



## **VNRC's Climate Council Priorities**

The initial Climate Action Plan *must* include the following priorities in order to:

- Drive down climate pollution and meet our Global Warming Solutions Act targets;
- improve our communities' resilience; and
- ensure equity is front and center in how we prioritize and shape policies and investment strategies.

In addition to the issues highlighted below, we must take numerous small and large steps forward—but the following issues are among the most important priorities to include in the 2021 Climate Action Plan.

### **1. Reduce sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to achieve a decrease of 26% below 2005 levels by 2025.**

- a. **Sustainable Transportation** (made up 40% of GHG contributions in 2018)
  - i. Reduce the purchase and use of internal combustion vehicles.
    1. Increase the sale and use of electric and fuel-efficient vehicles for low- and moderate-income Vermonters.
      - a. Expand the [MileageSmart](#) and plug-in electric vehicle incentive programs
      - b. Adopt equitable feebate or similar policies (incentivize what we want, disincentivize what we don't want)
    2. Increase public transit ridership and expand demand management programs
      - a. Align VTrans budget and priorities with GHG reduction strategies
      - b. Make fare-free transit permanent
      - c. Provide financial support for private sector transportation demand management (TDM)
    3. Improve internal combustion engine vehicle (ICEV) emission standards.
      - a. Continue participation in California's more stringent motor vehicle emission standards.
      - b. Participate in low- and zero-emission vehicle programs, including for medium and heavy-duty vehicles.

- ii. Transportation Mode Changes
    - 1. Reduce the frequency of use and dependence on single occupancy vehicles.
      - a. Improve public transit and demand mgmt. programs
      - b. Increase investments in state programs to implement [Complete Streets](#), including bike and pedestrian infrastructure
    - 2. Continue funding the [Mobility and Transportation Innovations Grant Program](#)
    - 3. Improve integration of state, regional, and local land use and transportation planning.
  - iii. Commit to long-term funding sources to achieve reductions in emissions and invest in clean transportation solutions.
    - 1. Join and implement a strong and equitable Transportation & Climate Initiative program (TCI-P). TCI-P puts a cap on carbon dioxide emissions from transportation fuels and invests the revenue into programs to further reduce climate pollution and support healthy communities and more resilient infrastructure.
    - 2. In adopting TCI, Vermont must ensure enhanced equity through complementary state implementation policies, particularly in how investment decisions are made.
- b. **Better Buildings** (made up 34% of GHG contributions in 2018)
- i. Support the phasing out of fossil fuel-based and inefficient residential heating systems.
    - 1. Expand and create fuel switching programs, such as a Clean Heat Standard or other regulatory tool.
    - 2. Prioritize programs that help low to moderate-income and underserved communities, as we work to help Vermonters avoid locking into generational fossil fuel heating systems.
  - ii. Improve the health, safety and efficiency of residential homes.
    - 1. Implement weatherization at scale, weatherizing an additional 120,000 homes by 2030.
    - 2. Prioritize programs that benefit low to moderate-income and underserved communities with a long-term, sustainable funding source.
- c. **Access to Clean, Renewable Energy**
- i. Expand a clean, renewable, resilient, local energy system

1. Implement an updated 100% Renewable Energy Standard with improved grid resilience and more locally produced energy.

**d. Strong Rural Communities**

- i. Implement smart growth policies.
  1. Increase funding to improve municipal infrastructure to facilitate development in and adjacent to Vermont's downtowns, city and village centers.
  2. Implement incentives to develop in areas designated for growth and infill development, while simultaneously improving designation programs by ensuring that impacts of growth in designated areas are addressed - for example by ensuring that additional development does not occur in mapped river corridors while at the same time implementing policies that better protect farmland and forests outside of designated areas (see more specific policies below).
  3. Invest in affordable and appropriately sited housing to ensure all community members have access to jobs, transportation, etc.
- ii. Improve coordination among municipal, regional, and state planning staff to increase effectiveness and provide greater capacity for implementation.
  1. Create a State planning office or similar coordinating entity

**e. Resilient Agriculture and Ecosystems**

- i. Expand and enhance protections for Vermont's forests and agricultural soils.
  1. Set a state policy of no net loss of intact forest blocks, or agricultural soils. Clear and measurable conservation targets and land use policies are needed to ensure we maintain our forests and soils, which will be essential to hitting our long-term climate targets. These policies will also help us prepare thoughtfully for population increases associated with climate migration. Policy strategies are needed to achieve these targets, including improving Act 250's criteria and jurisdiction to address forest fragmentation, bolstering municipal zoning and subdivision bylaws to address forest fragmentation, supporting strong property tax incentives for keeping forests as forests, etc.

2. Develop and implement a 30% by 2030 and 50% by 2050 land and water conservation plan.
  3. Transition farming systems to more regenerative and organic practices to improve soil health and related benefits.
  4. Support accessible and equitable research, partnerships and education including Traditional Environmental Knowledge, workforce development, and technical assistance to landowners.
  5. Implement nature-based climate solutions - including flood hazard mitigation and connected rivers.
  - 6.
- 2. Ensure a Just Transition.**
- a. Integrate principles of environmental justice and equity.
    - i. Adopt a statewide Environmental Justice policy
    - ii. Require State agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their work, including accountability mechanisms such as an environmental justice mapping tool
    - iii. Establish an Advisory Council on Environmental Justice within the Agency of Natural Resources
- 3. Commit to and invest in long-term, sustainable funding sources and workforce development for climate solutions among all levels of government.**
- a. To achieve the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act, the Climate Action Plan must make investments at the scale and scope required in both the short- and long-term. Further, we must invest in staffing capacity for state and local governments and partner organizations to implement the Climate Action Plan.
  - b. The state must make a concerted effort to support and develop the workforce that will be necessary to implement the numerous programs and policies that will be essential to meeting our greenhouse gas targets.

For more detailed information about our recommendations, please see letters from the [Forest Partnership](#) and [Water Caucus](#)