



# The Vermont Council on Rural Development

Summer 2006

*Creating a prosperous future for rural Vermont through facilitation, collaboration, and the effective use of local, state, federal, educational, and private resources.*

## From the Board

### Catherine Dimitruk, VCRD Board Chair

One of the most pressing issues before us today is energy: where does it come from and at what cost – to our pocketbooks, our environment, our rural character? Vermonters are not just lamenting a challenging situation. They are digging in with innovation, determination, and optimism as they tackle solutions that a changing energy sector demands. VCRD is a part of those conversations, and will devote a substantial amount of its 2006-2007 programming in exploring economic opportunities in fuel development, power generation, and efficiency in rural Vermont. In this issue we feature two new VCRD energy initiatives: a one-day Summit on Local Power in August, and a year-long council devoted to producing policy recommendations around Vermont energy.

We remain committed to working within rural communities around the state as our Community Visit Program enters its 15<sup>th</sup> year and our Creative Communities Program builds strong networks town to town. The Vermont Brand is being actively promoted through our work in the forest products industry, and we continue to support the expansion of wireless access in rural areas.

We look forward to a dynamic and productive summer.

*Catherine Dimitruk assumed the role of VCRD chair in June 2006. She is the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.*

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## **Local Power: Energy & Economic Development in Vermont**

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is pleased to announce our 2006 summer conference - Local Power Energy and Economic Development in Rural Vermont. The conference will be held at Lyndon State College on August 22 from 9:00am – 4:00pm.

The conference is open to the public through pre-registration and will bring together entrepreneurs, energy developers, policy leaders, environmentalist, members of the agricultural and natural resources community, economic development specialists, and other interested individuals. Those attending will have the opportunity to consider what policies and investments may help advance the energy sector, and will work to define opportunities for in-state power generation, fuel development and efficiency.

This promises to be a full and fascinating day, with perspectives from invited speakers, Senator Patrick Leahy, Representative Bernie Sanders, Governor Jim Douglas and Lt. Governor Brian Dubie. Dan Reicher of New Energy Capital will present a survey of best practices and strategies found both domestically and internationally. A panel of noted experts from diverse fields will discuss Vermont's potential for realizing energy opportunities. Finally, participants may register for one

of eleven work groups and are invited to share their expertise and ideas in facilitated discussion forums.

***Register early – space is limited!***

Registration forms can be found on our website at [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org) or by contacting [vcrd2@sover.net](mailto:vcrd2@sover.net)

VCRD has convened annual conferences on topics of rural importance since 1996, operating from the principal that dialogue, collaboration, a respect for diverging opinions, and building consensus is essential in moving from ideas toward action. Points of discussion and recommendations from the 2006 conference will be presented in a published report for consideration by the Governor's office and Legislature. Additionally, the conference will provide starting points for consideration by the Vermont Rural Energy Council, VCRD's year-long policy initiative. (See article following)

Advances in renewable energy and efficiency are occurring throughout Vermont, and the rest of the world. Learn what's being done now, and explore what may lie ahead. This will be a working conference where your ideas matter. We hope you can join us!

### **VCRD 2006 Local Power Summer Conference Work Groups**

1. Vermont Solar
2. Hydro Opportunities
3. Developing Utility-Scale Biomass
4. Farm-Based Methane
5. Transportation and Bio-Fuels
6. Waste-to-Power
7. Efficiency and Conservation
8. Co-Gen and Distributed Generation
9. Community & Household/Business Scale Wind Power
10. Creating the VT Green Energy Brand
11. Community Energy Planning

## Vermont Rural Energy Council

In June, VCRD instituted the Vermont Rural Energy Council (VREC) a one-year policy council designed to unite federal, state, non-profit, and industry leaders in identifying opportunities and proposing policies, investment strategies, and practical action to expand economic development in renewable energy generation, fuel development, and energy efficiency in rural Vermont.

Emerging technologies in biomass, thermal, water, farm and bio-waste methane, solar, bio-fuels, and small-scale and community wind projects offer unprecedented opportunities for rural entrepreneurship and should be systematically promoted today as elements in Vermont's economic brand, and as strategies toward the future sustainability and prosperity of rural communities. By leading in energy efficiency and the innovation of renewable local power, Vermont can build a major competitive advantage for its businesses and communities.

Toward that end, the Vermont Rural Energy Council will take one year to evaluate issues and build a practical blueprint for action to promote energy generation in rural Vermont. VREC will explore opportunities provided by Vermont's forest, farm, solar, wind, water and thermal resources to maximize innovation and sustainable energy generation. The Council will address opportunities to expand the generation of electric power but will consider transportation, and home and commercial heating of equal importance.

The Council's work is bounded and specific, and is not designed to address the wide range of issues related to Vermont's

energy policy or to develop recommendations around the future of Hydro Quebec contracts, Vermont Yankee re-licensing, or utility-scale wind projects. Instead, VREC will make specific recommendations to Vermont's Governor, Legislature, Congressional Delegation, energy industry and public that would expand state policy and public/private cooperative action to support and enhance the generation of power, development of fuels, and improvement of energy efficiency in rural Vermont.

Chaired by **Richard White**, CEO of Community National Bank, VREC members include **Paula Calabrese**, Casella Waste Systems; **Hal Cohen**, Central Vermont Community Action Council; **Robert De Geus**, Department of Forests Parks & Recreation; **Rep. Robert Dostis**, House Committee on Natural Resources and Energy; **Michael Dworkin**, Vermont Law School; **Bob Foster**, Foster Farm; **Sen. Vince Illuzzi**, Sen. Economic Development Committee; **Ellen Kahler**, VT Sustainable Jobs Fund; **Tom Kavet**, Kavet, Rockler & Associates; **Steve Kerr**, VT Secretary of Agriculture; **Kerrick Johnson**, CVPS; **Lawrence Mott**, Earth Turbines; **Andrew Perchlik**, Renewable Energy VT; **Chuck Reiss**, VT Builds Greener Program; **Bob Rogan**, Green Mountain Power; **Chuck Ross**, Sen. Leahy's Office; **Beth Sachs**, VEIC and Efficiency VT; **Bill Sayre**, Economist and AIV; **Mark Sinclair**, Clean Energy Group and Clean Energy States Alliance; **Rich Smith**, Department of Public Service; **Lisa Ventriss**, VT Business Roundtable; **Netaka White**, VT Biofuels Association; **Jeff Wolfe**, Global Resource Options; **Bonnie Smoren**, VCRD, Project Manager; **Paul Costello**, VCRD Executive Director, Producer.

## **Creative Communities**

The Creative Communities Program has completed work with four communities around the state. Final reports for Hardwick, Rutland, St. Albans and Windsor are now available (see <http://www.vtrural.org> to download a PDF version). These communities have formed teams to implement projects that cover a range of topics, from launching a PR campaign for Windsor to strengthening the future of the Town House as a center of creative activity in Hardwick.

Bellows Falls continues its series of creative economy workshops. The first workshop this spring explored possible outlets for local foods sales in the downtown (including in winter). A second workshop, on marketing for local restaurants, is planned for July 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Creative Communities Program is excited to have begun work with two new communities: St. Johnsbury and the towns of Grand Isle County. Public forums will be held in these places in late summer and early fall.

Applications are still welcome for participation in the Creative Communities Program; new participants will be added throughout the fall and winter. Updated application guidelines will be available online starting July 21<sup>st</sup> (<http://www.vtrural.org>).

For more information please contact Helen Labun Jordan at [ccp@sover.net](mailto:ccp@sover.net) or (802) 223-3793.



## **Community Visit Program**

Hugging the Southwesterly corner of Vermont, the town of Pownal is a place of beautiful landscapes, changing economic fortunes, and a unique geography containing three village areas in one community. It is also home to residents committed to helping Pownal achieve its best destiny – one that reflects the values and goals of the people who live and work there.

Many of those residents showed up ready to work during VCRD’s recently completed Community Visit to Pownal. The forums and town meetings offered throughout the 3-month program saw the largest turnout in the history of the program.

In the end, residents formed work teams to work in four selected areas:

### **Economic Development**

### **Outdoor Recreation**

### **Community Identity & Communications**

### **Mobile Home Park Improvement & Affordable Housing**

Peter Hopkins, Chair of the Community Visit Process in Pownal will work closely with the committees, Selectboard and Planning Commission as the task forces implement action plans and develop resources to achieve their goals.

For a complete report on Pownal see: <http://www.vtrural.org/reports-visits.php>

*“There are so many assets here! Taconic and Long Trails, town forests, a beautiful river, and people deeply connected to their home.”*

Forum Participant

## News and Updates

### New Website!

VCRD is delighted to unveil our new website at [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org). The new site features easy navigation, up to date information on all of our programs and initiatives, and a fresh look that we hope you will enjoy. Check back often to learn about opportunities for rural Vermont communities, conference news, and activities in forest products, energy, broadband access, rural policy and more. Thanks to Loud Canvas Media for website development and Wayne Fawbush for providing site images.

### Fall Community Visit – Hinesburg

Our next Community Visit will be in Hinesburg, a town of 4300 residents located in Chittenden County. Over the coming month, VCRD will work with townspeople to develop a steering committee that will help kick off the process, scheduled to begin with a community-wide forum in September.

### Forest Products

The Forest Products Marketing Initiative continues to provide many venues for Vermont woodworkers to showcase their work and expand their marketing opportunities through participation in activities promoting the Vermont Brand. The recently concluded Fine Furniture and Wood Products Design Competition was a showcase for the extraordinary craftsmanship found in Vermont Wood Products, and drew high praise from exhibitors and visitors alike. Be sure to visit the Woodstock Arena from September 30 through October 1 for the Third Annual Fine Furniture and Woodworking Festival – a fine fall weekend of food, music, and of course, Vermont Wood Products! For more information visit:

[www.cabotcheese.com/woodproducts](http://www.cabotcheese.com/woodproducts) or [www.vermontwood.com](http://www.vermontwood.com)

### Talking Points

“It’s democracy”, VCRD Executive Director, Paul Costello observed recently at a facilitated session in **Waterbury** designed to open up discussion around the issue of town/village merger. That principal is at the heart of all VCRD initiatives, and none more so than our increasingly utilized facilitation service. In addition to work in Waterbury, VCRD has recently facilitated discussions in **Burke** around development planning, in **Enosburg**, as townspeople consider public safety, and in **Chelsea**, as residents explore changes to school curriculum. VCRD provides skilled, neutral facilitation that is designed to elicit discussion and encourage local leadership around challenging issues.

**If your community would benefit from this service, contact Paul Costello at [vcrd@sover.net](mailto:vcrd@sover.net) or (802) 828-6024.**

### Broadband Update

Al and Laura Duey contract with VCRD to produce the Vermont Rural Broadband Project, which works with communities throughout VT that lack broadband access. By surveying and aggregating demand town to town, or regionally, the project sets committees to negotiate with service providers for affordable access. Residents in 13 towns have received broadband as a result of this initiative, and six more (Elmore, Lowell, Middlesex, Strafford, Westford and Worcester) are negotiating for service.

The Dueys also lead VCRD’s WiFi Project, which is building open access WiFi sites in businesses through the Northeast Kingdom.

For more information call them at (802) 467-1266 or visit [www.vtruralbroadband.org](http://www.vtruralbroadband.org)



## **VCRD 2006 Membership**

Not a member? **It's not too late to join VCRD as a 2006 member.** Members join VCRD partners in promoting opportunities in rural communities throughout the State of Vermont. Members receive VCRD program reports, quarterly newsletters, Annual Reports, and may participate as resources to communities and policy dialogues as appropriate. To become a member of VCRD, send contact information and a check for \$30 (Individual), \$125 (Organization), or \$500 (Leadership Contribution) to VCRD, PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development deeply appreciates the partnership of our members in the work of the Council. Annual membership dues help cover the operating expenses of the VCRD.

VCRD is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Our VT State Tax ID number is 125249 and our Federal ID number is 03-0354510.

<b>Organization:</b>	_____
<b>Name/Title:</b>	_____
<b>Address:</b>	_____
	_____
<b>Phone:</b>	_____ <b>Fax:</b> _____
<b>Email:</b>	_____

- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$30.00 Individual Member Dues**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$125.00 Organization Member Dues**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$500.00 Leadership Contribution**

**Please make check payable to: Vermont Council on Rural Development. Thank you so much for your support!**

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*VCRD is an equal opportunity employer and provider.*