farmer-led program to leave deep-topsoil farms and watersheds for future generations.





**The VT Ripsower pulls surprisingly easily behind most tractors over 50 horsepower.**

4WD tractors typically provide the best traction, especially on smaller tractors, but larger 2WD tractors also do the job.

Clay soils require higher hp tractors than other soil textures, with 25 hp per shank suggested. It's worth it. Clay responds well and quickly to the full ripsowing process, which incrementally loosens and fills subsoil with diverse roots to increasing depths with each new ripsowing, and contributes to functional conversion of mineral subsoil to new, aggregated, root and worm-filled topsoil.



**Lots of rocks? Not a problem.** The VT Ripsower's 24" shanks swivel around obstacles and instantly hydraulically reset when they hit any obstruction. ***The VT Ripsower works in soils ranging from compacted clay to stony mountain glacial till, gravel, and silt loam riverbottom.***



When you purchase a VT Ripsower, you get access to **ongoing educational events around Vermont**, and become a part of a growing learning community of land stewards working to heal land like the future depends on it.





Ready to order? There are two VT Ripsower models to choose from:

- **The Land Care Cooperative 2024 3-shanker (LCC 23-3)**
  - Recommended for tractors <125 hp
- **The Land Care Cooperative 2024 5-shanker (LCC 23-5)**
  - Recommended for tractors >125 hp

**Features:**

- Easy hookup, pin-hitch drawbar
- Hydraulic depth control wheels for field-work and road transport
- Hydraulic reset 24" subsoiler shanks, 30" on center
- Sponge-feed seedbox for planting any blend of seed
- Rolling baskets for flattening furrows
- Baker boot openers for placing seed in soil
- Two 55-gallon tanks, plus biofertilizer liquid injection system
- Replacement "Wombat" tips and leading edge knives



**Price:**

- LCC 24-3: \$27,867 plus applicable taxes & shipping
- LCC 24-5: \$38,607 plus applicable taxes & shipping
- Prices subject to change after August 1, 2023

**Terms:**

- 50% non-refundable down-payment at time of order
- Full payment of balance due upon pickup
- Construction may take up to six months, depending on time of order

To place your order, contact the Land Care Cooperative at  
[landcarecoop@gmail.com](mailto:landcarecoop@gmail.com)



# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

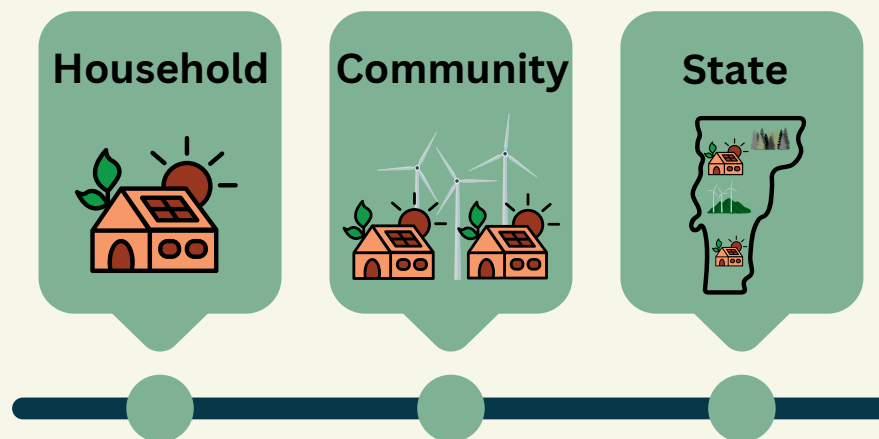
## Resilience and Adaptation

Vermont is already feeling the impacts of climate change - shorter winters, droughts, and more intense rain events. The 2021 Climate Action Plan identifies state actions to cut climate pollution and make communities more resilient. The Climate Action Office wants to hear what actions and programs are most important to Vermonters as we work to implement the Plan and develop future iterations of it.

### RESILIENCE IN VERMONT

In Vermont, building resilience to climate change means taking steps to change our behavior, systems, and in some cases our way of life to prepare for the impacts of climate change. This might mean moving our homes out of the way of rivers that are likely to flood, checking on elderly neighbors when there is a heat wave, or protecting wild places so that plants and animals under stress from changing temperatures have places to live.

### LEVELS OF RESILIENCE



### BENEFITS

Even if we do everything possible to slow down climate change, the impacts will still be felt by people, particularly those already marginalized and vulnerable. Adapting to climate change now will **save lives; save money; reduce risk from future disasters; and improve quality of life for people, plants, and animals.**

# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Resilience and Adaptation

### HOUSEHOLD PROGRAMS

**VEM Flood Resilient Communities Fund** reduces flood hazards while increasing water quality and public safety through at-risk property buyouts.

**NOFA-VT Farmer Resilience Grants** distributes money directly to farmers to fund projects that will improve long-term resilience.

**NOAA Climate Resilience Activity Book** is an activity book accessible to all ages to help facilitate conversation about and explain climate resilience in a community.

### COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

**VT Urban & Community Forestry Program** has funding for municipalities to create more resilient urban tree networks.

**VDH Health Equity and Community Design Technical Assistance Pilot** gives capacity and resources to communities to develop healthy community designs centered on equity.

**VDH Hot Weather Preparedness** Follow these steps and guidance from the Dept of Health to make your family and community more resilient to hot weather.

### OTHER PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

**Current Use Program** provides incentives to keep agricultural or forest land undeveloped through valuation and taxation.

**US Climate Resilience Toolkit** outlines steps to identify and address pressing climate-related vulnerabilities and risk.



**PROGRAM LINKS**

### VERMONT CLIMATE ACTION OFFICE:

[www.climatechange.vermont.gov](http://www.climatechange.vermont.gov)

[anr.cao@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.cao@vermont.gov)

# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Transportation

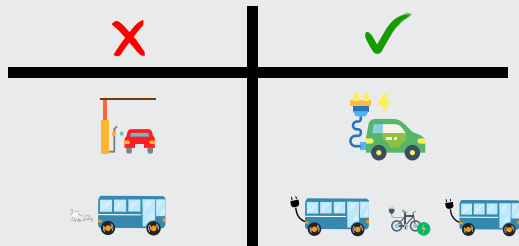
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### TRANSPORTATION IN VERMONT

As a rural state, public transportation is restricted to urban areas. Vermonters travel in their own cars that use fossil fuels like gasoline. Burning fossil fuels releases harmful air pollution and greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. To do our part to address climate change, we must lower emissions from transportation, which is our largest contributor to climate pollution in VT. Transitioning to electric vehicles, considering micros public transit for rural areas, and living in villages can help lower emissions in from transportation in Vermont.

### TRANSPORTATION EMISSION

#### REDUCTION PLAN



- An **individual** can decrease their own transportation emissions by relying less on fossil-fuel vehicles.
- A **community** can decrease its emissions by increasing access to public transportation and implementing new land use planning.

### BENEFITS

**Fewer Emissions** - When cars run on electricity instead of gasoline, they produce significantly less climate pollution.

**Improved Public Health** - Burning fewer fossil fuels decreases air pollutants and improves overall public health.

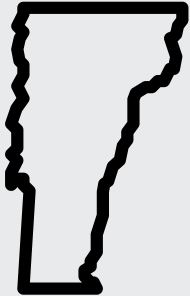
**Money Saved** - A rural driver can save at least \$1500 each year by switching to an electric car.

**Increased Equity** - Increasing access to micro-public transit makes it easier for rural Vermonters to drive less.

# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Transportation

### GET HELP PURCHASING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE



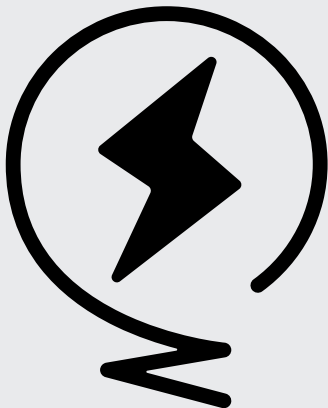
#### VERMONT STATE INCENTIVES

Up to \$8000 on eligible new EV purchase at point of sale



#### FEDERAL INCENTIVES

Up to \$7500 tax credit



#### ELECTRIC UTILITY INCENTIVES

Rebates and bill credits (varies by Utility)

### OTHER WAYS TO BE MOBILE AND CLIMATE-FRIENDLY

Carpool - share your car or get a ride to save money and reduce pollution  
Carshare - for when you need a car, why own when you can share?



Work from home - save money and time



Reduce the cost and environmental impact of your commute!  
Vermont's seven regional bus companies help you get around in your community and across the state.



PROGRAM LINKS:

### VERMONT CLIMATE ACTION OFFICE:

[www.climatechange.vermont.gov](http://www.climatechange.vermont.gov)  
[anr.cao@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.cao@vermont.gov)



# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Renewable Energy

Vermont is already feeling the impacts of climate change - shorter winters, droughts, and more intense rain events. The 2021 Climate Action Plan identifies state actions to cut climate pollution and make communities more resilient. The Climate Action Office wants to hear what actions and programs are most important to Vermonters as we work to implement the Plan and develop future iterations of it.

### ELECTRICITY IN VERMONT

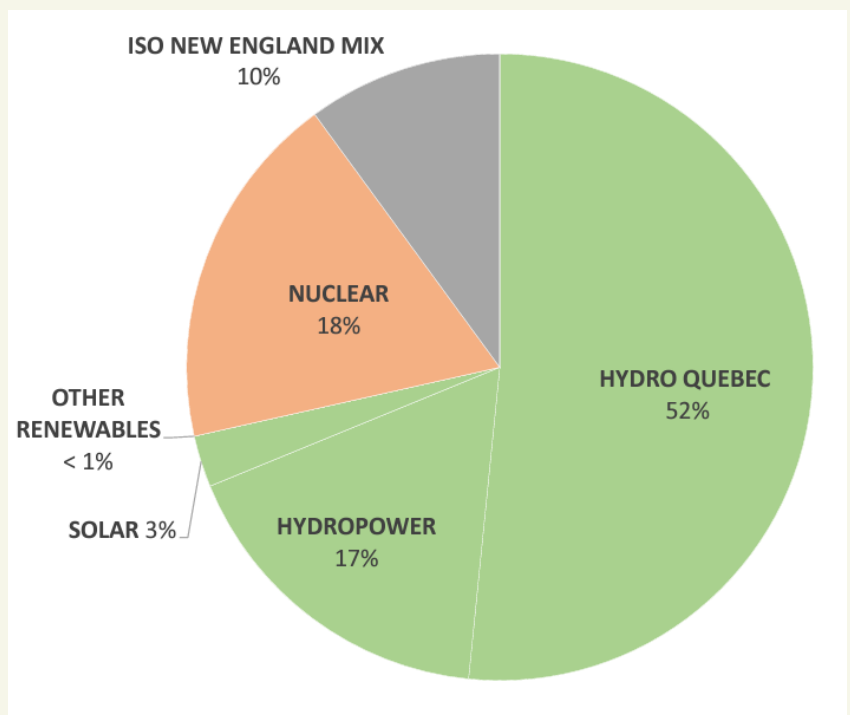
Electricity is a critical source of energy that fuels many of our daily activities, and increasingly helps heat our homes, businesses, and powers our transportation. Every year more of that electricity comes from renewable sources like solar, wind, hydroelectric power, or biomass. Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard (RES) requires electric utilities to purchase an increasing amount of renewable electricity over time and develop renewable electricity in Vermont.

### VERMONT'S ELECTRICITY MIX

Approximately one-third of Vermont's electricity use is met by in-state generation. The remainder is imported from other New England states, New York, and Quebec and includes additional types beyond what we generate in state, including natural gas (which emits greenhouse gases) and nuclear power (which doesn't).

Renewable energy certificates (RECs) are used to establish "renewability". This allows

Vermont's final electricity mix to be 73% renewable and 90% non-GHG emitting.



The above graphic illustrates Vermont's electricity portfolio which includes in-state generation, hydro Quebec, and additional electricity purchased from the "ISO New England Mix" which is the bundle of electricity generated in New England. In 2022 it was 52% natural gas, 26% nuclear, 12% renewables, 7% hydropower, and 2% oil.



# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Renewable Energy

### CONSUMER FOCUSED ELECTRICITY PROGRAMS

- Net-metering - get credit for electricity you generate
- Affordable Community Renewable Energy (ACRE) - access to low-cost renewable electricity to disadvantaged communities
- Energy Efficiency - reduce your electricity and heating costs
- Energy Transformation (RES Tier III)



**PROGRAM LINKS**

### ELECTRIC VEHICLE PROGRAMS

#### Replace Your Ride Program

\$3000 for each scrapped internal combustion engine when buying a new or used electric vehicle

#### MileageSmart Program

Up to \$5000 towards a used high efficiency vehicle for low and moderate income buyers

#### State Incentive Programs

State money available based on income for purchase of all-electric or hybrid plug-in vehicles

#### Federal Tax Credit

Many new and used electric vehicle purchases are eligible for federal tax credits through the Inflation Reduction Act.

### VERMONT CLIMATE ACTION OFFICE:

[www.climatechange.vermont.gov](http://www.climatechange.vermont.gov)  
[anr.cao@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.cao@vermont.gov)

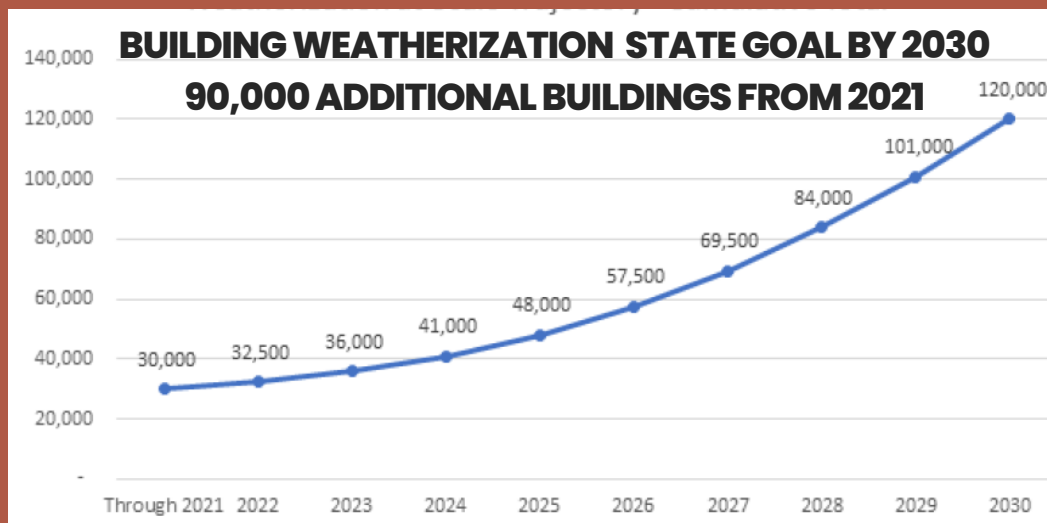
# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Buildings

Vermont is already feeling the impacts of climate change – shorter winters, droughts, and more intense rain events. The 2021 Climate Action Plan identifies state actions to cut climate pollution and make communities more resilient. The Climate Action Office wants to hear what actions and programs are most important to Vermonters as we work to implement the Plan and develop future iterations of it.

### BUILDINGS IN VERMONT

Vermont has some of the oldest homes in the country resulting in poor insulation, heat loss, and older types of heating systems. Building efficiency refers to the ways energy and resources are used by a structure. Supporting building efficiency through weatherizing our homes and fuel-switching, Vermont can reduce climate pollution while making our homes more comfortable, healthier, and less costly to heat and cool.



### WHAT IS...?

**Weatherization** – Simple measures like weather stripping and caulking to whole home air sealing and insulation

**Fuel Switching** – Changing the fuel used for heat; for example from an oil or gas furnace to an electric heat pump

### BENEFITS

**Saves Money** – Well insulated homes cost less to heat and cool. Heat pumps cost less to operate than gas or oil heat

**Increases home comfort** – No more cold drafts!

**Healthier homes** – Effective insulation and proper ventilation improves indoor air quality

# CLIMATE ACTION IN VERMONT

## Buildings

### WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Provides no-cost home energy audit and weatherization services to eligible households through 5 regional community action organizations:

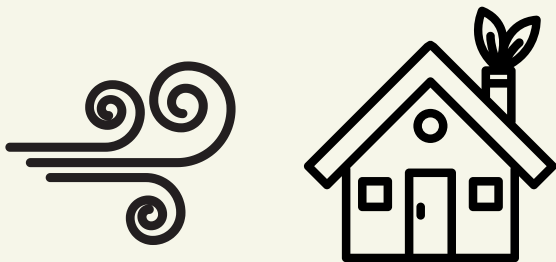
**Bennington Regional Opportunity Center**

**Capstone Community Action**

**Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity**

**Northeast Employment and Training Organization**

**Southeastern Vermont Community Action**



### ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

The **Energy Efficient Utility Program** provides energy efficiency options, including fuel switching and weatherization, services to homeowners and businesses throughout Vermont.

- **Efficiency Vermont (statewide)**  
**(888) 921-5990**
- **Burlington Electric Department (for BED customers)**  
**(802) 865-7362**
- **Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. (for VGS customers)**  
**(802) 863-4511**



**PROGRAM LINKS**

### VERMONT CLIMATE ACTION OFFICE:

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[anr.cao@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.cao@vermont.gov)

# Vermont Climate Action Plan

## SUMMARY



### The Vermont Climate Action Plan

Vermont and the world are facing the impacts of climate change and it's time to act. The initial Vermont Climate Action Plan, released on December 1, 2021, outlines steps to cut climate pollution and help Vermonters prepare for extreme weather and other impacts caused by climate change.

Vermont must get ready for a changing climate and cut its climate pollution, such as carbon and methane emissions, in half by 2030 to meet the target in Vermont's Global Warming Solutions Act. To do this, Vermont will need to prioritize helping the people who will be most affected by climate change.

The Legislature established the Vermont Climate Council to draft the plan. As they drafted the plan, the Climate Council incorporated ideas and feedback from a wide range of Vermonters. In addition, the Climate Council developed this plan in coordination with the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan (released November 2021), which details energy opportunities and challenges for the state. Five subcommittees shaped the plan: Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Agriculture and Ecosystems, Cross Sector Mitigation, Just Transitions and Science and Data.

The initial Vermont Climate Action Plan is a first step in climate action and will be updated at least every four years. The plan includes an implementation section for legislators and other state-level stakeholders to inform decision-making. The Climate Council will continue to build out the framework for measuring and assessing progress that government, nonprofit, private sector and municipal partners across the state can use to evaluate their impacts in achieving plan goals.



Vermonters must be part of determining and implementing solutions to climate change. The Just Transitions subcommittee created *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition* to provide a framework for the Council and subcommittees to evaluate, adjust and prioritize recommendations based on how they will impact Vermont's impacted and frontline communities including those who are highly exposed to climate risks; experience oppression and racism, are excluded from opportunities or have less resources to adapt to climate and economic change; bear the brunt of pollution and negative effects from fossil fuels and extractive economies and are more likely to experience a job transition as Vermont addresses climate change.

## Guiding Principles for a Just Transition

- Ensuring **inclusive, transparent, and innovative engagement** in the development of the plan and associated policies and program.
- Creating **accountable and restorative** recommendations that recognize inequality and seek to resolve them using clearly identified strategies.
- Moving at **the speed of trust** to provide adequate time to incorporate people's voices and prepare Vermonters for the transition to a sustainable climate future.
- Incorporating **solidarity** to create inclusionary spaces for all traditions and cultures, particularly for Indigenous communities, recognizing them as integral to a healthy and vibrant Vermont.
- Prioritizing the **most impacted first** through recommendations that address the needs of impacted and frontline communities first, providing the greatest benefits of transitions to these communities.
- Developing **supports for workers, families, and communities** that consider and plan for potential impacts on workers, families and their communities based on the implementation of Vermont's Climate Action Plan.

## Climate Change in Vermont

The last decade was the warmest on record. The disruptions are already being felt, from extremely hot days in the summer to increasingly severe storms. If action isn't taken soon, when young Vermonters reach retirement age, summer in Vermont will feel similar to northwest Georgia, with more than 17 days a year exceeding 95°F.

Climate change presents many risks for Vermont, as the [Vermont Climate Assessment](#) shows. Not everyone is affected equally. This includes outdoor workers, low-income community members, BIPOC Vermonters, the old and young, people with health conditions or a disability, LGBTQ2 community members and others.



## Here's what Vermont is facing:

- **More rain and flooding:** Precipitation will increase and become more frequent and intense, particularly in mountainous areas with an 80% increase in the likelihood of flooding threatening homes, businesses, infrastructure, communication and transportation systems.
- **Changes to agriculture:** Shifts in growing season lengths and more rain will complicate growing conditions for many crops, including apples and maple syrup, increasing the likelihood of crop damage or crop failure. Rising temperatures can also lead to heat-stress for livestock.
- **Different forests:** Ecosystems will be increasingly threatened by invasive species and shifts in the seasons.

Extreme weather events disrupt lives, and place people, communities, farms, forests, waterways, businesses and livelihoods at risk. At the same time, tackling the challenge of climate change presents opportunities. Reducing emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change improves people's health, protects Vermont's farms, forests, and water bodies, and supports new jobs in clean energy.

## ENERGY ECONOMY AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO CLIMATE ACTION

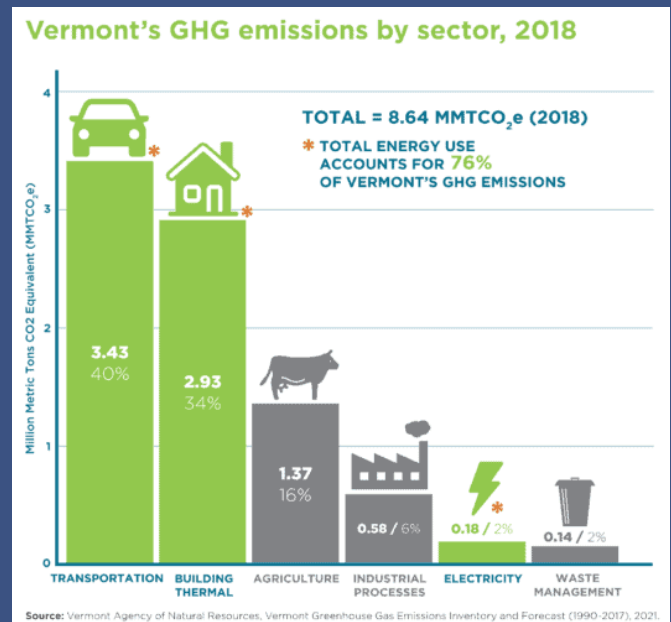
Vermont's current dependence on fossil fuels leads to high and unpredictable energy costs for Vermont households and businesses. Some are more burdened by energy costs than others. For example, renters and low-income Vermonters pay a greater percentage of their income for energy and rural households tend to spend more on transportation.

Transitioning off fossil fuels presents significant opportunities for Vermonters including lower energy costs, greater investment in the regional economy and more high-paying jobs in the weatherization, electricity and clean energy sectors.

With federal, state and utility incentives, the up-front costs of electric or renewable energy options can often be lower than costs for new fossil fuel equipment and less expensive to operate. For example, electric vehicles can save rural Vermonters more than \$1,500 per year on average to operate, require less maintenance and cost less due to incentives.

Delivering clean energy is also an opportunity for local energy providers, helping home and business owners weatherize buildings and install heat pumps or other alternatives. In 2020, clean energy jobs made up 6 percent of total employment in Vermont, with the median wage being higher than the statewide median. Growing this sector can be a win for the local economy, workers, and Vermont households.

*In Vermont, emissions come from the following sources and are addressed in the Climate Action Plan:*



# Vermont Climate Action Plan Pathways and Strategies

The Vermont Climate Action Plan is organized into five impact areas:









The criteria used to evaluate strategies in the Vermont Climate Action Plan included the ability to reduce climate pollution and prepare for climate impacts, cost effectiveness, and how actions will have the most benefit and harm reduction for frontline communities.

A summary of each impact area is outlined in the Pathways, Strategies and Actions table. For more information including the cost effectiveness, co-benefits and feasibility of the actions visit <https://climatechange.vermont.gov>.

# Overview of Water Quality Financial Assistance Programs

AGR.WaterQuality@Vermont.gov // 802-828-2431





PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	DUE DATE	MORE INFORMATION
<p><b>Farm Agronomic Practices Program</b></p> <p><b>FAP</b></p>	<p>Financial assistance to Vermont farms for implementation of soil-based agronomic practices that improve soil quality and reduce runoff and erosion. Financial assistance for educational or instructional activities also available. <b>Per/acre payment rates based on practice type.</b></p>	<p>At least 30 days prior to practice implementation. Cover cropping applications due by August 1</p>	<p>Agriculture.vermont.gov/FAP Sonia Howlett: 802-522-4655</p> 
<p><b>Best Management Practices Program</b></p> <p><b>BMP</b></p>	<p>Technical and financial assistance program focusing on engineered and structural on-farm improvements which protect or promote water quality. <b>Up to 90% State cost share towards eligible practices &amp; expenses.</b></p>	<p>April 1 priority due date. Applications continually accepted.</p>	<p>Agriculture.vermont.gov/BMP Emma Redel: 802-261-5628 OR Ellen Friedrich: 802-261-5629</p> 
<p><b>Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program</b></p> <p><b>CREP</b></p>	<p>Technical and financial assistance program designed to reduce sediment runoff and improve water quality by removing land from agricultural production and establishing vegetative buffers. <b>Up to 100% cost share towards implementation costs, plus incentive, annual rental, &amp; maintenance payments.</b></p>	<p>Program inquiries accepted on a first come first serve basis</p>	<p>Agriculture.vermont.gov/CREP Ben Gabos: 802-461-3814</p> 
<p><b>Capital Equipment Assistance Program</b></p> <p><b>CEAP</b></p>	<p>Financial assistance for new or innovative equipment that will improve water quality, improve manure management, separate phosphorus (P) from manure, or decrease greenhouse gas emissions. <b>Funding limits dependent on equipment type. Up to 90% State cost share.</b></p>	<p>Applications due by November 1</p>	<p>Agriculture.Vermont.gov/CEAP Sonia Howlett: 802-522-4655</p> 
<p><b>Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip Program</b></p> <p><b>GWFS</b></p>	<p>Technical and financial assistance to address erosion and surface runoff through the establishment of perennially vegetated and harvestable grassed waterways, filter strips, and critical source area seedings. <b>Per acre incentive payments and up to 90% State cost share for implementation costs.</b></p>	<p>Program inquiries accepted on a first come first serve basis</p>	<p>Agriculture.Vermont.gov/GWFS Ellen Friedrich: 802-261-5629</p> 
<p><b>Pasture and Surface Water Fencing Program</b></p> <p><b>PSWF</b></p>	<p>Pasture management technical and financial assistance to Vermont farmers to improve water quality and on-farm livestock exclusion from surface waters statewide. <b>Up to 90% State cost share for implementation costs.</b></p>	<p>Program inquiries accepted on a first come first serve basis</p>	<p>Agriculture.Vermont.gov/PSWF Mary Montour: 802-461-6087</p> 



# Overview of Water Quality Financial Assistance Programs

AGR.WaterQuality@Vermont.gov // 802-828-2431



PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	DUE DATE	MORE INFORMATION
<b>Vermont Farmers Ecosystem Stewardship Program</b> <b>CSP-Assist</b>	Supplemental financial assistance to support farmers to enroll in the USDA-NRCS Conservation Stewardship program (CSP). <b>Payment for completing CSP assessment. Additional payment for signing CSP contract.</b>	Applications due by November.  Funding on first come first serve basis.	Agriculture.vermont.gov/CSP-Assist Noah Gilbert-Fuller: 802-505-3407 
<b>Vermont Pay for Performance Program</b> <b>VPFP</b>	Innovative, performance-based program which provides financial compensation for reducing phosphorus (P) losses from farms. <b>Payment based on modeled P reductions across farm operation.</b>	Applications accepted in January	Agriculture.vermont.gov/VPFP Brodie Haenke: 802-636-7852 

## Additional Financial and Technical Service Providers for Agricultural Water Quality Assistance

ASSISTANCE PROVIDER	CONTACT
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Find your local NRCS office at <a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center">www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center</a>
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)	802-828-3250 OR <a href="http://www.VHCB.org">www.VHCB.org</a>
Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) & your local Conservation District	<a href="http://www.vacd.org">www.vacd.org</a> OR Find your local conservation district at <a href="http://www.vacd.org/contact-nrcds/">www.vacd.org/contact-nrcds/</a>
University of Vermont (UVM) Extension	802-656-2990 or 866-622-2990 Contact your local Extension office at <a href="http://www.uvm.edu/extension/contact-us">www.uvm.edu/extension/contact-us</a>
Your local Farmers Coalition and/or Watershed Alliance	<a href="http://www.cvfc-vt.com">www.cvfc-vt.com</a> <a href="http://www.farmerswatershedalliance.org">www.farmerswatershedalliance.org</a> <a href="http://www.crwfa.org">www.crwfa.org</a>



# EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

## Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) which responds to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is not necessary for a national emergency to be declared for an area to be eligible for assistance.

The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters. All projects must have a project sponsor.

NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90 percent within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

## Type of Work Authorized

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard life and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- debris-clogged waterways,
- unstable streambanks,
- severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure,
- wind-borne debris removal, and
- damaged upland sites stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

The program can include purchasing floodplain easements. These easements restore, protect, maintain, and enhance the functions and values of the floodplain, including associated wetlands and riparian areas. They also conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge, as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, and the results of erosion.

EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. NRCS completes a Damage Survey Report which provides a site-by-site investigation of the work and measures necessary to protect life and property from additional flooding and soil erosion. NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats. Should sponsors want to increase the level of protection, the sponsor will be responsible for paying 100 percent of the costs of the upgrade and additional work.



*Due to extreme rainfall on October 31, 2019, Lewis Creek in the Town of Bristol, Vermont, had extensive flood flows which caused bank erosion that endangered a two garage and residence.*

## Eligibility

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but must be represented by a project sponsor.

Sponsors include legal subdivisions of the State, such as a city, county, general improvement district, conservation district, or any Native American tribe or tribal organization.

## Sponsor's Obligations

Sponsors are responsible for:

- providing land rights to implement repair work
- securing all necessary permits
- furnishing the local cost share
- accomplishing required works of improvement to remove the imminent threat to life and property
- performing any necessary operation and maintenance



After EWP repairs, the streambank has been stabilized to prevent further bank erosion and danger to the buildings.

### Criteria for Assistance

All EWP works of improvement must reduce threat to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; and be technically sound.

Property is defined as any artificial structure permanently affixed to the land such as, but not limited to: houses, buildings, roads, utilities, structures, dams. Standing timber, orchards, growing crops, other agronomic crops are not considered property under the EWP Program.

### How Do I Obtain Assistance?

If your land has suffered severe damage that may qualify for the EWP Program, you should contact your local NRCS office and request assistance. City, county, state governments, flood and water control districts, and soil and water conservation districts are the most common sponsors of EWP projects. More information is available from NRCS offices throughout the United States and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands areas.

### Emergency Watershed Protection Cost Share

The NRCS contribution toward the implementation of emergency measures may not exceed 75 percent of the construction cost, including work done to offset or mitigate adverse impacts as a result of the emergency measures.

However, if NRCS determines that an area qualifies as a limited resource area, the Federal contribution toward the implementation of emergency measures may not exceed 90 percent of the construction cost of such emergency measures.

NRCS may provide technical assistance as services and/ or funds to plan, design, and contract the emergency measures, subject to an agreement between NRCS and the Sponsor.

Purpose	Installation / Construction	Engineering / Technical Assistance	Real Property Rights
Emergency Watershed Protection	Not to exceed 75 percent, or 90 percent for limited resource areas	Not to exceed 100 percent	\$0

### More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For more information contact:

Michel Lapointe  
 Vermont EWP Program Manager  
 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 94 Harvest Lane, STE 203  
 Williston, VT 05495-8997  
 michel.lapointe@usda.gov  
 802-497-5977



Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List<sup>[1]</sup> FY2023



Climate Change Mitigation Practice Categories	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name <sup>[2]</sup> (units)	CSP Enhancement Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Bundle and Enhancement Activity
Soil Health			B000BFF1	Buffer Bundle#1*
			B000CPL24	Cropland soil health management system*
			B000CPL25	Climate smart advanced soil health*
	327	Conservation Cover (acres)	E327A	Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects
			E327B	Establish Monarch butterfly habitat
	328	Conservation Crop Rotation (acres)	E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation
			E328B	Improved resource conserving crop rotation
			E328E	Soil health crop rotation
			E328F	Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E328G	Crop rotation on recently converted CRP grass/legume cover for soil organic matter improvement
			E328N	Intercropping to improve soil health
			E328O	Perennial grain crop conservation rotation
	329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres)	E329A	No till to reduce soil erosion
			E329B	No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E329C	No till to increase plant-available moisture
			E329D	No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E329E	No till to reduce energy
	332	Contour Buffer Strips (acres)	None Available	
	340	Cover Crop (acres)	E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion
			E340B	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E340C	Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E340D	Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health
			E340F	Cover crop to minimize soil compaction
			E340G	Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients
			E340H	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles
			E340I	Using cover crops for biological strip till
	345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres)	E345A	Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion
			E345B	Reduced tillage to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E345C	Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture
			E345D	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E345E	Reduced tillage to reduce energy use
	386	Field Border (acres)	E386A	Enhanced field borders to reduce soil erosion along the edge(s) of a field
			E386B	Enhanced field borders to increase carbon storage along the edge(s) of the field
			E386C	Enhanced field borders to decrease particulate emissions along the edge(s) of the field
			E386D	Enhanced field borders to increase food for pollinators along the edge(s) of a field
			E386E	Enhanced field borders to increase wildlife food and habitat along the edge(s) of a field
	393	Filter Strips (acres)	E393A	Extend existing filter strip to reduce water quality impacts
	412	Grassed Waterways (acres)	E412A	Enhance a grassed waterway
	484	Mulching (acres)	E484A	Mulching to improve soil health
			E484B	Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody materials as mulch
E484C			Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody materials as mulch	
585	Stripcropping (acres)	None Available		
601	Vegetative Barriers (feet)			
603	Herbaceous Wind Barriers (feet)			

Climate Change Mitigation Practice Categories	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name <sup>(2)</sup> (units)	CSP Enhancement Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Bundle and Enhancement Activity
Nitrogen Management	590	Nutrient Management (acres)	E590A	Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses
			E590B	Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies
			E590C	Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses on pasture
			E590D	Reduce risks of nutrient losses to surface and groundwater by increasing setback awareness via precision technology
Livestock Partnership	366	Anaerobic Digester (number)	None Available	
	632	Waste Separation Facility (number)*		
Grazing and Pasture	512	Pasture and Hay Planting (acres)	E512A	Cropland conversion to grass-based agriculture to reduce soil erosion
			E512B	Forage plantings that help increase organic matter in depleted soils
			E512C	Cropland conversion to grass for soil organic matter improvement
			E512D	Forage plantings that help increase organic matter in depleted soils
			E512E	Forage and biomass planting that produces feedstock for biofuels or energy production
			E512I	Establish pollinator and/or beneficial insect and/or monarch habitat
			E512J	Establish wildlife corridors to provide habitat continuity or access to water
			E512L	Diversifying forage base with interseeding forbs and legumes to increase pasture quality
			E512M	Forage plantings that improve wildlife habitat cover and shelter or structure and composition
	528	Prescribed Grazing (acres)	E528A	Maintaining quantity and quality of forage for animal health and productivity
			E528D	Grazing management for improving quantity and quality of food or cover and shelter for wildlife
			E528E	Improved grazing management for enhanced plant structure and composition for wildlife
			E528F	Stockpiling cool season forage to improve structure and composition or plant productivity and health
			E528G	Improved grazing management on pasture for plant productivity and health with monitoring activities
			E528H	Prescribed grazing to improve/maintain riparian and watershed function-elevated water temperature
			E528I	Grazing management that protects sensitive areas -surface or ground water from nutrients
			E528J	Prescribed grazing on pastureland that improves riparian and watershed function
			E528L	Prescribed grazing that improves or maintains riparian and watershed function-erosion
			E528M	Grazing management that protects sensitive areas from gully erosion
			E528O	Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality
			E528P	Implementing Bale or Swath Grazing to increase organic matter and reduce nutrients in surface water
			E528R	Management intensive rotational grazing
	E528S	Soil Health Improvements on Pasture		
	E528T	Grazing to Reduce Wildfire Risks on Forests		
	550	Range Planting (acres)	E550A	Range planting for increasing/maintaining organic matter
			E550B	Range planting for improving forage, browse, or cover for wildlife

Climate Change Mitigation Practice Categories	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name <sup>[2]</sup> (units)	CSP Enhancement Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Bundle and Enhancement Activity
Agroforestry, Forestry and Upland Wildlife Habitat	311	Alley Cropping (acres)	None Available	None Available
	342	Critical Area Planting (acres)		
	379	Forest Farming (acres)		
	380	Windbreaks/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation (feet)		
	381	Silvopasture (acres)	E381A	Silvopasture to improve wildlife habitat
	390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover (acres)	E390A	Increase riparian herbaceous cover width for sediment and nutrient reduction
			E390B	Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat
	391	Riparian Forest Buffer (acres)	E391A	Increase riparian forest buffer width for sediment and nutrient reduction
			E391B	Increase stream shading for stream temperature reduction
			E391C	Increase riparian forest buffer width to enhance wildlife habitat
	420	Wildlife Habitat Planting (acres)*	E420A	Establish pollinator habitat*
			E420B	Establish monarch butterfly habitat*
	422	Hedgerow Planting (feet)	None Available	
	612	Tree/Shrub Establishment (acres)	E612B	Planting for high carbon sequestration rate
			E612C	Establishing tree/shrub species to restore native plant communities
			E612G	Tree/shrub planting for wildlife food
	645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (acres)	E645B	Manage existing shrub thickets to provide adequate shelter for wildlife
			E645C	Edge feathering for wildlife cover
	666	Forest Stand Improvement (acres)*	E666A	Maintaining and improving forest soil quality*
			E666D	Forest management to enhance understory vegetation*
E666E			Reduce height of the forest understory to limit wildfire risk*	
E666F			Reduce forest stand density to create open stand structure*	
E666H			Increase on-site carbon storage*	
E666I			Crop tree management for mast production*	
E666J			Facilitating oak forest regeneration*	
E666K			Creating structural diversity with patch openings*	
E666L			Forest Stand Improvement to rehabilitate degraded hardwood stands*	
E666P			Summer roosting habitat for native forest-dwelling bat species*	
E666R	Forest songbird habitat maintenance*			
E666S	Facilitating longleaf pine regeneration and establishment*			
Restoration of Disturbed Lands	453	Land Reclamation, Landslide Treatment (acres)	None Available	
	543	Land Reclamation, Abandoned Mined Land (acres) <sup>[3]</sup>		
Energy, Combustion, and Electricity Efficiency	372	Combustion System Improvement (number)	None Available	
	374	Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation (number)*		
			E533C	Install VFDs on pumps <sup>[4]</sup> *
			E533D	Switch fuel source for pumps <sup>[4]</sup> *
	672	Energy Efficient Building Envelope (number)*	None Available	
670	Energy Efficient Lighting System (number)*			
Wetlands	657	Wetland Restoration (acres)*	None Available	
Rice	449	Irrigation Water Management (acres) <sup>[4]</sup>	E449B	Alternated Wetting and Drying (AWD) of rice fields



## NOTES:

In addition to the designated CSAF mitigation activities listed, conservation practices that facilitate the management or the function of a CSAF mitigation activity but may not achieve the desired effects on their own (and may not have a quantifiable benefit) may be planned as applicable. Examples: Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) may need facilitating practices such as Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490) or Access Control (472). Conservation Crop Rotation (328) may need facilitating practices such as Pest Management Conservation System (595), Cover Crops (340), or Irrigation Water Management (449). Waste Separation Facility may need facilitating practices such as Waste Transfer (634) or Roofs and Covers (367). Prescribed Grazing (528) may need facilitating practices such as Watering Facility (614), Stream Crossing (578), Fence (382), or Livestock Shelter Structure (576). Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) may need facilitating practices such as Brush Management (314), Herbaceous Weed Treatment (315), or Prescribed Grazing (528).

Activities highlighted have been added to the list in FY23.

\*Noted activities are added to the list as “provisional.” These practices, associated enhancements, and bundles are being added under the premise that they may provide benefits, and a quantification methodology will be evaluated during the fiscal year. Practices may be removed from the mitigation practice list in a subsequent fiscal year if quantification is not possible.

- [1] Unless otherwise noted, listed practices have quantifiable carbon sequestration and/or GHG reduction methodologies described in COMET-Planner ([www.comet-planner.com](http://www.comet-planner.com)). New practices will be added as science progresses and scientifically defensible quantification methodologies are identified to accompany existing and new NRCS conservation practice standards.
- [2] The included Conservation Practice Standard links provide national information. Please consult the NRCS office at your local USDA Service Center for any local and state level criteria. Visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](http://farmers.gov/service-locator) to find contact information for your local office.
- [3] Effective Oct 1, 2022, Land Reclamation, Currently Mined Land (544) was archived and has been removed from this mitigation list, the practice was combined into Land Reclamation, Abandoned Mined Land (543). See NHCP Notice 172 for more information.
- [4] Conservation Practice Standards Irrigation Water Management (449) and Pumping Plant (533) are not GHG mitigation practice standards. The only atmospheric-beneficial applications are with Enhancement Activities E533C, E533D, and E449B or when 449 is implemented as part of an alternated wetting and drying (AWD) system in rice fields.



# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

## Is EQIP Right for Me?



### Can You Answer 'Yes' to the Following?

Then EQIP may be a good fit for your operation

- I own or rent, and manage land for agricultural or forest production, such as cropland, rangeland, grassland or forestland.
- I have control of the land such as through ownership or a lease.
- I can prove irrigation history if my conservation work involves water conservation with irrigation system improvements.
- My land complies with highly erodible land and wetland conservation determination provisions (if unsure, ask your local USDA Service Center).
- I established or updated farm records with the Farm Service Agency for me and my operation.
- I have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS.
- My average gross income is less than \$900,000 (does not apply to Indian Tribes).
- If I am a member of an entity or joint operation, I have authority to make management decisions for the business.

### What is EQIP?

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers technical and financial assistance for working lands, including field crops, specialty crops, organic, confined livestock and grazing, and non-industrial private forest land.

Rather than take land out of production, EQIP helps farmers maintain or improve production while conserving natural resources on working landscapes.

### What Are the Benefits?

EQIP may provide many benefits, including improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against drought and increasing weather extremes.

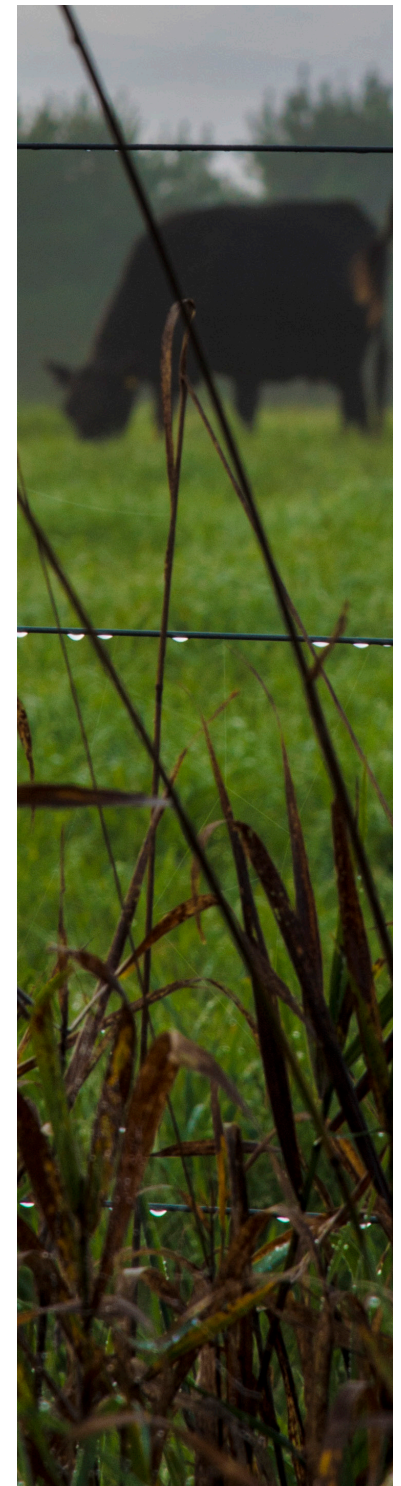
For example, EQIP can help you:

- Reduce contamination from agricultural sources, such as animal feeding operations.
- Efficiently utilize nutrients, reduce input costs and reduce non-point source pollution.
- Increase soil health to help mitigate against increasing weather volatility and improved drought resiliency.

### How Does EQIP Work?

EQIP supports producers who improve and sustain natural resources on their operation by implementing structural, vegetative, and management practices.

For example, if you want to use EQIP conservation practices to improve irrigation efficiency, renovate pastureland or nutrient and pest management on your eligible land,





NRCS offers technical assistance, and EQIP offers financial assistance through a contractual agreement.

If you decide to work with NRCS, you will receive a one-on-one consultation from a local NRCS conservation planner to evaluate your current management system and conduct an assessment of natural resources on your land. You will then work with the NRCS conservation planner to develop a free conservation plan that addresses the identified resource concerns.

Once you choose the conservation practices or activities that best fit your needs, and if your application is selected for funding, EQIP offers payments for implementing these practices on your land with the expectation that you will operate while maintaining the practices for the expected lifespan.

## How Long is a EQIP Contract?

The length of an EQIP contract can vary depending on your goals and timeline, but cannot exceed 10 years.

## EQIP Eligibility

### Land Eligibility

#### Q. What lands are eligible for EQIP?

- A. For eligibility purposes in Farm Bill programs, NRCS considers any land on which agricultural commodities, livestock or forest-related products are produced as eligible land.

That land can include cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and other farm or ranch lands.

EQIP has no minimum acreage requirement; however, EQIP is a competitive program that awards points based on resource concerns to be addressed and other factors.

### Producer Eligibility

#### Q. Who is eligible to apply for EQIP?

- A. Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations or Indian Tribes that have control of the land and currently manage it for agricultural, forest and livestock production.

## Special EQIP Initiatives

EQIP has a broad delivery system to put targeted conservation on the ground at the local level, across the entire country.



EQIP targets conservation through the following initiatives to address priority natural resource concerns on the most vulnerable lands and high priority watersheds:

- High Tunnel Initiative
- Organic Initiative
- Air Quality Initiative
- On Farm Energy Initiative

## EQIP Payments

#### Q. What types of payments are offered through EQIP?

- A. EQIP offers payments for practices and activities which may be categorized as vegetative, structural, and management practices.

Producers may also apply for Conservation Activity Plans through a Technical Service Provider.

#### Historically Underserved (HU) Participants:

Historically underserved participants are eligible for increased payment rates and advanced payments to help offset the costs of purchasing goods or services. HU participants include socially disadvantaged, beginning, veteran and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

- **Dedicated funds** – at least 10 percent of EQIP funds are dedicated to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- **Higher payment rates** – up to 25 percent higher than the standard practice payment rates.
- **Veteran Preference** – eligible veterans who compete in the beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers funding pools, receive preference points.



**Q. When are payments made?**

- A. Under the general EQIP payment process, a producer is reimbursed after a conservation practice is certified as meeting NRCS standards and specifications. This process often means that producers must pay up front costs with their own funds, unless the participant opts for the advance payment option.

**Q. Do I have to pay income taxes on my payments?**

- A. Yes. All payments made to you by NRCS are reported to the Internal Revenue Service and should be reported as income on your tax return for the applicable tax year. You will receive a Form 1099 to report EQIP payments on your tax return.

**EQIP Application and Evaluation****Q. How do I apply for EQIP?**

- A. Contact your local USDA Service Center and let them know you are interested in EQIP. A conservation planner will work with you to determine your eligibility.

NRCS accepts EQIP applications year-round and funding is provided through a competitive process.

State-specific application cutoff dates are set to evaluate applications for funding. Cutoff dates can be found at [nrcs.usda.gov/statecutoffdates](https://nrcs.usda.gov/statecutoffdates). If you apply after the application cut-off date, your application will automatically be deferred to the next funding cycle.

If you are new to working with USDA, you will need to establish your Farm Record with the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Establishing a Farm Record requires several forms and documents, so make an appointment with your FSA office as soon as possible.

**Q. How are EQIP applications evaluated?**

- A. Once NRCS completes an assessment of your operation and you choose the conservation practices or activities that you want to implement, NRCS will rank your application to determine how well your current and future management system will address national, state, and local natural resource priorities.

NRCS will rank your application against other similar eligible applications in the same ranking pool, with the highest scoring applications receiving contract offers first.



# Conservation Stewardship Program

Is CSP Right for Me?



## Can You Answer 'Yes' to the Following?

Then CSP may be a good fit for your operation.

- I own or rent, and manage land for agricultural or forest production, such as cropland, rangeland, grassland or pasture.
- I have already been doing conservation work on my operation.
- I want to expand my existing conservation efforts to achieve a higher level of environmental stewardship.
- I intend or plan to maintain control of the land for at least five years.
- My land complies with highly erodible land and wetland conservation determination provisions (if unsure, ask your local USDA Service Center)
- I have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS.
- My adjusted gross income is less than \$900,000 (does not apply to Indian Tribes).
- As a member of an entity or joint operation, I have authority to make management decisions for the business

## What is CSP?

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level.

The program is designed to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. CSP is for producers who are passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship.

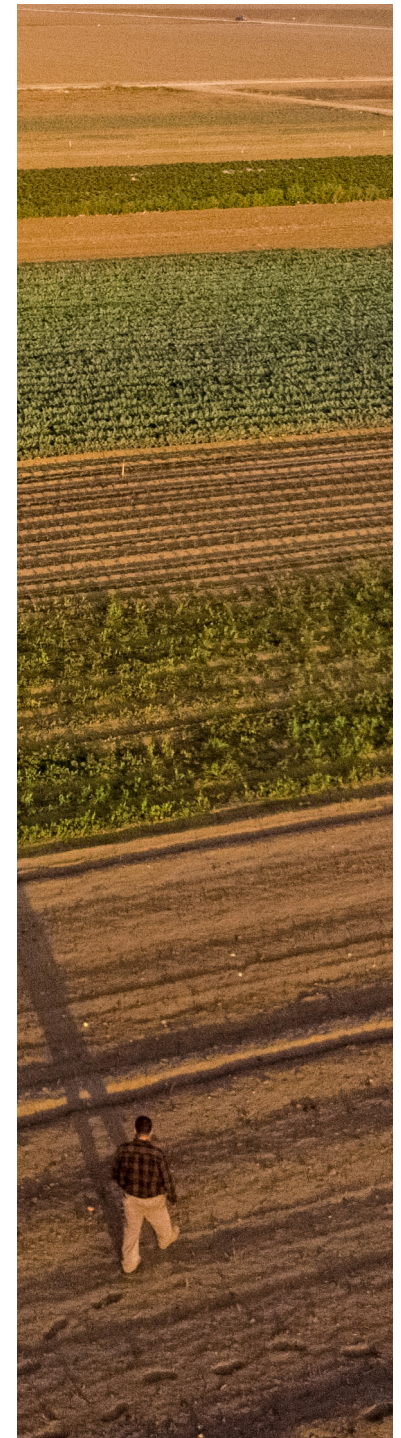
## What are the benefits?

CSP may provide many benefits, including increased crop productivity, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

For example, CSP can help you:

- Schedule timely planting and management of cover crops
- Develop a grazing plan that will improve your forage base
- Implement no-till to reduce erosion or manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat

If you are already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, chances are CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals.





## How Does CSP Work?

CSP offers opportunities for producers to expand on existing conservation efforts by applying new conservation practices, enhancements, and bundles. These new activities will help enhance natural resources and improve the operation.

For example, if you have been planting a cover crop, you may decide to try an enhancement for a multi-species cover crop or implement a deep rooted cover crop to break up soil compaction.

If you decide to apply for CSP, the local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with you to evaluate your current management system and the natural resources on your land. You will then work with the NRCS conservation planner to select new CSP conservation activities based on your management objectives for your operation.

Once you choose the conservation practices or activities that best fit, and if your application is selected for funding, CSP offers annual payments for implementing these practices on your land, and operating and maintaining existing conservation efforts.

Want to take it a step further? CSP also offers bundles where you can select a suite of enhancements and receive a higher payment rate.

## How Long is a CSP Contract?

Five years, with the potential to renew for another five-year period if you successfully complete your first contract term, and if your renewal application ranks high enough (CSP renewals are a competitive process).

## CSP Eligibility

### Land Eligibility

#### Q. What lands are eligible for CSP?

- A. Eligible lands include private agricultural lands, agricultural Indian lands, nonindustrial private forest land, farmstead, associated agricultural lands and public land that is under the control of the applicant and part of their operation. There is no minimum acreage requirement. CSP enrolls your entire operation into the program, not just one specific field or tract. All land must be in compliance with USDA highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions to be eligible for CSP.

#### Q. I am new to farming? Am I eligible for CSP?

- A. Not yet. The land must be actively used for producing an agricultural or forest product. Lands being cleared or prepped for future agricultural production are not eligible for CSP until an agricultural operation has been established and crops, food or fiber have been successfully produced. Be sure to check with your local USDA service center before clearing any land to ensure that you will not violate the highly erodible land conservation or wetland conservation requirements. Failing to have NRCS complete proper determinations may impact your ability to participate in USDA programs.

### Producer Eligibility

#### Q. Who is eligible to apply for CSP?

- A. Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations or Indian Tribes that own or rent and currently manage land for agricultural or forest production. The applicant must have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS and must maintain control of the land for the entire span of the 5-year CSP contract. The applicant must have an adjusted gross income of less than \$900,000. The adjusted gross income requirement does not apply to Indian Tribes.

## Stewardship Threshold Eligibility

#### Q. What is the stewardship threshold?

- A. Stewardship threshold is a term NRCS uses to determine if a CSP applicant is currently meeting or exceeding an adequate level of conservation criteria for a particular natural resource concern. CSP applicants must currently be meeting the stewardship threshold for at least two priority natural resource concerns on every land use included in the operation. They must also agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional resource concern by the end of the contract on at least one land use. Don't worry if you are unsure of your threshold because an NRCS planner will assist you.

## Practice Enhancements and Bundles

#### Q. What is a conservation practice?

- A. Conservation practices can improve soil, water, plants, air, wildlife habitat, and related natural resources. Each conservation practice must be performed using NRCS practice standards developed by each state.

#### Q. What is an enhancement?

- A. Enhancements are conservation activities used to treat resource concerns and improve conservation performance.

#### Q. What is a bundle?

- A. Bundles are land-use specific and consist of at least three enhancements, for which implementation as a group improves conservation performance and addresses multiple resource concerns in a comprehensive and cost-effective manner.

Each bundle has three or more required enhancements, and for some bundles, the applicant has the option to pick additional enhancements from a select list that addresses specific resource concerns.





Producers interested in implementing enhancements or bundles on their property can visit with their local NRCS conservation planner to learn more about them.

## CSP Payments

### Q. What types of payments are offered through CSP?

- A. There are three types of payments available through CSP.
1. **Annual contract payments** which are based on two components:
    - Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation based on the land uses included in the contract
    - Payments to implement additional conservation practices and activities.
  2. **Supplemental payments** for producers willing to implement a resource conserving crop rotation, improve an existing resource conserving crop rotation, or implement advanced grazing management
  3. **Minimum contract payments** for most contracts.

### Q. When are payments made?

- A. NRCS makes payments as soon as practical after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous fiscal year and completed before September 30.

### Q. Do I have to pay income taxes on my payments?

- A. Yes. All payments made to you by NRCS are reported to the Internal Revenue Service and should be reported as income on your tax return for the applicable tax year. You will receive a Form 1099 to report CSP payments on your tax return.

## CSP Application and Evaluation

### Q. How do I apply for CSP?

- A. Contact your local NRCS field office and let them know you are interested in CSP. A conservation planner will work with you to determine your stewardship threshold eligibility.

If you are new to working with USDA, you will need to establish your Farm Record with the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Establishing a Farm Record requires several forms and documents, so make an appointment with your FSA office as soon as possible.

In addition to your Farm Record documents, you will also need to submit to NRCS:

1. NRCS CPA-1200- Conservation Program Application
2. A map showing all land uses and acres in the operation.
3. A map or other documentation identifying any known ineligible land and associated acreage amounts.

### Q. How are CSP applications evaluated?

- A. Once NRCS completes an assessment of your operation and you choose the conservation practices or activities that you want to implement, NRCS will rank your application to determine how well your current and future management system will address national, state, and local natural resource priorities.

NRCS will rank your application against other similar eligible applications in the same ranking pool, with the highest scoring applications receiving contract offers first.

## CSP Grassland Conservation Initiative

CSP offers the new Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI) that aids eligible producers with protecting grazing lands, conserving and improving soil, water, and wildlife resources, and achieving related conservation values through a five-year grassland conservation contract. Eligibility is limited to producers with recorded grass on their FSA acreage report from 2009 through 2017.

