



VCRD News

FALL 2008

From the Chair

Jolinda LaClair, State Director,
USDA Rural Development

The leaves in most parts of our small, vibrant state of Vermont, have dropped...blanketing our landscape with the signs of winter that bring hardship to Vermont households and businesses, as well as crisp, fresh clarity that helps generate exciting new ideas in time for spring planting. VCRD has its hands in the mix of innovation to address Vermont's challenges across sectors and in every corner of the state, making for a very exciting and busy time! In the last several months VCRD completed a "Community Visit" process in Killington, followed up to advance the recommendations of the Vermont Rural Energy Council, organized a strategic planning process to promote Agricultural Development in Vermont, and, most significantly, produced the work of the Council on the Future of Vermont.

Commissioned and managed by VCRD, the Council on the Future of Vermont has gathered the thoughts

of thousands of Vermonters through polls, on-line surveys, stakeholder sessions, and over 100 community-based meetings throughout the state. With historically unprecedented outreach, the council has heard about Vermont values, challenges and opportunities, and priorities. The final report, due in the Spring of 2009, will describe starting points that Vermonters share and will consider how we can work together to achieve our common priorities. The VCRD Board is eager to review the findings of the Council on the Future of Vermont and to take leadership in organizing follow up efforts for policy or program development with a variety of Vermont stakeholders and leading organizations.

As the new chair of the VCRD Board I want to take a moment to thank Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director of the NW Regional Planning Commission and VCRD's outgoing chair, for her wise and balanced leadership these last two years. It is an exciting time at the VCRD Board; we are proud of our

VCRD Membership

Please consider joining VCRD. Your membership contribution makes it possible for us to continue making a difference in Vermont. Donations to VCRD are tax-deductible. [Click here for the join/renewal form](#) and mail in your contribution today. Thank you!

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Council on the Future of Vermont
- Broadband in Vermont
- Strategic Planning for Agriculture Development
- Community Programs:
 - Creative Communities
 - Community Visits
 - VT Rural Energy Council
- VCRD News
- Publications

recent undertaking as conveners of policy and community progress, and despite the challenges ahead for rural Vermont, we look forward with confidence.

Council on the Future of Vermont ~ www.futureofvermont.org

The Council on the Future of Vermont (CFV) is turning a corner and heading into the home stretch. The community discussions, interviews, polling and research

make this project probably the most intensive study of public perspectives on the future and its imperatives that has ever taken place in Vermont. We feel honored

to be managing this conversation, and humbled by the thanks we get from Vermonters who say; "It is time we had this conversation!"

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Today, the **community meetings** in counties throughout Vermont are complete. In addition to the 14 open community sessions, over 80 meetings have taken place with groups ranging from young men in prison to leaders in business, arts and professional associations, firefighters and veterans groups, high school students and farmers. We have taken thousands of pages of testimony from Vermonters on Vermont values, the challenges and opportunities ahead, and the priorities that they believe we should rally behind as a people.

VCRD staff is taking testimony from boards and interest groups with experience and expertise that can lend specificity to the ideas contributed in community sessions. These **organizational sessions** range from groups such as the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, to the Vermont School Boards Association, to the Abenaki Nation.



The CFV **telephone poll** documented the values Vermonters hold and their ranking of the key challenges ahead. Soon to be published on

line poll results will allow us to compare the contributions of hundreds more Vermonters.



The Center for Social Science Research at St. Michael's College has built a research team to analyze 20-year **trend lines** in categorical areas ranging from demographics to crime, from Vermont's forests to Vermont's economy. Their historical analysis will be published for the use of the general public and will form one of the foundations for deliberation toward the final report of the CFV.



The Council on the Future of Vermont is working to evaluate all the data, balance the voices, and sift through the meaning of all we have heard into a **final report**. This report will include a clear and readable summary of categorical findings, a synthesis that analyzes key themes and directions for the state, and a statement that consolidates all that we have heard about the values and points of

Conference on the CFV Findings

Spring 2009

UVM Dudley Davis Center

Join us for the unveiling of the findings at our Council on the Future of Vermont Conference in Spring 2009. Many of you have participated in one way or another in this process, and now we will give you, and all Vermonters, the opportunity to **review CFV findings, brainstorm actions** to respond to findings and **prioritize and set common goals and responsibilities** toward advancing identified issues. Look for more about this exciting conference soon!

vision of Vermonters as we look to the future together.

VCRD has built a **roll out plan** for the report that ensures that the CFV findings go back into all corners and crannies in Vermont, and are systematically presented to the people of Vermont, the Governor and Legislature, and key stakeholders. A VCRD Committee is designing a **3-day conference** to open the release in May; the hope is that the conference will open with a ceremonial presentation of the report to the people of Vermont with the Governor at a plenary session of the VT Legislature. We hope that you can be with us!

→ Young Writers Project (YWP)

The Council on the Future of Vermont is pleased to announce a new collaboration with the **Young Writers Project!** To bring youth voices more fully into this statewide dialogue, CFV and YWP have designed writing prompts for students across the state and plan to showcase and celebrate student essayists and authors with a series of publication opportunities and events—are you a young writer? Do you know students who need an incentive to write? Visit <http://www.youngwriters-project.org/> to learn more!

→ Art of Action – Shaping Vermont's Future Through Art

The Council on the Future of Vermont is working with the Vermont Arts Council and Lyman Orton on a unique project: **Art of Action – Shaping Vermont's Future Through Art**. This project will give artists the chance to take your inputs and create art that helps to provoke and inspire action around visions for the state! To learn more, visit www.vermontartscouncil.org

Broadband in Vermont ~ www.VTRuralBroadband.org

In the year 2000 VCRD built a **Broadband Working Group** to bring together State, Federal, Non-Profit and policy partners working toward the goal of universal and affordable high speed internet access for all of Vermont. Together this team devised aggregation strategies and helped VCRD build the **VT Rural Broadband Program**. Led by Laura and Al Duey of Burke, the program has provided consultation services to over 50 Vermont communities, helping many of them assess and aggregate their demand and negotiate with potential providers to draw services.

The establishment of the **Vermont Telecommunication Authority** has lessened the need for VCRD's Vermont Rural Broadband Project to provide consultation and/or aggregation services to many rural communities. The project continues to assist individuals and rural towns in determining their

broadband options and how to obtain services, and to distribute information on new broadband services. With recent announcements of major broadband expansions by Fairpoint and Comcast, VCRD's project will focus on the remaining unserved regions. At VCRD we deeply appreciate the leadership that the authority brings to the telecom issue, and in particular their role now convening the Broadband Working Group.

Another VCRD initiative, the **ConnectNEK Project**, has been helping small businesses, tourists and local residents in the Northeast Kingdom access broadband by building a series of WiFi hotspots throughout the region. Ultimately, these hot spots will be self-sustaining and revenue neutral in serving the local and tourism needs for connectivity in key downtown and community sites throughout the Kingdom.

As broadband availability increases in Vermont's rural areas, VCRD is changing its focus toward promoting productive use of the Internet. The **e-NEK Project** is experimenting with a variety of activities in two Northeast Kingdom communities to increase Internet usage by small businesses, individual residents and the community at large. The project is partnering with Lyndon State College to pair business students with small businesses to identify specific internet applications for each business. We can learn so much from these "digital natives" — they will be key leaders in helping businesses and communities find the full benefits of internet technologies, both for the bottom line, and for our ability to communicate and work together at the local level in the future.

Strategic Planning for Agriculture Development

At the beginning of 2008, the VT Agency of Agriculture and John Merck Fund asked VCRD to manage a strategic planning process designed to advance farm businesses and agricultural enterprises in the state. "**Moving Vermont Agriculture Forward**," began with two working task forces: **Branding and Marketing** and **Business Development**. The task forces were designed to look for key opportunities to support long-term business profitability in agriculture and value-added ventures, dairy and non-dairy,

and to identify signature projects that could advance agricultural development to the next level.

The **Branding and Marketing Task Force** is developing a platform with three key ideas:

1. Expanding cross agency support for agritourism;
2. Building a "Vermont Farm and Food Festival," to showcase VT agriculture; and
3. Establishing an on-line center for agritourism and Vermont product sales.

Members of the Branding and Marketing Task Force include:

- **Bill Stenger**, President, General Manager and CEO of Jay Peak
- **Dr. John Bramley**, CEO of Windham Foundation
- **David Marvin**, President, Butternut Mountain Farm
- **Bill Schubart**, President, Resolutions Inc.
- **Megan Camp**, Vice President, Shelburne Farms
- **Anson Tebbetts**, Deputy Secretary, VT Agency of Agriculture

The **Business Development Task Force** is evaluating the potential for the creation of a **Vermont**

Agriculture Development Corporation to rally technical advice, site and regulatory assistance, business planning and financing help, and equity capital to eligible agricultural entrepreneurs. Members of this group include:

- **Diane Imrie**, Director, Nutrition Services, Fletcher Allen Hospital

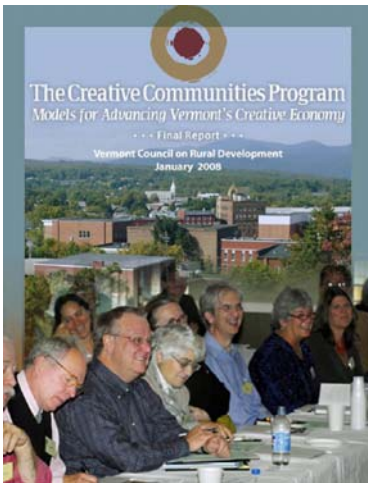
- **Robert Foster**, President, Vermont Natural Ag Products
- **Allison Hooper**, President, VT Butter and Cheese
- **Rep. Will Stevens**, Owner, Golden Russet Farm
- **Rosalie Wilson**, President, Business Development Services
- **Andrew Meyer**, President, Vermont Soy Company
- **Dan Smith**, Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation

- **David Lane**, Deputy Secretary, VT Agency of Agriculture

VCRD deeply appreciates the assistance of **Helen Labun Jordan** of the Agency of Agriculture in this effort. More information to follow!

VCRD Community Programs

Creative Communities Program



The **Creative Communities Program** has completed its effort of providing a strategic planning structure for 12 towns and cities working to advance the creative economy, build local brand identity,

improve downtown activities and amenities, and attract entrepreneurs, innovative businesses and jobs. VCRD continues to provide follow up assistance to these communities and is proud of the terrific work of the hundreds of local volunteers who are leading these efforts forward with terrific results. To learn more, look for the on-line final report at <http://www.vtrural.org/files/2008-ccp-final-report.pdf>, or contact us for a DVD telling the stories of participating communities and sharing an outline of how a community can succeed and where there are resources to help.

Community Visits

In the first half of 2008 VCRD conducted an exciting and successful **Community Visit** process to **Killington**. This process invites the entire community together to consider assets and challenges, to set priorities, to line up together for action, and to connect with leaders and resources to get things done. Over 300 Killington participants (30% of the adult population!) worked with the

VCRD visiting team to craft a vision for the future development of the town. A "**Town/Mountain Partnership**" Task Force was established to advance common efforts and interests, build bridges between groups and prevent or resolve potential conflicts. Other Task Forces are designed to **expand collaborative marketing, expand four season events**, and plan for the development of an indoor/outdoor **performing arts center**. With the passage of a municipal commercial tax, the town has built a new office to provide leadership and significantly boost economic development and marketing efforts.

VCRD is working to systematically advance our capacity to provide Community Visits and customized neutral facilitation in support of rural communities in Vermont; we are also beginning to identify towns for 2009. If your town is interested in a visit process or other community-based facilitation, contact Paul Costello at 223-5763 or email vcrd@sover.net.

Vermont Rural Energy Council

VCRD-built and produced the **Vermont Rural Energy Council** that worked from 2006 to 2007 to define clear strategies to expand in-state energy generation, fuel development and efficiencies that would support the future prosperity of the state.

VREC's final report, "**Strengthening Vermont's Energy Economy**," significantly raised awareness, educated Legislators and policy makers about issues and opportunities, and helped provide conditions to advance the short and long-term prospects of energy policies that will expand

efficiency, in-state generation and fuel development. While not the single cause of new provisions, VREC recommendations influenced statutory measures enacted this year and expanded the range of dialogue toward future action in Vermont. [Click here for the full report.](#)

S. 209, the “Vermont Energy Efficiency and Affordability Act.” connected to VREC

recommendations to:

- a. Advance agricultural generation, especially manure to electricity
- b. Advance all-fuels efficiency fund and program provisions
- c. Expand and enhance “Weatherization” program services
- d. Establish new “Weatherization” program eligibility standards
- e. Build a common energy audit tool
- f. Expand solar tax credits
- g. Improve residential and commercial green building standards
- h. Set up a platform toward “Smart Metering”
- i. Set up to explore tiered block rate structures for electric rates
- j. Expand Net Metering to 250 kw and include Group Net Metering
- k. Pre-development begun toward a Vermont Carbon Credit system

- l. Prioritize clean/renewable energy as elements of state portfolio
- m. Set plans to expand bio-fuel usage, with state leadership
- n. Provide for an evaluation of creating a “public power authority”

S 350, an “Act Relating to Energy Independence and Economic Prosperity” consolidated provisions

from the VREC report with the Governor’s Commission on Climate Change. Elements related to the VREC report included:

- o. Greenhouse Gas Registry
- p. Transportation efficiency planning
- q. Public transportation planning
- r. Encouragement of Combined Heat and Power projects
- s. Inclusion of solar hot water systems in Weatherization projects

There is much more to be done. The economic analysis and recommendations of the VREC report have had an impact, and will be a platform for further efforts to expand efficiency, in state power development, and the development of Vermont bio-fuels.

VCRD News

Welcome New Board Members

- **Mark Young**, President, First National Bank of Orwell
- **Tom Hark**, President, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Staff Updates

- VCRD says goodbye to **Bonnie Smoren**, Office Manager/Executive Assistant extraordinaire. Bonnie has taken a position at the Institute for Sustainable Communities. We wish her all the best and deeply appreciate the hard work, diligence, and dedication that Bonnie brought to all her effort in service to VCRD and rural Vermont communities.
- VCRD welcomes **Margaret Gibson McCoy** to carry on where Bonnie left off. Margaret worked for River Network in administration and communications for almost two decades before she took a couple years off to raise her two boys. She lives with her family in East Montpelier. We are delighted to welcome Margaret to the VCRD team!

VCRD Serves as Host for the NRDP/PRA National Conference

In September, VCRD hosted the annual conference of the National Rural Development Partnership/Partners in Rural America. Participants from 13 states joined us in Montpelier for 4 days of dynamic sessions around “Advancing Creativity and Innovation in Rural America” which kicked-off at the State House. Throughout the conference, panels of professionals led discussions pertinent to rural America on:

- Innovative Agricultural Development
- The Expansion of Renewable Energy and Efficiency
- Advancing the Creative Economy
- The Generational Transfer of Rural Wealth, and
- Telecommunications

At the conference conclusion VCRD Executive Director, **Paul Costello**, was honored with the 2008 Ron Shaffer Award which is given annually by the PRA to an individual who embodies the values necessary to build a national and state rural development partnership that meets the diverse needs of rural America.

Membership

If you haven't joined or renewed for 2008, it's not too late. Just fill out the membership form below and mail it in today! Thanks to these 2008 members for supporting the work of VCRD:

2008 MEMBERSHIP (as of October 2008)

Individuals

Ellen Atkinson
Robert Bast
Leon Berthiaume
John Bloch
Bill and Ruth Botzow
John Bramley
Michael Brands
Faith Brown & Jennifer Silpe
Greg Brown
Ronald Chaffee
Alison Clarkson
Vaughn Collins
Paul Costello
Douglas Cox
William Dakin, Jr
Karl Decker
Sen. William Doyle
Louis Dupont
Peg Elmer
John Ewing
Don Faulkner
Robert Foster
Barbara Grimes
Marie Houghton
Mark Hunziker
Victor Kalina
Candace Koenemann
Heidi Krantz
Jolinda LaClair
Stephanie Lahar
James Lathrop
Christine Lilyquist
John Magnant
Erhard Mahnke
Mary Mankin
Edgar May
John McClaughry
Susan McCormack
Glenn McRae
Jill Michaels
Mary Miller
Pat Moulton Powden
Diane Munroe
Phyl Newbeck
David Palumbo
Scudder Parker
Richard Peck
Andrew Perchlik
Andrew Pomerantz
Shanna Ratner
Michelle Rock
Linda Rooker
Betsy Rosenbluth

Christopher Roy
Laural Ruggles
Frank Sadowski
William & Kate Schubart
Bobette Scribner
Tim Smith
Emily Stebbins
Caryl Stewart
Peter Thoms
Carol Wells
Richard White
Christopher Wing
Robert Winkler
Michael Young

Organizations

Community Loan Fund
Biomass Energy Resource Center
Brattleboro Housing Authority
Butternut Mountain Farm
Central Vermont Community Action Council
Central Vermont Solid Waste Management
City of Montpelier
Concept II
Downs Rachlin & Martin PLLC
Gilman Housing Trust Inc.
Green Mountain & Finger Lake National Forests
Green Mountain Dairy Farmers Coop
GroSolar
Lyndon State College
Marlboro College
National Bank of Middlebury
NeighborWorks of Western Vermont
Northeastern Vermont Development Assoc.
Northern Community Investment Corp.
Northern VT RC&D Council
Northshire Bookstore
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
ORCA Media, Inc.
Preservation Trust of Vermont
Ravenmark, Inc.
Reg. Affordable Housing Corp.
Ryegate Power Station
Simon Pearce Inc.
Smartgrowth Vermont
Springfield Housing Authority
Springfield Regional Dev. Corp

Sydney Lea Living Trust
Systems inSync
The Hartland Group
Town of Bradford
Town/Village of Woodstock
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Comm.
Union Bank
Vermont Land Trust
Vermont Law School - Environmental Law Center
VT Agency of Transportation
VT Center for Emerging Technologies
VT Economic Development Authority
VT Energy Investment Corp
VT Housing Finance Agency
VT Public Power Supply Authority
VT Sustainable Jobs Fund
VT Wood Manufacturers Assn
VT Youth Conservation Corps
VT Association of Realtors
Waitsfield & Champlain Valley Telecom
Washington County Mental Health
Washington Electric Cooperative
Wells River Savings Bank
Woodstock Foundation DBA Billings Farm and Museum
Yankee Farm Credit

Leadership Donors (\$500+)

Agency of Commerce and Community Development
Ben & Jerry's Foundation
Cabot Creamery
Casella Waste Systems
Central VT Public Service
Chittenden Bank
Community National Bank
Greater Burlington Industrial Corp.
Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
High Meadows Fund
Housing Vermont
Killington Chamber of Commerce
The Lintilhac Foundation
McClure Foundation
Merchant's Bank
Merck Foundation
National Life of Vermont

New Castle Fund
NRG Systems
Passumpsic Savings Bank
Rutland RPC
State of Vermont
Union Mutual of Vermont
UVM Center for Rural Studies
Union Mutual of Vermont
USDA Rural Development
VT Community Foundation
VT Mutual Insurance
VT State Employees Credit Union
VT Transco - VELCO
Windham Foundation

VCRD Membership Form

Join VCRD in support of Vermont Communities! The Vermont Council on Rural Development deeply appreciates the partnership of our members in the work of the Council. Annual membership dues help us serve rural communities directly, and advance strong rural policy in Vermont. Members receive VCRD program reports, newsletters and annual reports, and may participate as resources to communities and policy dialogues as appropriate. VCRD is a 501c3 non-profit organization; contributions are tax-deductible.

Make checks payable to: 'VCRD' and mail to: VCRD, 43 State Street, PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384.

Name/Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

- \$ 35 ~ Individual Member
- \$125 ~ Organizational Member
- \$500 ~ Leadership Contribution
- _____ ~ Other

Check here if you prefer to remain anonymous and don't want to be listed in our newsletters or annual reports.

Questions? Call 802-223-6091 or email: vcrd@sover.net.

Recent VCRD Publications

Here are links to recent publications that can be found on our website:

- COMMUNITY VISIT REPORTS:**
 - [Killington](#), April 2008
 - [Derby](#), January 2008
 - [Richford](#), July 2007
- CREATIVE COMMUNITIES TOWN REPORTS/ACTION PLANS:**
 - [Manchester](#), August 2007
 - [Middlebury](#), July 2007
 - [Richmond](#), July 2007
 - [Plainfield](#), May 2007
 - [Randolph](#), May 2007
- [Creative Communities Program Final Report](#), January 2008
- [The Vermont Energy Digest](#), April 2007
- [Strengthening Vermont's Energy Economy: Final Report and Recommendations of the Vermont Rural Energy Council](#), August 2007
- COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT:**
 - [Looking Ahead: Vermonters' Values and Concerns Summary Report and Full Report](#) (2008 Telephone Survey Summary Results and Analysis), prepared by UVM's Center for Rural Studies, August 2008
- [Rural Development in Vermont: Community and Policy Findings](#), October 2008
- For a copy of the **Creative Communities DVD**, contact Margaret at: vcrd2@sover.net or 802-223-6091.



Save the Date:

Future of Vermont Conference

Spring 2009

UVM Dudley Davis Center

Join us for the unveiling of the findings at our Council on the Future of Vermont Conference in Spring 2009. Many of you have participated in one way or another in this process, and now we will give you, and all Vermonters, the opportunity to **review CFV findings, brainstorm actions** to respond to findings and **prioritize and set common goals and responsibilities** toward advancing identified issues. Look for more about this exciting conference soon!



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