



DOING OUR PART: 2020 PLAN for CLIMATE ACTION in VERMONT

Our opportunity to build a prosperous
future for all Vermonters

#ActOnClimateVT

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for all Vermonters**

Vermonters know that global warming is our largest threat and climate action is our greatest opportunity. We share a responsibility to reduce the pollution that is driving global warming while strengthening our economy, protecting public health, and advancing equity.

Calls for urgent action to reduce climate pollution have been issued by the world's climate scientists, all levels of government, business leaders and medical professionals, religious communities and low-income advocates, and most clearly of all, by young Vermonters who will either live with the costly consequences of a forever altered planet or prosper in a transformed energy future.

The stakes could not be higher.

Vermonters are experiencing the intensifying, negative impacts of a warming world and these changes threaten our every pursuit. Mild winters and early springs are straining our economy, putting our farming, forestry, maple sugaring and winter sports economies at risk. More frequent and intense storms are causing flood damage, including an intense, warm 2019 Halloween rain storm which resulted in a \$5 million+ price tag for Vermonters and the fifth largest outage event in Green Mountain Power's history.

Warmer average temperatures are diminishing water quality, degrading critical wildlife habitat, and have dramatically increased the number of tick and mosquito borne diseases while invasive plant species thrive, affecting crops and forests. The public health consequences of global warming have led the

World Health Organization to declare climate change as ***“the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century.”***

Advance equity by investing in our clean energy future.

The injustice of the climate crisis is that those least responsible for pollution are the most susceptible to the dangers of an unhealthy planet. Around the world and in Vermont, climate catastrophes often affect marginalized communities first and worst – as we saw when mobile home parks across the state were devastated in Tropical Storm Irene. We can protect those most vulnerable to climate change by strategically investing in clean energy solutions and public infrastructure and by harnessing the power of our natural systems both to sequester and store carbon and to foster climate resilient communities.

We cannot afford inaction.

The extraction and combustion of oil, gas, and coal is harming the people of Vermont today, and a continued reliance on these fuels will lead to greater damage and more costly consequences in the future. There are clean, local, affordable energy solutions available now. Investing in these solutions will put Vermonters to work in 21st century clean energy jobs and retain far more of the \$1.5 billion that Vermont sends out of state every year to pay for imported fossil fuels. In doing so, we can also build on the success of existing programs we have long benefitted from, like Low Income Weatherization, and expand workforce opportunities, lower cost burdens, improve building efficiency and more.



2020 Plan For Climate Action in Vermont:

Since 2006, Vermont has had statutory goals to cut carbon pollution and do our part to combat the global climate crisis. Instead, our greenhouse gas emissions have risen dramatically. The Legislature and Governor Scott must ensure long-overdue progress to cut Vermont's climate pollution, enacting the foundational policies outlined in the following pages in 2020.

SIGNED BY:

Audubon Vermont
Capstone Community Action
Cathedral Square Corporation
Conservation Law Foundation
Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
Downstreet Housing & Community Development
Lake Champlain Committee
National Wildlife Federation – NE Regional Center
The Nature Conservancy
NeighborWorks of Western Vermont - Heat Squad
Renewable Energy Vermont
Rights & Democracy
Sierra Club – Vermont Chapter
Sunrise Movement
Toxics Action Center

Twin Pines Housing
Vermont Conservation Voters
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
Vermont Energy Education Program
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Vermont Climate and Health Alliance
Vermont Interfaith Power and Light
Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council
Vermont Medical Society
Vermont Public Interest Research Group
Vermont Youth Lobby
Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance
Windham-Windsor Housing Trust
350Vermont

The Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act

Vermont has a responsibility to do our part to cut pollution in line with what world scientists say is required to avoid the catastrophic impacts of global warming. Incremental action is insufficient and puts our economy, public health, and Vermonters' quality of life at risk.

The Global Warming Solutions Act will serve as the strategy and accountability framework needed to change the trajectory of our rising emissions and achieve our shared goals. This accountability framework will:

- **Set Vermont on a path toward meeting our commitment to the Paris Climate Accord by 2025 and achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.**
- **Establish binding targets**, initiating a comprehensive process and requiring meaningful, stepped action to achieve those targets.
- **Force the state to meet its obligations** by authorizing citizen suits – only if state government fails to meet key milestones.
- **Prioritize and protect low income and vulnerable Vermonters**, ensuring a just transition for people from every part of the state, by ramping up investments in common sense, money-saving, carbon-shaving solutions.
- **Generate economic opportunity** by keeping far more of our now-exported dollars in state and putting people to work in well-paying careers in innovative fields like solar, advanced wood heat, energy efficient housing, transportation electrification and more.

- **Harness the strengths of our rural landscapes** and our valuable farm, forest and soil assets to go beyond 100% reduction and sequester carbon, simultaneously increasing resilience and enabling strategic adaptation.
- **Leverage the commitment of other New England states** who have taken similar actions, growing their economies and protecting public health across the region.



A Commitment to 100% Renewable Electricity by 2030

By increasing the pace of deploying resilient, well-sited, new renewable generation we can build strong communities, keep more of the almost 80 percent of every dollar we spend on fossil fuels in state, and put people to work powering our lives with clean energy.

To fully realize the benefits of a transformed energy economy, Vermont must implement a true 100% renewable electricity standard that increases new and local renewable energy generation to:

- **Reduce fossil fuel use** by replacing costly and inefficient fossil-fueled vehicles and heating with more efficient, electric solutions powered by clean energy.

- **Create climate resilient communities**, increasing energy choices and improving access to innovative advanced energy technologies for all Vermonters.
- **Create jobs and strengthen our local economy**, spurring entrepreneurship and keeping far more money spent on imported energy in Vermont.



Modernize Vermont's Energy Efficiency Utilities

Today's energy challenges need modern solutions. Heating and transportation are Vermonters' biggest energy costs and the most polluting sectors of our economy. We can both reduce emissions and help those facing the highest energy cost burden by using the existing statewide infrastructure of the efficiency utilities Vermonters have invested in and benefitted from – Efficiency Vermont and Burlington Electric Department – for cleaner, more cost-effective alternatives.

Maintaining our current investment in our efficiency utilities while enabling them to focus on reducing climate pollution, rather than only cutting electricity use, will:

- **Make it more affordable for Vermonters to heat our homes and businesses.** We can use cleaner electricity to power efficient solutions with lower operating costs than their fossil fuel counterparts.
- **Keep more money circulating in the local economy by investing in proven solutions,** which will help more Vermonters stay warm, save money, and reduce pollution.

- **Bring new technologies to the state to increase availability and reduce costs.** From lightbulbs to cold climate heat pumps, the efficiency utilities have grown the market for efficient products. A modernized efficiency utility could expand these efforts and help grow the market to reduce costs and increase access to innovative technologies.
- **Generate greater impact** by sharing goals between energy efficiency and distribution utilities; making electric vehicles more affordable and expanding their availability; increasing weatherization efforts; enabling Vermonters to control when we use electricity to reduce system costs; and more.



Participate in the Transportation and Climate Initiative

Vermonters will save money by moving away from fossil-fueled transportation, and with transportation fuels making up nearly half of our climate pollution, cutting their use is a critical climate action.

A little over a decade ago, under the leadership of Governor Jim Douglas, Vermont became one of the first states to join the first multistate agreement to set a cap on climate pollution – the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) – which has helped reduce pollution in the electric sector across the Northeast.

We now have the opportunity to join a similar effort with other states to reduce pollution from the transportation sector through the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI). The goal of TCI is developing an equitable program to generate revenue that helps all Vermonters invest in cleaner transportation alternatives, while mitigating potential financial impacts on those least able to afford them.

A strong, equitable Transportation and Climate Initiative will:

- **Reduce carbon pollution from transportation**, our most polluting sector.
- **Advance equity** by using revenues to invest in solutions for low-income and rural Vermonters, for whom transportation costs and access can be particularly burdensome.

- **Transform our transportation sector** by creating programs for cleaner transportation. These include electric buses, rail transit, hybrid and electric passenger vehicles, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, affordable housing in and near our community centers, and more.
- **Invest in a just transition for all Vermonters**, working in collaboration with states around the region to transition to a cleaner, more equitable, affordable, and efficient system.



Governor Scott and members of the Vermont General Assembly:

We urge you to ensure Vermont does our part to turn this crisis into equitable economic opportunity by working swiftly to enact this *2020 Plan for Climate Action in Vermont.*



**Stay Engaged and Follow the Action:
#ActOnClimateVT**