

[Get Involved](#)

[Visit Our Website](#)

[Give](#)

### March 2014 E-News



Lawmakers are back at it after the Town Meeting break, spending lots of time on the floors of both the House and Senate, passing bills. With about six weeks left in the session, it's fair to say that things are very busy under the Golden Dome.

VNRC is tracking, and has testified on, several bills including legislation on [net metering](#) (which lawmakers just approved hours ago and now moves to the Governor's desk - see story below), [Current Use](#), [shoreland protection](#), [Lake Champlain cleanup](#), [forest fragmentation](#), [dam safety](#), [siting of energy generation projects](#), [avoiding sprawl](#) and [agricultural soils](#).

Legislation is changing daily, so if you want more details on a bill, information as to where it's headed, or want to learn how you can get involved, we suggest emailing the relevant VNRC program directors listed below:

- Jamey Fidel at [jfidel@vnrc.org](mailto:jfidel@vnrc.org) (Current Use, forest fragmentation)
- Kim Greenwood at [kgreenwood@vnrc.org](mailto:kgreenwood@vnrc.org) (Shoreland protection, Lake Champlain cleanup, dam removal)
- Kate McCarthy at [kmccarthy@vnrc.org](mailto:kmccarthy@vnrc.org) (Smart Growth, agricultural soils)
- Johanna Miller at [jmiller@vnrc.org](mailto:jmiller@vnrc.org) (Net metering, weatherization, energy siting.)

Thanks for all you do!

The VNRC Team

### VNRC NEWS

#### VNRC Staff Spreads the Word to Students at UVM, VTC, and Other Vermont Insitutions



This spring, members of VNRC staff are speaking to college students in Vermont about smart growth, marketing and outreach, and career options.

VNRC staff members from time to time visit classes at UVM, the state college system and other institutions, to help students understand what VNRC does as well as the conservation and energy challenges that face the state.

Just this week, VNRC's sustainable communities program director Kate McCarthy visited a UVM class on sustainable transportation. One group in the class is working to better understand the implementation of smart growth in Vermont and how to calculate that implementation.

VNRC's communications and membership team, Jake Brown and Mari Zagarins, are headed to UVM next week to talk with environmental entrepreneurship students about marketing and outreach. And in April, VNRC's water program director Kim Greenwood is headed to an environmental permitting class of soon-to-be-engineers at Vermont Technical College to discuss nontraditional engineering career paths. Greenwood graduated from VTC with a mechanical engineering degree in 1998.

"Virtually all of our staff speak to classes in the university and graduate school settings to help them understand what we do and the challenges we face," said Brian Shupe, VNRC's executive director. "We feel it's an important part of our mission."

#### VNRC Team Visits Maker of High Efficiency Mobile Homes in Wilder



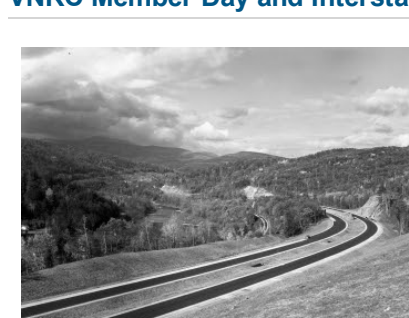
VNRC staff members Mari Zagarins and Emma Zavez recently visited Vermod High Performance Homes, the maker of a new generation of modular homes based in White River Junction.

The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board and Efficiency Vermont [have teamed up](#) to build houses that come equipped with solar panels on the roof, heavy-duty insulation in the walls, triple pane windows, and long-lasting appliances. While the upfront cost will be higher than a traditional mobile home, the long-term benefits are clear: the owner will save energy and money (the monthly utility bill is estimated to be \$11) and the home is built to last the same amount of time as any other independently constructed building (100+ years).

"We were impressed by the energy-saving design, the big, beautiful windows and closets, and the overall spacious feel," Zavez said of the houses. "Vermod has created a winner - the home is good for the environment and the pocketbook."

[Learn more about the Manufactured Housing Innovation Project](#)>>

#### VNRC Member Day and Interstate Highways Exhibit at Vermont History Museum April 4



The construction of the Interstate highway system between 1958 and 1978 was a game-changer for Vermont's culture and landscape. Come join VNRC at the Vermont History Museum on Friday, April 4 between 10 am and 4 pm to meet our staff and check out the [Vermont Interstate Highways exhibit](#). The Museum will welcome VNRC members for a reduced admission price of \$2, and all non-members will have the option to sign up on the spot.

Just past the admissions table, stop by the Snelling Room for light snacks and more information about the arrival of the Interstate and how it launched the modern environmental movement in Vermont. Then proceed to the exhibit and browse the collection of photographs from the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration between 1958 and 1978, before, during, and after Interstate construction.

Can't make it on April 4? Not to worry - the exhibit will remain on display at the Museum through Saturday, April 26. While the regular fees for admissions are low - \$5 for members and \$3 for seniors, students, and children - contributions to the Vermont Historical Society are always appreciated.

### VERMONT NEWS

#### Lawmakers Approve Net-Metering; Bill Expanding Energy Opportunities Heads to Gov.



Lawmakers gave final approval today to an expansion of the state's successful net metering program.

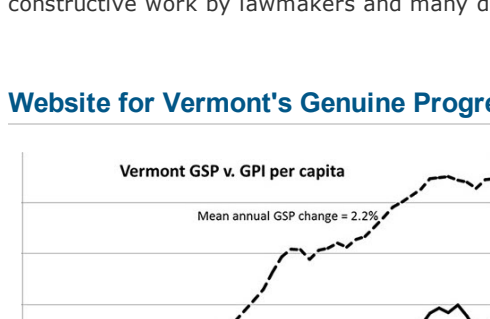
After a unanimous [vote in favor by the Senate last Friday](#), the House today gave its final OK to the bill, [H.702](#) in a nearly unanimous voice vote.

Beyond the core provisions that the House passed originally — including raising the 4 percent capacity cap to 15 percent — the Senate made some minor adjustments, including adding a provision that could potentially allow communities to develop larger-scale solar net metered projects on closed landfills, a provision that VNRC

strongly supported.

"This decisive action by legislative leaders underscores the importance of the net metering program for our economy and our environment," said VNRC's Energy Program Director Johanna Miller. "With a likely swift signature of Governor Shumlin, all Vermonters will once again be able to generate clean, affordable electricity from the sun," she said. "The passage of this bill is great news and is an example of positive, constructive work by lawmakers and many diverse stakeholders."

#### Website for Vermont's Genuine Progress Indicator Recently Launched



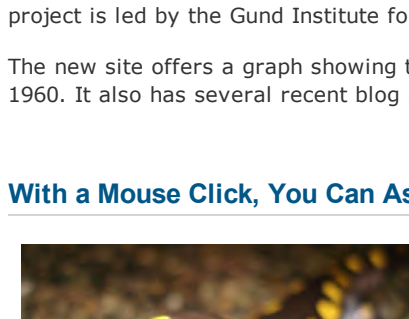
Details of Vermont's Genuine Progress Indicator, a measurement of economic well-being that's an alternative to the traditional Gross Domestic (or State) Product, are now available on a [recently-launched website](#).

VT-GPI is an alternative measure of the benefits and costs of the Vermont economy, according to the website. Enacted into law in 2012 with the support of VNRC and others, the VT-GPI includes yearly estimates of the economic, environmental, and social performance of the Vermont economy. The VT-GPI

project is led by the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont.

The new site offers a graph showing the difference between mean Gross State Product and GPI since 1960. It also has several recent blog posts on the issue.

#### With a Mouse Click, You Can Assure Safe Passage for Salamanders and Frogs



A new, on-line crowd funding effort is underway to raise money to build a tunnel under a busy road in Monkton to let salamanders and other amphibians move to critical breeding habitat in the spring.

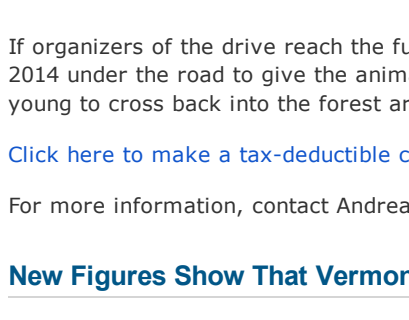
Salamanders and frogs in Monkton need to move every spring from their winter habitat on rocky forested hillsides to their breeding habitat in a nearby swamp. The problem is, they have to cross the busy Monkton-Vergennes Road. It's estimated that over half of the animals that try to cross are killed by traffic.

If organizers of the drive reach the fundraising goal of \$45,000, two tunnels will be constructed starting in 2014 under the road to give the animals a safe route to the wetland, and later, for the adults and their young to cross back into the forest area.

[Click here to make a tax-deductible contribution online](#)>>

For more information, contact Andrea Morgante at 482- 5120, [andreaahinesburg@gmail.com](mailto:andreaahinesburg@gmail.com)

#### New Figures Show That Vermont's Agricultural Sector is Growing



The number of farms in Vermont has increased by five percent in the last five years, and the agricultural land base has increased one percent over the same period, according to preliminary results from the 2012 agricultural census.

The figures, recently released by the USDA and the National Agricultural Statistics Service, also show that the overall market value of Vermont agricultural products has grown by 15 percent.

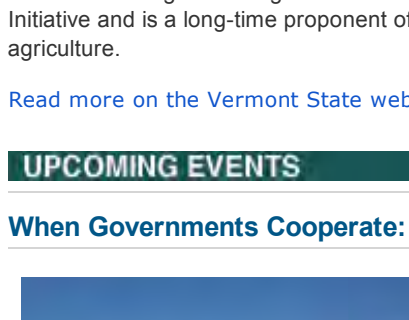
Chuck Ross, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets said that the findings "paint a positive picture of Vermont's community-based system of agriculture."

VNRC is working in the Legislature to better protect agricultural soils, supports the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative and is a long-time proponent of the Current Use program, all of which are critical policies that support agriculture.

[Read more on the Vermont State website](#)>>

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### When Governments Cooperate: State Municipal Day Focuses on Local Officials

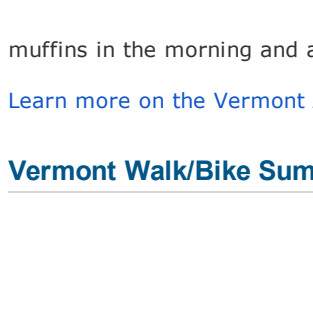


Are you a select board member, town clerk, planner, road foreman, zoning official, conservation commission member, energy committee member, or other local official? On Monday, March 31st, join the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources at the National Life Building in Montpelier. This all-day event will include poster presentations, workshops, technical assistance and the opportunity to engage with Agency staff members and municipal colleagues from across the state.

[Pre-registration](#) is required. The \$25 fee includes coffee and muffins in the morning and a buffet lunch by the New England Culinary Institute.

[Learn more on the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources website](#)>>

#### Vermont Walk/Bike Summit and Bike Expo, March 29-30 in Burlington



Help recognize the ongoing work of making walking and bicycling more visible, safe, respected and fun. Come to Burlington for two full days of dynamic speakers, workshops, exhibitors, and activities!

The Vermont Walk/Bike Summit will take place on Saturday, March 29, from 8:30am - 4pm at the Hilton Hotel on Battery Street in Burlington. Keynote speaker Caroline Sampanaro (in photo) is the Senior Director of Campaigns and Organizing at Transportation Alternatives, New York City's leading transportation advocacy organization, with a citywide network of over 100,000 supporters. She has helped spearhead the rapid transformation of NYC into a bicycle-friendly city, and directs dozens of grassroots campaigns to transform the city's streets.

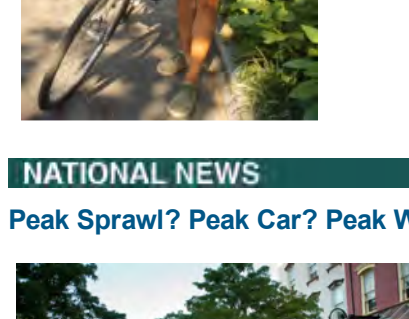
The [registration](#) fee, \$20 before March 28 or \$30 at the door, includes ten workshop options, a plated luncheon, and outdoor activities.

Then, stick around for the [Bike Expo](#) on Sunday, March 30, from 10am - 4:30pm. Check out a number of cycling-specific events, including demos in Battery Park and non-competitive rides.

[Learn more about the Walk/Bike Summit and the Bike Expo](#)>>

### NATIONAL NEWS

#### Peak Sprawl? Peak Car? Peak Wal-Mart? Where will the Millenials Take Us?

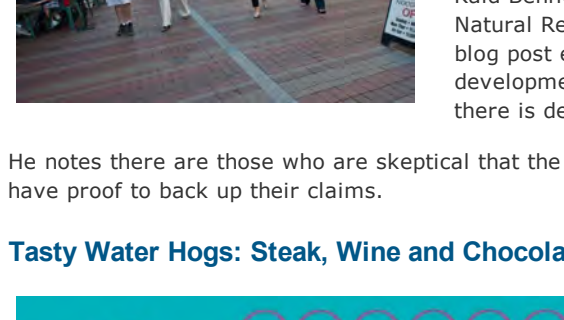


A [recent article posted on Better! Land-Creating](#), and [Towns](#) explores the notion that the land-consumptive, sprawl-and-growing, automobile-dependent era of American land use may be ending, driven in part by the Millennial generation that for the most part appears to want to live in urban environments.

Kaid Benfield, the director of sustainable communities at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, DC, in the blog post explores recent data on real estate, on land development and suggests that cities are being reborn, and that there is decreasing demand for far-flung suburban real estate.

He notes there are those who are skeptical that the trend. But he also questions whether the skeptics have proof to back up their claims.

#### Tasty Water Hogs: Steak, Wine and Chocolate all Take a Big H2O Toll



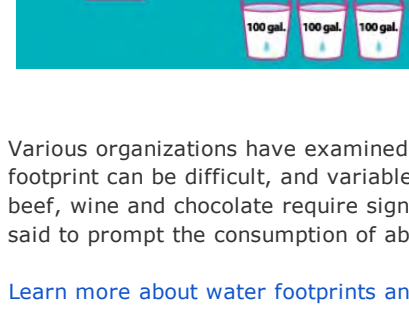
Most people commonly think the only water they use are for showers, drinking, or washing their dishes and clothes. But each of us has a water footprint that's far broader.

Increasingly, scholars have pointed out that each of us actually has a water footprint that is calculated by counting the amount of fresh water that we each use daily and the amount of water required to produce the goods and services that we consume.

Various organizations have examined the notion of a water footprint and while measuring one's water footprint can be difficult, and variable by region of the globe and source of any given product, foods like beef, wine and chocolate require significant volumes of water to produce. In the case of beef, a pound is said to prompt the consumption of about 1,700 gallons of water, for example.

[Learn more about water footprints and what you can do to reduce yours](#)>>

#### New Initiative Launched to Educate Public on Climate Misinformation



The National Association for the Advancement of Science has begun a new effort to help communicate facts about climate change. The new [What We Know Initiative](#) is aimed at assuring "three Rs" of climate change are communicated to the public.

The Rs are:

Reality: 97% of climate experts have concluded that human-caused climate change is happening.

Risk: the reality of climate change means that there are climate change impacts we can expect, but we also must consider what might happen, especially the small, but real, chance that we may face abrupt changes with massively disruptive impacts.

Response: that there is much we can do and that the sooner we respond, the better off we will be.

To guide the What We Know initiative, AAAS convened a group of prominent experts in climate science to address the fact that many Americans still erroneously believe that the scientific community is divided on the issue and that Americans are largely unaware of the full spectrum of the climate risks — both what is likely to happen and what might happen — that human-caused climate change presents to Americans now and in the future.

### Connect



### Get involved

- [Events](#)
- [Donate](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Influence Legislation](#)

### Be a Recurring Member!

[Donate a fixed amount every month](#)

### 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.