



Vermont's 2025 Environmental Common Agenda

Your guide to this year's top legislative priorities for the environment

Last legislative session, lawmakers enacted a suite of impactful environmental policies, including: holding Big Oil accountable for the damage they have done to our climate and communities, addressing flood safety, achieving 100% renewable energy by 2035 across all of our utilities, modernizing Act 250 to build much-needed housing while safeguarding our critical natural resources, and better protecting Vermonters from toxic PFAS, neonicotinoid, and other harmful chemicals. Collectively, these policies will make for healthier, more affordable, and more resilient communities.

There is much more work to be done. The Trump administration has already announced plans to roll back federal environmental investments and protections. This threatens the health and safety of our communities. The environmental community in Vermont stands ready to work with Vermont lawmakers to chart a different path forward. By implementing the numerous laws enacted in recent years, we can demonstrate how a healthy environment benefits our families and communities. We are committed to working to ensure Vermont remains a place where we can embody our shared values of healthy air, water, and land, connected and supportive communities, and an accessible and transparent democracy.

We are calling on Vermont lawmakers to:

- ✓ Watchdog and invest in **successful implementation of the historic climate and environmental laws** passed in recent years, and oppose any efforts to weaken environmental protections.
- ✓ **Build climate resilience** by **better protecting our lands and waters**, by better regulating farm pollution and chloride, and **better protecting our biodiversity and endangered species**.
- ✓ **Invest in affordable housing** that is centered on smart growth principles.
- ✓ **Cut climate pollution** and ensure an **accessible, affordable transition to clean energy**:
 - **Fund Vermont's electric vehicle incentives** and **public transit** programs.
 - Identify a regulatory approach that **helps all Vermonters transition to clean heating systems**.
 - **Make solar energy more accessible** for Vermonters.
- ✓ Foster healthy communities and safeguard our democracy:
 - Protect public health by **reducing people's exposure to toxic PFAS chemicals** and **reduce plastic pollution**.
 - Advance policies and programs that **support our local farms** and ensure **all Vermonters are food secure**.
 - **Safeguard Vermont's democracy** by passing a state Voting Rights Act, ranked choice voting, and banning corporate contributions.



Partner organizations supporting the 2025 Environmental Common Agenda:

Audubon Vermont
Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC)
Conservation Law Foundation (CLF)
Lake Champlain Committee (LCC)
Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV)
Renewable Energy Vermont (REV)
Rights & Democracy (RAD)
Third Act Vermont
350VT
Trust for Public Land (TPL)

Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR)
Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club
Vermont Climate & Health Alliance (VTCHA)
Vermont Community Thermal Networks
Vermont Conservation Voters (VCV)
Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited
Vermont Interfaith Power & Light (VTIPL)
Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC)
Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG)

The Vermont environmental community's vision for a bright future includes working to advance and defend policies that protect the environment; promote health, civil rights, social, racial and economic justice; bolster strong communities; and strengthen our democracy.



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The Environmental Common Agenda is a project of Vermont Conservation Voters (VCV).

VCV is the non-partisan political action arm of Vermont's environmental community. Since 1982, our mission has been to defend and strengthen the laws that safeguard our environment. We work to elect environmentally responsible candidates. We then hold legislators accountable for the decisions they make affecting our air, water, land, wildlife, communities, and health.

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Build Climate Resilience by Protecting the Health of Our Waters and Lands

Vermonters understand that the climate crisis is here. Vermont is one of the fastest warming states in the country, and we are feeling the impacts of climate disasters in our communities.

Protecting our forests, floodplains, and sustainable local farms plays a critical role in fostering community health, flood protection and climate resilience. There has been significant progress in recent years to build climate resilience and conserve critical habitats and natural resources in Vermont – in particular with the passage of the Flood Safety Act (Act 121) and legislation to adopt a goal of conserving 30% of our lands by 2030 and 50% by 2050 (Act 59). We must ensure these laws are implemented in an effective and timely manner, and that existing conservation programs are fully funded.

In addition to the critical work needed to implement these recently-enacted policies, there are a number of actions we can take this year to further strengthen our community resilience. Ensuring clean water and maintaining our state's biodiversity are essential to ensuring healthy people, protecting our quality of life, and maintaining a thriving economy.

As we fall behind on meeting our clean water targets, how we regulate our farms is an important factor. Under the current system, both the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (AAFAM) regulate water pollution on farms.



Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ **Ensure clean and healthy lakes, rivers, ponds and streams** by improving the regulation of water pollution on farms, and reducing chloride pollution.
- ✓ **Better protect biodiversity** by funding existing conservation programs and making strategic updates to Vermont's Threatened and Endangered Species Law.

This duplicative system has resulted in a lack of clarity for farmers and has failed to effectively address water pollution on farms. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently issued a letter to ANR stating Vermont's current system of regulating water pollution on farms violates the Clean Water Act. We are calling on lawmakers to shift clear authority to ANR to properly regulate water pollution on farms. This shift will create a clearer regulatory system for farmers, reduce redundancies in state government, and help ensure all farms are complying with our state and federal clean water laws.

Another water pollution issue is the over-salting of roads, which harms water quality and aquatic species. We are calling on lawmakers to pass a Chloride Reduction Program that will require municipalities to employ practices that will reduce the amount of salt used on our roads and therefore reduce harmful chloride pollution.

In Vermont, more than 200 plant and animal species are listed under Vermont's Threatened and Endangered Species Law. These species need conservation attention to improve their recovery prospects. We are calling on lawmakers to make strategic improvements to our endangered species law to enhance the overall ability of species to thrive in our state, and to examine ways to boost the recovery of listed species and prevent other species from declining.

Support Housing and Conservation Policies Centered in Smart Growth Principles

Every Vermonter deserves access to safe and healthy housing. With last biennium's updates to Act 250, Vermont has made huge strides toward building more affordable, climate resilient housing for current and future Vermonters. We must focus development in areas like our downtowns and village centers to maximize housing, mobility (walkable and bikeable streets with public transit options), and employment opportunities. Through this smart growth approach, we can simultaneously protect our vital farms, forests, and waters.

It is imperative that Vermont remains committed to the progress made with the passage of the HOME Act (Act 47) in 2023 and the Act 250 land use reform in 2024 (Act 181). We must give these laws time to be implemented effectively, and we must allow towns to comply with the new zoning and planning requirements. We are already seeing successes coming from these smart growth housing bills. To continue this work, investments supporting small-scale developers, affordable and energy efficient housing, community revitalization, land access, and rural lands are critical.

Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ **Maintain the balanced approach** achieved in last year's Act 250 and land use modernization law (Act 181) and the 2023 HOME Act (Act 47).
- ✓ **Promote housing that is affordable for all** by investing in multi-unit, mixed-use, and infill development located in well-planned, walkable areas.
- ✓ **Fully fund** the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board at statutory levels, increase funding and expand eligibility for Downtown and Village Center tax credits, and increase support for the Land Access and Opportunity Board, Regional Planning Commissions, and Natural Resources Conservation Districts.
- ✓ **Pass a rental registry** to ensure a healthy and safe housing stock for Vermont renters and support weatherization and energy efficiency efforts across the state.

For more information on climate resilience and smart growth initiatives, contact these experts at our partner organizations:

Climate Resilience

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Smart Growth

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Continue to Advance Equitable and Affordable Climate Solutions

Currently, many Vermonters spend a disproportionate amount of their income on heating, transportation, and electricity. Fossil fuels like oil, gas, and propane are expensive and part of a volatile global market. In contrast, clean energy can be produced locally, and is an affordable and healthier solution for our communities.

In 2020, President Trump formally withdrew the United States from the international Paris Agreement on climate change. At the time, Governor Scott affirmed our commitment to climate action, and the legislature enacted the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). The GWSA established climate pollution reduction requirements in line with the Paris Agreement, based on milestones determined by the world's leading scientists in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As the impacts of the climate crisis continue to grow, and the incoming federal administration pledges to roll back progress, we cannot back down from these commitments.

We have the opportunity to help all Vermonters — particularly those with low to moderate incomes — transition to affordable and accessible clean energy solutions. By transitioning to clean energy, we can build our energy independence, improve public health, and create valuable local jobs that will benefit Vermonters and our environment.

Clean Transportation

We are calling on lawmakers to begin an immediate process to review the Budget Adjustment Act and FY26 budget to reinstate funding for Vermont's critical electric vehicle and electric bike incentive programs for low- and moderate-income Vermonters. Further, we must identify sustainable funding to support public transit, active transportation solutions like biking and walking, and other affordable options. Additionally, the legislature must continue to advance a long-term funding source and policy tool to reduce greenhouse gas pollution from the transportation sector, while creating a modern transportation funding system.

Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ **Maintain our commitment to the Global Warming Solutions Act.**
- ✓ **Fund Clean Transportation programs**, including public transit, bike and pedestrian programs, and electric vehicle incentives.
- ✓ **Help all Vermonters access clean and affordable heating solutions** by advancing a regulatory framework.
- ✓ **Increase Vermonters' access to solar energy** by reauthorizing the Standard Offer Program.

Clean Heat

Our goal with any policy around how we heat our buildings is for the state to help low- to moderate-income Vermonters access clean and affordable heating solutions. One proven technology that the Public Utility Commission is currently investigating is Thermal Energy Networks, which has a role in our clean energy future. More broadly, in 2023 the Affordable Heat Act was passed, mandating the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to research and propose a Clean Heat Standard for the state of Vermont. The PUC has also indicated that it will be proposing one or more additional policies for the legislature to consider in this area. We urge the legislature to vet a range of potential options, and to act to help Vermonters access cleaner, more affordable heating solutions.



Clean Power

Related to clean electricity, several notable state government processes are underway. The PUC is examining ways to protect ratepayers, and that study will be in front of the legislature in 2026. Further, Standard Offer solar projects are a cost-effective way for utilities to meet their in-state solar requirements under Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard (RES). Created by the Legislature in 2009 and expanded in 2012, the original program was fully contracted out. Now that the state has

required more in-state renewables in the RES of 2024, reauthorizing the Standard Offer program is a good way to ensure cost-effective, efficient, and predictable deployment of solar power in Vermont. Further, we need to ensure our current net metering program is working as intended, and oppose any additional cuts to the compensation Vermonters receive for going solar using that program. Finally, we need to assess and ensure that we have effective energy siting policies and processes.



For more information on clean energy initiatives, contact these experts at partner organizations:

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Safeguard Vermonters' Health and Democracy

Vermont is a special place to live; the natural world is all around us and neighbors know neighbors. In this time of uncertainty and division across the country, Vermont must stand strong as a place where anyone can lead a safe and healthy life, and where our voices are heard.

Healthy Communities

Vermont has a track record of working toward healthy and thriving communities. In recent years, the state has made huge strides to better regulate toxic chemicals such as PFAS and pesticides. This year we must effectively implement the ban on neonicotinoid-treated seeds - which negatively impact pollinators. As Vermont makes headway in cleaning up toxic chemicals in our environment, we must also do everything possible to reduce or divert our waste to Vermont's aging and only landfill. A modernized bottle bill, a policy which passed the legislature last year but was vetoed by the Governor, would help address this issue by increasing recycling.

Supporting Vermont food supply chains to be strong and resilient is another critical component of supporting Vermonters' health. Climate change will continue to impact food supply chains and jeopardize access to food across the globe. Here in Vermont, we can prepare our food systems for disruption by building a strong regional



Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ Further **restrict consumer products containing harmful PFAS "forever" chemicals.**
- ✓ **Create a climate impact recovery fund for farms** and ensure **full funding of Vermont's local food security programs:** Crop Cash and Farm Share.
- ✓ **Ensure a healthy democracy** by advancing Ranked Choice Voting, banning corporate contributions in campaigns, and passing a Voting Rights Act for Vermont.

food supply, supporting the resilience of our food producers, and working to ensure food security for all who live here. Strong local food systems create climate resilience and better protect our state when disaster hits. In line with the Food Security Roadmap, Vermont should ensure food security for all, that farms have the resources to be resilient, and that communities have the tools necessary to support attaining food security.

Democracy

Vermont can build on its record of cultivating a healthy democracy by passing our own Voting Rights Act to make sure all Vermonters have access to the ballot, working to reduce the influence of outside spending including banning corporate contributions, and advancing ranked choice voting - which fosters better civic discourse during elections and helps encourage more candidates to run.

For more information on health and democracy initiatives, contact these experts at partner organizations:

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