

Vermont Council on Rural Development

*Helping rural Vermonters create a sustainable future
through effective use of public and private resources*

2011 Annual Report



A member of the National Rural Development Partnership, the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Vermonters and Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. A dynamic collaboration of federal, state, local, non-profit, and private leadership, VCRD is uniquely positioned to build partnerships to address policy questions of rural import. We welcome your comments, suggestions, membership, and support.

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Jenny Nelson, *Agricultural Policy Advisor*, Office of Senator Sanders

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***VCRD Board Development:** VCRD is designed to act as a true 'council' that brings together state, federal, non-profit, local and private sector leadership to support public policies and programs that serve the needs of Vermont's rural communities. With the change in administration, four long-term VCRD state-sector board members transitioned off the board in January 2011: **Jonathan Wood**, **Roger Allbee**, **Kevin Dorn** and **Pat Moulton Powden**. This year we welcomed 4 new representatives from the state (listed above).

Welcome to the Vermont Council on Rural Development 2011 Report

In the spring of 2009, VCRD published the conclusions of the Council on the Future of Vermont: *Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future*. This marked the completion of a two-year long project, maybe the most extensive evaluation of public values and priorities that has ever been conducted in the history of the state. *Imagining Vermont* documented the neighborliness and dedication to community that Vermonters have shown so powerfully in this past year in response to the Spring flooding, and especially in their courageous action during and after Hurricane Irene. That strength provides a foundation for optimism about the future vitality of rural Vermont communities.

At VCRD *Imagining Vermont* is a living document, a springboard to action, and a foundation for our work plan—in 2011 and for the next five years. In it Vermonters call for leadership to preserve and protect the working landscape and to advance the state as a center for innovation and green entrepreneurship—a place that creatively tests new ideas.

At VCRD we are dedicated to service to rural Vermont communities. We're designed to serve in two ways: first, as community organizers that help residents set priorities and line up for practical action for town improvement or revitalization. Second, as a neutral facilitator of policy dialogues focused on helping state, federal, non-profit, regional, business and congressional leadership work more effectively to address fundamental challenges and opportunities facing rural Vermont communities. In line with this mission and the charge we have from the Council on the Future of Vermont, VCRD has led dynamic programs in the last year to:

- Help Morrisville set core priorities and organize toward building a food coop, improving trails and walkways, revitalize empty buildings and incubate new businesses.
- Help the Shumlin administration and key partners plan ways to advance Vermont's innovative green economy.
- Complete the plan of the Vermont Working Landscape Council, build the Working Landscape Partnership and Coalition, and frame ideas for a Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Fund for Legislative and Gubernatorial action.
- Lead the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project providing on-line services to 24 rural communities including Front Porch Forum, 1:1 computing in schools, website development, business counseling, WiFi zone development and others.
- Serve as a lead facilitator for key conversations in Vermont ranging from food systems development, to food safety and security, green workforce development, and the future of education.

Through the Council on the Future of Vermont we heard about the dedication of Vermonters to the land and to action in the best spirit of democracy and community. We are grateful for the opportunity that we have, and the charge before us as an organization, to promote efficiency in policy development, and effectiveness in community dialogue and action, for the benefit of all Vermonters.

Paul Costello
Executive Director



VCRD Staff and Board

2011 Program Updates

Community Visit Program: Morristown

VCRD has conducted Community Visits in 40 towns to engage people, evaluate critical challenges, prioritize goals, set up work teams, and build bridges between local needs and public services and resources. Through the 4 month Community Visit Program, VCRD brings state, federal, private and non-profit leaders to hear the concerns of rural communities. The program fosters local leadership and provides facilitation, planning, and resource development to help towns identify and address their priority needs.

In 2011, VCRD conducted a Community Visit in **Morristown** where over 200 community members participated with support from 36 visiting Resource Team members. Through the process, Morristown residents identified four key priorities for action and formed task force groups who have begun work to **Develop a Morrisville Food Coop and Organize the Foods Industry; Organize a Business Incubator; Redevelop Empty Buildings Downtown; and Improve Trails and Walkways and Physically Unify the Town by Building a Pedestrian Bridge.**

The Morristown Community Visit report, available on our website at: www.vtrural.org, captures the process and includes the workplan that each

Morristown residents reading the list of opportunities together on “Community Meeting Day.”



task force has developed. In the months since the Visit, each of the task force groups have been hard at work and are making progress. As they move priorities to action the groups are supported with resources from federal, state, regional, local, non-profit, and business leaders who participated in the process.

In 2012, VCRD will bring the Community Visit program to **Bennington** and **Cabot**. VCRD is working to systematically advance our capacity to provide Community Visits and customized neutral facilitation in support of rural communities in Vermont. We’re working today to identify towns to work with in 2013 and beyond and are always glad to have towns nominated by our members, partners and friends!

Community and Economic Development Strategic Support

VCRD is committed to supporting communities who have participated in Council initiatives including the Community Visit Program, Creative Communities Program and e-Vermont Community Broadband Project. These programs compliment many VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development efforts to stimulate vibrant downtowns, create new commercial

ventures and develop sustainable local businesses. Thousands of residents in over 50 towns have benefited from these programs and many request additional facilitation, technical support, and implementation assistance.

In 2011, VCRD has provided strategic advice in follow

up to VCRD community programs and statewide efforts including **Fairfield, Killington, Randolph, Rutland, Pownal, Shoreham, Marlboro, Guilford, Richmond and Richford** and served as a resource and referral agent in support of numerous community efforts throughout Vermont.

VCRD also provides facilitation support to a number of systematic efforts to advance community and economic development in rural Vermont. In 2011 we led in the design and facilitated the day for the “Vermont Green Partnership’s Green Summit” on workforce development at VTC in November. VCRD also led in the statewide education summit produced by the VT School

Boards Association and Superintendent’s Association, framing ways to produce community engagement and facilitating a ‘town meeting’-style event of evaluating major policy questions around the future of public education in Vermont.

As an active member of **Partners for Rural America**, with a seat on its governing board, VCRD connects with State Rural Development Councils (SRDC) across the country and national leadership on rural issues. With its strong board and workplan, Vermont is seen as a national model of SRDC action.

e-Vermont Community Broadband Program

Online tools can offer significant resources and new opportunities in almost every aspect of our lives. However, many people lack the knowledge or awareness to use these tools to their best advantage. National studies consistently show that lack of familiarity with the Internet is a primary reason why households choose not to subscribe to high speed service as it becomes available. Rural towns have a skills and knowledge gap that allows a digital divide to remain even after broadband infrastructure is built.

In spring of 2010, the Vermont Council on Rural Development launched an ambitious project to help rural towns realize the full potential of the Internet.

The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project works locally to ensure best use of online resources to strengthen everything from education to government to business to community connections. Through e-Vermont and under the leadership of VCRD, seven partner organizations deliver services on the ground in 24 Vermont communities. Community Directors at VCRD coordinate these services and manage a process that engages community members from a range of backgrounds in applying broadband resources to reach local goals.

Since the time of the previous annual report significant progress has been made in deployment of partner resources. For example:

- **Digital Wish** increased from serving 665 students with their 1:1 computing education to 1,139 as they bring technology and training to classrooms around Vermont; in-school trainings reached almost 1,500.
- **Front Porch Forum** subscriptions increased from 2,000 to 6,284 households in e-Vermont towns. A quarter of the e-Vermont towns now exceed 50% subscription rates.



- **The Vermont Small Business Development Center** increased its base of e-Vermont business clients receiving individual advising services from 32 to 91.
- **The Snelling Center for Government** is helping 16 town governments build websites.
- **27 local libraries** are receiving equipment for public Internet access.
- The **Vermont State Colleges** launched the Internet Interns program to place students at local libraries to help patrons' build competence.
- The **Vermont State Colleges, VCRD** and the **Department of Libraries** launched the Teaching Internet Basics training program to teach technical and pedagogical skills for working with people new to using the Internet

The Vermont Council on Rural Development also works with leaders in e-Vermont communities to build projects that fall outside of partner services and respond to particular local needs. In 2011, first round towns completed these independently developed projects while second round towns launched their own projects. e-Vermont communities are **building wireless Internet zones, online archives for local historic documents, public**



PHOTO: ANDY DUBACK

Internet access using mobile computer labs, a series of community presentations on online tools in the creative economy, online streaming for public access television stations, and improvements to online farmers' markets.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is proud to lead this critically important project and bring lessons learned to communities statewide.

For more information, please visit www.e4vt.org. There you will find recent updates, press coverage, toolkits, webinars, community stories, and other resources.

Governor's Summit on Green Innovation

In June 2011 VCRD convened the "Governor's Summit on Green Innovation," in collaboration with the new administration of Governor Peter Shumlin, to advance Vermont as a 'Green Innovation State' and to facilitate the development of action steps for work across agencies and organizations to promote green innovation as a driver for the future economic prosperity and environmental health of Vermont. Thirty-five participants (along with sixteen speakers, panelists, facilitators, and staff) attended

the two day session at the Basin Harbor Club in Vergennes. Since then, we worked with the administration to analyze and focus the list of 21 categorical actions the participants put forth into six priorities that are now established as key directions for collaborative action to advance Vermont's green economy.

Working Landscape Partnership

Since its launch in December 2010, the **Vermont Working Landscape Partnership** (VWLP) has grown to 170 organizations and over 470 individuals. The Partnership includes farmers, foresters, businesses, non-profit organizations, state, federal, and local leaders, and others who are active in promoting the vitality of Vermont's farm and forest future. The Partnership has worked to advance the 5-point Action Plan developed by their leadership team, the Working Landscape Council. It proposes systematic ways to support local agriculture and forestry, incubate and attract farm and forest entrepreneurs, build rural jobs, and conserve Vermont's Working Landscape for the next generation.

This major policy effort will advance the working landscape by supporting the businesses that have produced and stewarded that landscape and new innovative enterprise development to advance farm, forest, and value-added development for a new generation.

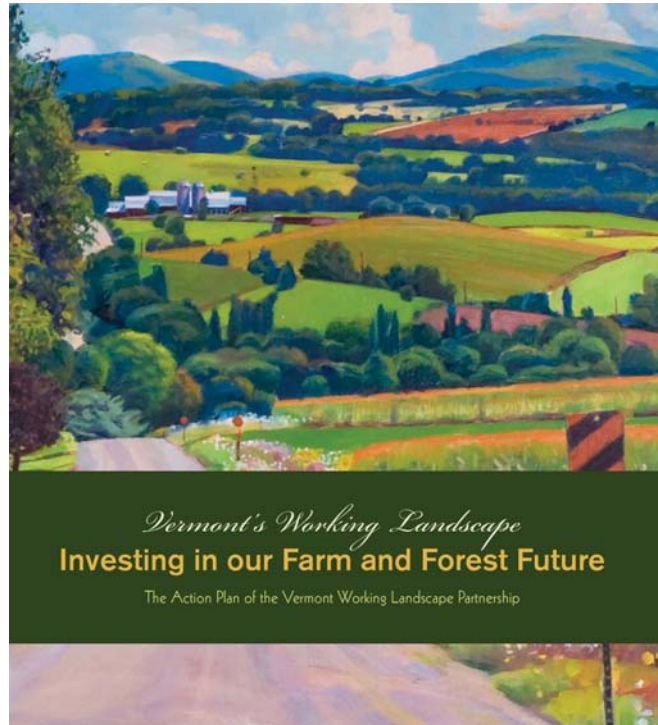
VCRD convened and facilitated the **Vermont Working Landscape Council** (VWLC), a diverse representation of farmers, foresters, and stakeholders to serve as the leadership team for the VWLP to build the Action Plan which they adopted in September 2011. VCRD then published and distributed 1,000 copies of "**Investing in our Farm and Forest Future**," which calls for new land use policies and sustained investments in the enterprises that support the productive conservation of working lands. The platform proposes a state investment of \$15,000,000 annually in enterprise development, infrastructure and conservation designed to stimulate farm and forest enterprises and the value chains that build jobs and prosperity for rural Vermont communities.

With the Action Plan as a starting point, we've been rallying partners and supporters across party lines

and throughout the state united in the mission of dramatically driving forward new economic opportunities on the land as a foundation for the next generation of Vermont's working landscape.

VCRD presented the Action Plan to key Administration leaders over the course of the fall. We continue to meet with leaders of state government as well as organizations across the state that can mobilize their membership for implementation as we look toward the legislative session of 2012.

Join the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership and learn more about the subsequent success of these efforts at www.vtworkinglands.org!



Read the action plan at
vtworkinglands.org

2011 Members and Donors

VCRD receives financial support from Federal, State, Foundations, Businesses and Memberships. We would like to thank the many contributors who support our work in service to Vermont's rural communities. Annual membership dues help cover the operating expenses of the VCRD and fund all programmatic activities.

Individuals

Robert Bast	John Ewing	Stephanie Lahar	Phyl Newbeck
Julia Blake	Dana Farley	Sydney Lea	Nancy Patch and Kevin Conneely
Putnam Blodgett	Cheryl and Monty Fischer	Michael and Sandra Levine	Richard Peck
Bill and Ruth Botzow	Linda and Roger Fox	Jim Linville	Marcia and Albert Perry
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	Jolinda H. LaClair	Jenny Nelson	

Organizations

Bardill Land & Lumber Co.	Landworks	Vermont Association of Architects
Bradford Community Development Corp.	Maple Landmark Woodcraft	Vermont Association of Realtors
Butternut Mountain Farm	Marlboro College	Vermont Association of Snow Travelers
Cabot Creamery	National Bank of Middlebury	Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery
Mateo & Andy Kehler / Cellars at Jasper Hill	NeighborWorks of Western VT	Vermont Community Loan Fund
Central VT Community Action Council	Northern VT RC&D Council	Vermont Energy Investment Corp.
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	Onion River Coop / City Market	Vermont Professional Tax and Financial Services, LLC
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Green Mountain Power	People's United Bank	Yankee Farm Credit
	Preservation Trust of Vermont	

Rural Champions

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Foundations and Special Project Funders

Ben & Jerry's Foundation
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 Vermont Agency of Commerce &
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 The Vermont Community Foundation

Community Visits

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 Springfield Housing Authority
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 Yankee Farm Credit

e-Vermont: Community Broadband Project

The Evslin Family Foundation, Inc.
 UVM Center for Rural Studies
 Department of Commerce's National
 Telecommunications and Information
 Administration

e-Vermont In-Kind

Comcast
 Dell
 Digital Wish
 Front Porch Forum
 Microsoft
 Vermont Rural Partnership

In-Kind

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
 Serena Fox Designs

VCRD deeply appreciates our special partnership with the **Vermont Community Foundation** and we are especially grateful to **Mary Evslin** and the **Evslin Family Foundation** for their leadership on broadband issues in Vermont.

Join VCRD today in support of Vermont Communities!

Annual membership dues help us serve rural communities directly, and advance strong rural policy in Vermont. Make check payable to "VCRD" and mail to us at: PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05602.

NAME/TITLE: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

- \$ 35 ~ Individual Member
- \$ 125 ~ Organizational Member
- \$ 500 ~ Leadership Donor
- \$ 1,000 ~ Rural Champion
- \$ ____ ~ Other

Check here if you wish to remain anonymous and prefer not to be listed in our outreach materials.

VCRD is a 501c3 non-profit organization; contributions are tax deductible.

VCRD Programs, 1997-2011 *Program reports are available at www.vtrural.org*

Community Visits:

Morristown, 2011
 Fairfield, 2011
 Marlboro, 2010
 Shoreham, 2010
 Killington, 2008
 Derby, 2007
 Richford, 2007
 Hinesburg, 2006
 Pownal, 2006
 Woodstock, 2005
 Chelsea, 2005
 Bristol, 2004
 Johnson, 2004
 Enosburg, 2003
 Poultney, 2002
 Troy/Westfield/Jay, 2002
 Northfield, 2001
 Wilmington, 2001
 Bradford, 1999-2000
 Brandon, 1999
 Middletown Springs, 1999
 Rockingham, 1998
 Richford, 1996-97

Creative Community Projects:

Manchester, 2007
 Middlebury, 2007
 Richmond, 2007
 Plainfield, 2007
 Randolph, 2007
 Bellows Falls, 2006-07
 St. Johnsbury, 2006-07
 Islands, 2006
 Hardwick, 2006
 Windsor, 2006
 Rutland, 2006
 St. Albans, 2006

Summits:

Governor's Summit on Green Innovation, 2011
 Vermont's Working Landscape Summit, 2010
 Regions Connecting for Rural Innovation, a Northeastern U.S. Rural Policy Convening, 2010
 Summit on the Future of Vermont, 2009
 Advancing Creativity and Innovation in Rural America, 2008
 Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy, a National Conference for the Partners for Rural America, 2007
 Local Power: Energy & Economic Development in Rural Vermont, 2006
 Beyond the Divide: Conflict and Paths to Community Success, 2005
 The Structure of Planning in Vermont, 2004
 Vermont Rural Roundtable, 2003
 Rural Economic Development, 2002
 Rural Summit on Housing, 2001
 Governor's Rural Summit, 1999

e-Vermont: Community Broadband Project (2010-2012):

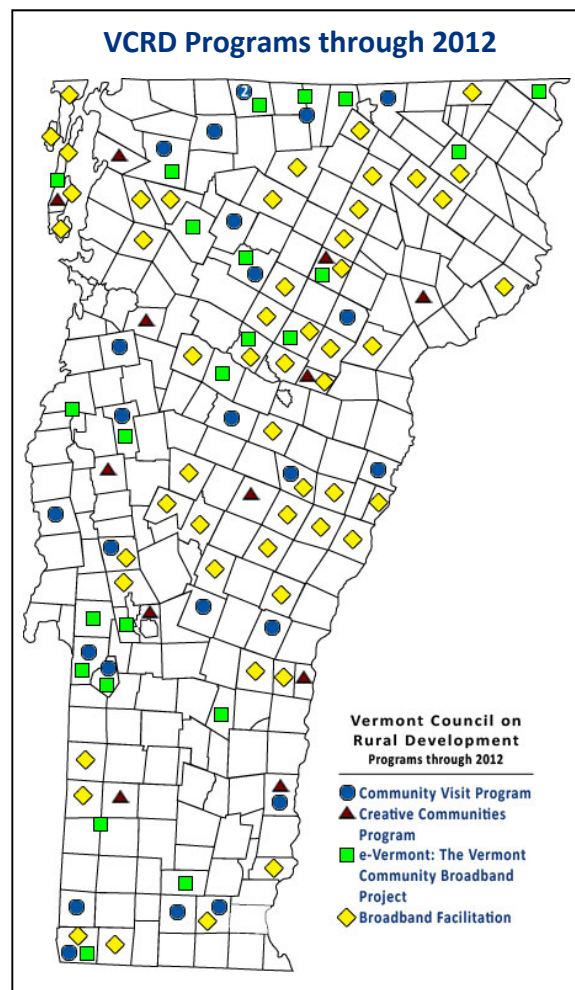
Brighton/Island Pond
 Bridgewater
 Bristol
 Cambridge
 Calais
 Canaan/Norton
 Castleton
 Dover
 Fairfield
 Grand Isle County (Alburgh/Grand Isle/Isle La Motte/North Hero/South Hero)
 Hardwick
 Jay/Westfield
 Ludlow
 Middlesex
 Middletown Springs
 Morristown
 Moretown
 Newport
 Poultney
 Pownal
 Richford
 Sunderland/Arlington/Sandgate
 Vergennes
 West Rutland

Councils:

Vermont Working Landscape Council, 2011-12
 Council on the Future of Vermont, 2007-09
 Vermont Rural Energy Council, 2006-07
 Vermont Council on Planning, 2004-05
 Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation, 2003-04
 Vermont Agriculture Viability Council, 2002-03
 Vermont Forest Products Council, 2001-03
 Vermont Broadband Working Group, 2000-05

Other Efforts:

Vermont Working Landscape Partnership
 Forest Products Marketing Initiative



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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