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## December 2013 E-News



Season's greetings! This wreath mysteriously appeared on VNRC's front door the other morning, reminding us all that the holiday season is upon us and adding a little more pep to everyone's step. (Turns out our resident elf/Communications Director, Jake Brown, was responsible.)

In addition to giving thanks and gathering with friends and loved ones, we've already started setting goals for the new year ahead. The 2014 legislative session is just around the corner, and lawmakers will be heading back to work on January 7 for their second year of the legislative biennium. As things gear up under the Golden Dome, look for VNRC's special legislative reports in upcoming newsletters and on our website. Meanwhile, please send any questions about the legislature or inquiries about how you can participate to Jake at [jbrown@vnrc.org](mailto:jbrown@vnrc.org).

And finally – are you wondering what to get for the environmentally-conscious person in your life who has everything? Give the gift that keeps giving... a [VNRC membership!](#) Supporting VNRC is an affirmation for everything you value about Vermont - healthy forests, sustainable communities, clean water, and abundant renewable energy sources.

As always, thank you for everything you do.

## VNRC NEWS

### VNRC to Grace vonRabenstein, Intern from Champlain College: Thank You, Thank You!



This month VNRC said goodbye to Grace vonRabenstein, a student in [Champlain College's](#) Environmental Policy Program who has been helping us as an intern during the fall semester.

Grace has been a huge help during a super busy time at VNRC. She's assembled our year-end appeal, edited material for the websites of the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions and Vermont Conservation Voters, and helped prepare training programs for real estate professionals put on by VNRC, and lots more.

Thanks Grace – we wish you the very best of luck in your future endeavors!

### VNRC is Seeking Part-Time Legislative Intern to Help us in 2104 at the State House



VNRC is seeking a part-time intern to help us track legislation moving through the Statehouse during the 2014 legislative year (January through May). Duties include monitoring relevant State House hearings and reporting to VNRC staff and tracking bills, among other tasks. The intern may also conduct basic research, help draft bill summaries, talking points and other documents.

Ideal candidates will have strong oral and written communication skills, be diplomatic, curious, and able to take initiative, and have experience and/or interest in the legislative process. Schedule is fairly flexible.

If you are interested, please send a brief note and resume to Communications/Government Affairs Director Jake Brown at [jbrown@vnrc.org](mailto:jbrown@vnrc.org).

### VNRC Celebrating the Success of Last Week's Energy and Climate Action Conference



Vermont's community-based efforts to tackle the challenges of climate change and ever-more-limited traditional energy supplies were the focus of the 2013 [Vermont Community Energy and Climate Action](#) Conference in Fairlee on Saturday. The day-long event, which drew about 270 people, focused on building partnerships at the local level and growing the climate action movement in Vermont. VNRC is the coordinator of the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network, or VECAN.

Vermont Congressman Peter Welch (shown here) and Senator Bernie Sanders were on hand for the event. Both noted that local leadership and action are key to progress on combating climate change.

"The glue that is keeping our country together is local leadership," Welch said. "And there is nobody that is doing it better in Vermont than our town energy committees."

Rich Phillips of the Marshfield Energy Committee has attended the conference for years and he said it always renews his motivation to work on climate change in his town.

"I feel more informed, energized and empowered by the inspiring efforts of my fellow Vermonters who are doing important work in their communities, and the useful overview of projects that energy committees like mine can undertake," he said.

[Read more about the conference and find additional resources on the VECAN website>>](#)

Are you interested in getting involved but don't know where to start? Email Keil Corey at [kcory@vnrc.org](mailto:kcory@vnrc.org) or call 802-223-2328 x118.

## VERMONT NEWS

### DPS Now Finishing up Total Energy Study Report for Vermont Lawmakers



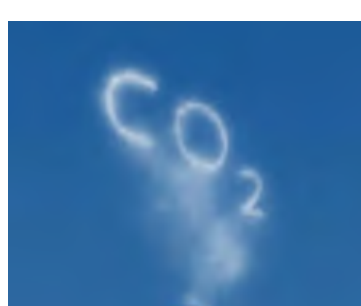
The Vermont Public Service Department is putting finishing touches on a "total energy study" report to the legislature.

The study will identify the most promising policy and technology strategies Vermont could use to reach its energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The state has set goals of meeting 90 percent of Vermont's energy needs from renewable sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 25 percent of 1990 levels, all by 2050.

The interim total energy study report is open for comment until January 22. You can file comments by clicking [here](#).

### Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions are Down, But They are Still Short of Targets



Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions, after growing significantly over the past two decades, have fallen back down to 1990 levels, but the state is still falling short of its reduction goals, according to [recently-released information](#) from the Agency of Natural Resources. Goals set by the legislature in 2006, for example, called for emissions in 2012 to be about 25 percent lower than they were that year.

In 1990, Vermont emitted approximately 8 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. That number grew to a high of just over 9.5 million tons in 2005. It then began to fall, and in 2011 was back to just about 8 million tons, approximately where it was in 1990. The trend is expected to continue downward, but in a [graph issued by ANR](#) shows we have fallen short of the 2012 goal.

ANR Secretary Deb Markowitz noted that Vermont's big sources of greenhouse gas emissions are the burning of fuel oil for cars and trucks and to heat homes and businesses, and not electricity generation.

"To bend the curve on Vermont emissions we must continue to make our homes, businesses and public buildings energy efficient, we need to continue to make investments in new renewable energy and we need to support our traditional land use patterns with walkable, livable village centers surrounded by a working landscape and forested mountains," she said. "We must continue to put the infrastructure in place to make it easier for Vermonters to choose to drive zero emission vehicles."

### With Circ Alternatives, There is a Fresh Start for Chittenden County Transportation



The recent announcement of a package of new transportation solutions for Chittenden County represents the sort of transportation planning that is aligned with future needs as well as likely constraints. VNRC's Kate McCarthy suggests in an [op-ed recently published in VTDigger](#) and other outlets.

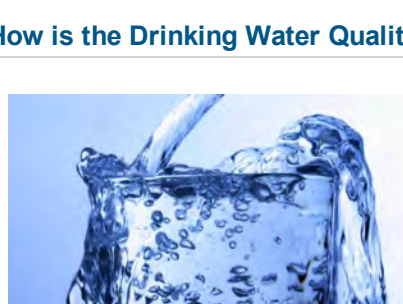
The Burlington Free Press also [published an editorial](#) recently that offers a similar perspective.

The Circ Alternatives Task Force, on which Kate served, was created after Gov. Shumlin announced that the Chittenden County Circumferential Highway would not be built as envisioned. It laid out specific 34 projects designed to alleviate traffic in the region including intersection and interchange

improvements, more bike and pedestrian lanes and other improvements.

In her op-ed, Kate notes Vermonters are driving less and getting their licenses later, suggesting that there are important demographic changes afoot that will affect transportation planning.

### How is the Drinking Water Quality in Your Town? Now, You Can Go Online and Find Out



If your home is on a public water system, you might be interested to know there is a new online tool that gives you the power to check on the quality of your drinking water.

As part of its Environmental Public Health Tracking portal, the Health Department and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have developed the data display that tracks the presence of 10 contaminants – such as arsenic, nitrate, uranium and the pesticide atrazine – that could cause health problems.

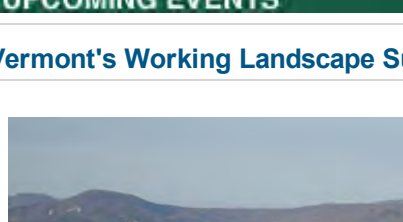
"We wanted to provide a site for people to learn more about water quality and health issues in the towns where they live," said David Grass, the Health Department's environmental health surveillance chief.

About 100 community water systems serve 400,000 residents in Vermont. The remainder of Vermonters get their water from private wells.

[Read more on the Vermont Department of Health website>>](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Vermont's Working Landscape Summit Set for Dec 17 at Vermont Technical College



Vermont's Working Landscape Summit is coming right up.

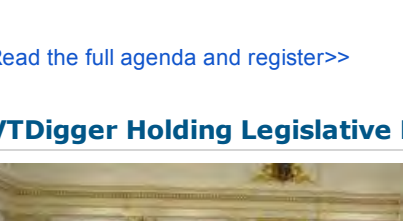
Please consider attending the summit on Dec. 17 for a day of celebration of the success to date – and preparation for work still to come – to continue to spur Vermont's rural renaissance. The event runs from 9 am to 4:30 pm.

Farmers, forest products leaders, value-adding entrepreneurs, investors, policy leaders, community residents, and all who care about the future of Vermont's Working Lands, are invited to

attend and consider the progress that has been made and look forward to the next stage of our collective efforts.

[Read the full agenda and register>>](#)

### VTDigger Holding Legislative Preview Event Tomorrow Afternoon in Montpelier



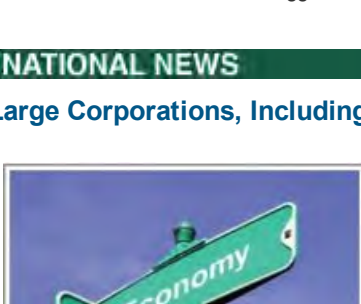
VTDigger is assembling a special panel of lawmakers from key committees who will offer the skinny on likely issues to be debated at the Statehouse this year. The forum will take place tomorrow (Thursday, Dec. 12) and last an hour or so and will take place at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier and run from 4-6 pm.

Lawmakers who will be on hand to discuss various policy areas include: Rep. Tony Klein (energy and natural resources), Rep. Michael Fisher (health care), Rep. Carolyn Branagan (taxes), Rep. Peter Peltz (education), Rep. Mitzi Johnson (budget), Sen. Richard Westman (budget), Sen. Dick McCormack (education), Sen. David Zuckerman (agriculture). There will be a cash bar.

For more information email VTDigger's Ann Galloway at [agalloway@vtdigger.org](mailto:agalloway@vtdigger.org).

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Large Corporations, Including Oil Giants, Planning for Future Carbon Costs



A [recent report](#) issued by the UK-based Carbon Disclosure Project notes that at least 29 major U.S. corporations including some of the world's largest oil companies, are accounting for a future price on carbon in their business planning.

Called variously an "internal carbon price, or "shadow price" or "carbon adder" the cost of emitting a ton of carbon dioxide equivalent created through additional regulatory constraint – whether it's through a cap and trade mechanism, direct tax on carbon, or some other scheme – is being estimated at various levels by various corporations, according to the report. Exxon/Mobil, for example, is using \$60/ton, BP is using \$40/ton, and Google is using \$14/ton.

"Most companies covered in this report state they expect an eventual regulatory approach in some form to address climate change," according to a summary of the CDP report. "Therefore, companies cite use of a carbon price as a planning tool to help identify revenue opportunities, risks, and as an incentive to drive maximum energy efficiencies to reduce costs and guide capital investment decisions."

In Vermont, one of the leading policy ideas under discussion as part of an ongoing total energy study (see story above) is a carbon tax. Several other states are considering carbon taxes.

[Read the full report>>](#)

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## VNRC's Mission

Through research, education, collaboration and advocacy, VNRC protects and enhances Vermont's natural environments, vibrant communities, productive working landscapes, rural character and unique sense of place, and prepares the state for future challenges and opportunities.