



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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[Home](#) > Craftsbury Outdoor Center finds innovative heating solution for net-zero lodge

Craftsbury Outdoor Center finds innovative heating solution for net-zero lodge



Tucked behind a secluded lake in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, the [Craftsbury Outdoor Center](#) [1] is an outdoor-lovers' dream that offers year round recreation opportunities including Nordic skiing, running, mountain biking, and sculling. Family events, lodging, and event rentals are available as well. While the non-profit organization is dedicated to lifelong sports, Directors Judy Geer and Dick Dreissigacker also prioritize land stewardship and sustainability. At times, these multiple goals can present a challenge, such as when the Center recognized the need for a snow-making system in a changing climate.

Judy Geer says, "Nordic skiing is a major focus for the Outdoor Center, so Climate Change is a real concern. The fact that a Nordic center now needs to have a snowmaking system is a sign of change. We want to grow outdoor recreation at the center and bring regional and national cross-country ski events to the Northeast Kingdom, but at the same time we want to implement this as responsibly and sustainably as possible. We know this is important to our members, guests and

community, who share our love for VT winters.?

To do this, the Center needed to get creative. While installing their snow-making system, they also put in an innovative campus heating system which combines waste heat from the snow-making generator, the output of a high-efficiency wood-fired boiler, solar thermal and a heat pump (to provide supplemental domestic hot water in the summer). The heat from all these sources is stored in a large, highly-insulated underground water tank, from where it is distributed for both heat and hot water. Also served by this system is the net-zero day lodge and activity center added in 2014. With solar panels covering its roof, it makes a significant contribution to the power needs of the campus, along with the 8 solar trackers nearby. Composting toilets, local materials, passive ventilation systems, and other energy-efficient features are also part of the new facility.

The Outdoor Center recognized that changing winter conditions pose a risk to a sport they and many Vermonters and visitors love. However, they saw an opportunity to grow and thrive by accessing innovative technology to reduce energy use, improve efficiency, and offer their members and guests the experience they are looking for.

Tags:

- [innovator story](#) [2]

Town:

- [Craftsbury](#) [3]

Program:

- [Climate Economy Initiative](#) [4]

Source URL: <http://www.vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy/innovator/craftsbury-outdoor-center>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.craftsbury.com/>
[2] <http://www.vtrural.org/tags/innovator-story>
[3] <http://www.vtrural.org/town/craftsbury>
[4] <http://www.vtrural.org/term/programs/climate-economy>