



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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

2008 Annual Report

-  Council on the Future of Vermont Forums 2007-09
-  Community Visits 1997 - 2008
-  Creative Communities 2006 - 2008
-  Broadband Projects 2000 - 2008

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 partnership of federal, state, local, non-profit, and private partners, 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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BOARD

FEDERAL

Jolinda LaClair – CHAIR, USDA Rural Development

Meg Mitchell – SECRETARY, Green Mountain National Forest

Harvey Smith, Farm Services Agency

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Roger Allbee, Agency of Agriculture

Kevin Dorn, Agency of Commerce & Community Development

Pat Moulton Powden, Department of Labor

Jonathan Wood, Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

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Joe Fusco, Casella Waste Systems, Inc.

Marie Houghton – VICE CHAIR, IBM

Mark Young, First National Bank of Orwell

NON-VOTING CONGRESSIONAL LIAISONS

Tricia Coates, Congressman Welch's Office

Jenny Nelson, Senator Sanders's Office

Chuck Ross, Senator Leahy's Office

From Paul Costello, Executive Director

As Vermonters, when we look to the challenges and opportunities ahead, we know “we’re all in it together.” The Vermont Council on Rural Development is proud to play our part in bringing Vermonters together through programs and policy efforts in support of rural communities throughout the state. Our work covers a wide spectrum – from statewide Policy Councils and Summits to goal setting in small rural communities, from the expansion of broadband to the development of the creative economy, and everywhere works to unite leadership to address issues of fundamental importance to the future of the state. We are deeply grateful to all our 2008 partners and supporters, and we salute the local leaders, committee members, and concerned residents in towns throughout the state who put themselves on the line to identify and address community priorities. In 2008, VCRD facilitated a strategic planning process to advance agricultural development, promoted broadband access and applications development in rural areas, and advanced the 2-year work of the Council on the Future of Vermont. With the many voices we heard throughout that process, and armed with the priorities that surfaced, we look to the future with renewed energy, excitement and commitment, and a fresh dedication to our work on behalf of rural Vermont.

Staff and Board Updates

We said goodbye in 2008 to dedicated board members **Chip Evans** (Vermont Workforce Development Council) and **Harvey Smith** (Farm Services Agency). Chip has completed his full term limit with the board and we extend our deepest appreciation for his contributions. Harvey resigned his position with his retirement from the Farm Services Agency. We wish him all the best!

New board members in 2008 include **Mark Young** (President, First National Bank of Orwell) and **Thomas Hark** (Founding President, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps). Welcome!

VCRD said goodbye to staff member **Bonnie Smoren**, Office Manager/Executive Assistant extraordinaire. 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. We are delighted to welcome her to our team!

Publications and Media Produced in 2008

Copies are available for download at www.vtrural.org or by calling 802-223-6091.

- **Final Report ~ Creative Communities Program: Models for Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy**, January 2008.
- **DVD ~ Vermont's Creative Economy: Progress and Promise**, January 2008. *A multimedia resource for economic and community vitality from the Creative Communities Program.*
- **Community Visit Report ~ Derby**, January 2008.
- **Looking Ahead: Vermonters' Values and Concerns Summary Report and Full Report** (Telephone Survey Summary Results and Analysis), prepared by UVM's Center for Rural Studies, August 2008.
- **Community Visit Report ~ Killington**, April 2008.
- **Rural Development in Vermont: Community and Policy Findings**, October 2008. *A summation of VCRD findings over the past 12 years.*
- **Vermont In Transition: A Summary of Social, Economic and Environmental Trends**, prepared by The Center for Social Science Research at St. Michael's College, December 2008.

2008 Program Updates

Council on the Future of Vermont

In 2008, The Council on the Future of Vermont (CFV) headed into the home stretch of the 2-year effort that began in 2007. 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.

The Council wrapped up the **community forums** in all 14 counties throughout Vermont and held over 80 meetings 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 took 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 also took testimony from boards and interest groups with experience and expertise that can lend specificity to the ideas contributed in community sessions. These **organizational sessions** ranged from groups such as the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, to the Vermont School Boards Association, to the Refugee and Immigrant Service Providers Network.

The CFV **telephone and online polling**, executed by the Center for Rural Studies at UVM, gave us statistically significant data on Vermonters' values and concerns. It gives us a sense of which issues had lots of agreement or were a source of division. Poll results were published in *"Looking Ahead: Vermonters' Values and Concerns"* available online.

The Center for Social Science Research at St. Michael's College analyzed 20-year **trend lines** in

many categorical areas such as: demographics, crime, forestry, economy and education. Their historical analysis, published in January 2008, *"Vermont in Transition: A Summary of Social, Economic and Environmental Trends"* formed one of the foundations for deliberation toward the final report of the CFV.



The Council on the Future of Vermont worked to evaluate all the data, balance the voices, and sift through the meaning of all they heard into a **final report, *Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future***. (published in April 2009 and available at www.vtrural.org). This report includes a clear 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 vision of Vermonters as we look to the future together.

VCRD is currently working through a **roll out plan** which ensures that the CFV findings go back into all parts of Vermont, and are systematically presented to the people of Vermont, the Governor and Legislature, and key stakeholders. The findings were released in a presentation at the Vermont State House in April 2009. Then the **Summit on the Future of Vermont**, held in May, saw 500 people gather and start to build actions around the findings.

Other components of the project in 2008 included partnerships with the **Young Writers Project, The Vermont Arts Council** and **Green Mountain College**.

We extend a special thanks to the dedicated members of the Council on the Future of Vermont!

Council on the Future of Vermont Members

Sue Allen, *Editor*, Barre-Montpelier Times Argus

Paul Bruhn, *Executive Director*, Preservation Trust of Vermont

Tom Debevoise, *CFV Chair*, Woodstock Dairy Farmer

Kara DeLeonardis, *Executive Director*, RUI2? Community Center

Steve Gold, *Retired*, Vermont Agency of Human Services

Chris Graff, *Vice President*, National Life Group

Cheryl Hanna, *Professor of Law*, Vermont Law School

Wanda Hines, *Co-Director*, Legacy Project, Burlington Community and Economic Development Office

Brian Keefe, *Vice President*, Government & Public Affairs, Central Vermont Public Service

Richard Mallary, *Retired*, US Congressman, Vermont Legislator

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, *President*, Marlboro College

William D. McMeekin, *Retired*, TD Banknorth

Félice Rivera, *Vice President for Communications*, Vermont Community Foundation

Charlie Smith, *President*, The Snelling Center

Emily Stebbins, *Strategic Planner/Analyst*, Office of the Vice President, University of Vermont

Greg Stefanski, *Executive Director*, Laraway Youth and Family Center

Fran Voigt, *President and CEO*, New England Culinary School

Laurie Zilbauer, *Senior Planner*, Northeastern Vermont Development Agency

Paul Costello, *Executive Director*, VCRD

Sarah Waring, *CFV Program Director*, VCRD

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 in **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 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 and 2010.

Broadband in Vermont ~ www.VTRuralBroadband.org

Broadband in rural Vermont continues to be an important issue for VCRD. Starting in 2000 with the formation of a **Broadband Working Group**, VCRD has continued to work toward the goal of affordable high speed Internet access for all of Vermont. This policy work has helped to promote the goal of universal access to an official state policy, and has encouraged state agencies to secure broadband expansion commitments from service providers. On a grass-roots level, VCRD's **Vermont Rural Broadband Project** has assisted over 50 Vermont communities in their efforts to obtain high speed Internet service locally. Led by Al and Laura Duey of Burke, this program continues to provide guidance to rural individuals who are trying to find service.

As the availability of rural broadband has increased in Vermont, VCRD's focus has turned to the productive use of the new service. Even after hard fought battles to obtain new service, the subscription rate for high speed Internet in rural Vermont is low, which jeopardizes the stability of the providers and their ability to expand service. The **ConnectNEK Project** was VCRD's initial effort in this area. This project helped small businesses in Northeast Kingdom establish WiFi hotspots, often the first use of broadband by the hosting businesses. The hotspots provide high speed Internet access for

tourists and local residents, and access to local travel information. Although the project has now ended, the Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourism Association has taken over the maintenance and expansion of the network.

The current VCRD project which focuses on promoting productive *use* of the Internet is the **e-NEK Project**. This project is working with Northeast Kingdom communities to increase Internet usage by small businesses, individual residents and communities. The project is community-driven, and encourages the community members to select Internet education and/or applications which are of value locally. The initial work was with physical communities, and has expanded to include communities of common interest, such as the local tourist facility providers.

The activities defined and explored by the **e-NEK Project** are being expanded on a statewide basis in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which includes funding for programs to expand knowledge and use of broadband. VCRD has taken a leadership role in crafting a statewide plan with other interested organizations. Upon approval and funding of the plan, VCRD will assume a management role in this project.

Vermont Rural Energy Council

VCRD founded 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 to expand efficiency, in-state generation and fuel development. While not the single cause of new provisions, VREC recommendations influenced statutory measures enacted in 2008 and expanded the range of dialogue toward future action in Vermont. [Click here for the full report.](#)

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** developed a platform with three key ideas:

- Expanding cross agency support for agritourism;
- Uniting agricultural and food events in Vermont as marketing partners to showcase VT agriculture; and
- Establishing an on-line center for agritourism and Vermont product sales.

The **Business Development Task Force** set the goal of creating 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.

VCRD deeply appreciates all the task force members and the assistance of **Helen Labun Jordan** of the Agency of Agriculture in this effort.

“Advancing Creativity and Innovation in Rural America” ~ a national conference hosted by VCRD

In September, VCRD hosted the annual conference of the National Rural Development Partnership / Partners in Rural America (PRA). Participants from 13 states joined Vermont rural leaders in Montpelier for 4 days of dynamic sessions around “Advancing Creativity and Innovation in Rural America” which kicked-off at the State House and included a bus tour of innovative businesses and practices in Vermont. 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 and President of the PRA, **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.



2008 Members

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.

Individuals

Ellen Atkinson	Peg Elmer	Mary Mankin	Linda Rooker
Robert Bast	John Ewing	Edgar May	Betsy Rosenbluth
Leon Berthiaume	Don Faulkner	John McLaughry	Christopher Roy
John Bloch	Robert Foster	Susan McCormack	Laural Ruggles
Bill and Ruth Botzow	Dawn and Kevin Francis	Glenn McRae, Ph.D.	Frank Sadowski
John Bramley	Joseph S. Fusco	Linda Prescott and Michael Katzenberg	William Schubart
Michael Brands	Alex Graham	Jill Michaels	Bobette Scribner
Faith Brown	Barbara Grimes	Mary Miller	Jennifer Silpe
Greg Brown	Marie Houghton	Pat Moulton Powden	Tim Smith
Ronald Chaffee	Mark Hunziker	Diane Munroe	Emily Stebbins
Alison Clarkson	Victor Kalina	Phyl Newbeck	Caryl Stewart
Vaughn Collins	Candace Koenemann	David Palumbo	Peter Thoms
Paul Costello	Heidi Krantz	Scudder Parker	David Tucker
Douglas Cox	Jolinda LaClair	Richard Peck	Carol Wells
William Dakin, Jr	Stephanie Lahar	Andrew Perchlik	Richard White
Karl Decker	James Lathrop	Andrew Pomerantz	Robert Winkler
Sen. William Doyle	Christine Lilyquist	Shanna Ratner	Michael Young
Louis Dupont	John Magnant	Michelle Rock	
	Erhard Mahnke		

Organizations

Community Loan Fund	Northeastern VT Development Assn.	VT Association of Realtors
Big Heavy World	Northern Community Investment Corp.	VT Association of Snow Travelers
Biomass Energy Resource Ctr.	Northern VT RC&D Council	VT Center for Emerging Technologies
Brattleboro Housing Authority	Northshire Bookstore	VT Economic Development Authority
Butternut Mountain Farm	NW Regional Planning Commission	VT Energy Investment Corp
Central VT Community Action Council	ORCA Media, Inc.	VT Housing Finance Agency
Central VT Solid Waste Management	Preservation Trust of Vermont	VT Land Trust
Christopher Wing	Ravenmark, Inc.	VT Law School
City of Montpelier	Reg. Affordable Housing Corp.	VT Public Power Supply Authority
Concept II	Ryegate Power Station	VT Sustainable Exchange
Downs Rachlin & Martin PLLC	Simon Pearce Inc.	VT Sustainable Jobs Fund
Gilman Housing Trust Inc.	Smartgrowth Vermont	VT Wood Manufacturers Assn
Green Mountain & Finger Lake National Forests	Springfield Housing Authority	VT Youth Conservation Corps
Green Mtn. Dairy Farmers Coop	Springfield Regional Dev. Corp	Waitsfield & Champlain Valley Telecom
groSolar	Sydney Lea Living Trust	Washington Co. Mental Health
Lyndon State College	Systems inSync	Washington Electric Cooperative
Marlboro College	The Hartland Group	Wells River Savings Bank
National Bank of Middlebury	Town of Bradford	Woodstock Foundation Billings Farm and Museum
NeighborWorks of Western VT	Town/Village of Woodstock	
	Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee RPC	
	Union Bank	
	VT Agency of Transportation	

Leadership Donors (\$500+)

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 Union Mutual of Vermont
 VT State Employees Credit Union

VELCO—Vermont Transit LLC
 Washington Electric Cooperative
 Yankee Farm Credit

Foundations and Special Project Funders

The John Merck Fund
 State of Vermont: Agency of Commerce
 and Community Development
 USDA Rural Development

Council on the Future of Vermont

Ben & Jerry's Foundation
 Casella Waste Systems
 Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
 High Meadows Fund
 Johnson Family Foundation
 J. Warren and Lois McClure Foundation
 National Life Group
 Northfield Savings Bank
 NRG Systems Inc.
 Union Mutual of Vermont
 The Vermont Community Foundation
 VT Mutual Insurance Company

Summit on the Future of Vermont

(received in 2008 and 2009)
 Anonymous
 Cabot Creamery Cooperative

Central Vermont Public Service
 Citizen's Bank
 The Comcast Foundation
 Community National Bank
 Greater Burlington Industrial Corp.
 Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of
 Commerce
 Lintilhac Foundation
 National Life Group
 Northfield Savings Bank
 The Orton Family Foundation
 Pomerleau Real Estate
 Preservation Trust of Vermont
 Vermont Association of Planning and
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 VELCO—Vermont Transit LLC
 The Windham Foundation

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 Lake Champlain Chocolates
 Times-Argus
 Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food
 and Markets
 Vermont Common Foods
 Vermont Life Magazine
 Vermont State Employees Credit Union
 Vermont Wood Manufacturers
 Association

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
- \$_____ ~ 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, 1997-2009

Community Visits:

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

Other Efforts:

Forest Products Marketing Initiative
Vermont Rural Broadband Project, 2000-present

Summits:

Summit on the Future of Vermont, 2009
Advancing Creativity and Innovation in Rural America, 2008
Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy, 2007
Local Power: Energy & Economic, Development in Rural Vermont, 2006
The Structure of Planning in Vermont, 2004
Rural Economic Development, 2002
Rural Summit on Housing, 2001
Governor's Rural Summit, 1999

Councils:

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

Program reports are available at www.vtrural.org



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