



The Vermont Council on Rural Development 2002 Annual Report

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to helping Vermonters and Vermont Communities create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration and the effective use of public and private resources. Part of the National Rural Development Partnership, a network of rural institutions working together to strengthen rural America, VCRD is also a key leader in ensuring that the rural perspective is reflected in Vermont's public policy. With a 20-member Board of Directors drawn from federal, state, local, private and non-profit sectors throughout the state, the Council represents a complex and energetic partnership bridging agencies and organizations in service to community-identified rural needs.

- **A Message from the Chair, Barbara Grimes**

This has been an exciting year for the Council! We again sponsored the Governor's Summit, this year at Basin Harbor, and held two Community Visits, the first in Troy and then Poultney in the fall. At the same time we have continued to move forward on special projects: Rural Telecommunications, Agricultural Viability, and Forest Products issues. Council Members have been joined by federal and state leaders to formulate policies, goals, and outcomes for each area of VCRD concern.

VCRD has become expert at bringing diverse groups together to find commonalities. With projected shortfalls in revenues at both the federal and state levels expected in 2003, VCRD is prepared to assist government in identifying and addressing rural Vermont priorities.

- **Rural Economic Development**

In June, VCRD produced and facilitated **The Governor's 2002 Summit on Rural Economic Development**. Working groups of state and federal executive leaders analyzed the challenges before four crucial rural sectors: Forest Products, Telecommunications and High Tech, Agriculture, and the Tourism Economy. In this gubernatorial transition year, the Summit consolidated some of the best ideas of the Dean Administration and federal partners as recommendations and potential action plans for the next administration. Through this process, participants committed to 32 collaborative Action Steps designed to maximize the impact of resources available to Vermont communities. This year VCRD reported to the Governor's office, but also shared the results with each of the leading candidates for that office.

- **Community Development**

Communities around Vermont can be isolated and disconnected from state, federal, and private resources, and may lack consensus on where to start in addressing the challenges ahead. VCRD **Community Visits** bring state, federal, and non-profit leaders with technical know-how and resources to two selected rural communities annually. The Council then facilitates a community engagement and visioning process where communities prioritize the challenges ahead, build plans to address them, and begin a networking process to mobilize resources to achieve success. Communities drive the process. Over the last six years VCRD Visits have supported volunteer leaders in nine towns or regions: Richford, Rockingham, Middletown Springs, Brandon, Bradford, Wilmington, Northfield, and, this year, the Troy/Westfield/Jay area and Poultney.

- **Telecommunications**

The **VCRD Telecommunications Committee** represents local, state and federal organizations and the private sector. Their goal is to help communities develop aggregation strategies resulting in better broadband service, lower rates and increased local understanding. 2002 Committee accomplishments include:

1. Providing leadership for statewide coordination and policy promotion in support of rural telecom advancement.
2. Hosting or co-hosting policy forums at the VT EXPO, the Market-Side Broadband Summit, Regional Economic Development Partnership meeting and other public venues.
3. Instituting NEKConnect, a telecommunication aggregation project for the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, which in 2002 has led in assessment, promotion, and education.
4. Assessing statewide aggregation opportunities and the role of the State of Vermont in promoting business deployment and applications.

- **Agriculture**

In 2001, VCRD instituted the **Vermont Agriculture Viability Council (VAVC)** with a one-year mission to build a concrete set of proposals that would respond to the challenges before agriculture in the state and lead to the long-term viability of the industry. The VAVC has proceeded in four stages:

1. VAVC commissioned and oversaw the development of a Vermont Agricultural Program Report to document duplication, over-lapping, and gaps between state, federal, non-profit and private programs, and evaluate program effectiveness.
2. VAVC gathered every major study of agriculture produced in VT since 1990 and evaluated their recommendations toward viability.
3. VAVC held five hearings with farmers, business people and concerned parties throughout Vermont on the challenges farmers and businesses face, their success stories, and their recommendations for public policy.
4. VAVC took testimony in monthly sessions on issues ranging from farm financing to education and marketing from leading experts and members of the farm community.
5. Based on this input, the VAVC has produced a consolidated Final Report with recommendations to the VCRD, the Governor, VT State Legislature, VT's congressional delegation, and concerned agencies and organizations. This report will be released in January 2003 and should function as a strategic plan for agriculture development in Vermont.

- **Forest Products**

In June the VCRD-produced **Vermont Forest Products Council (VFPC)** issued its Provisional Report of public policy recommendations to support the profitable development of value-added wood products and promote the wise use of Vermont forest resources. The report details issues from marketing to wood supply and regulation with recommendations designed to improve the vitality of the wood products economy. Today the VFPC is working toward its final report, which will be issued in June 2003.

- **VCRD Membership**

VCRD is seeking Members! Members will join VCRD partners in promoting opportunities in rural communities throughout the state of Vermont. VCRD Members will be invited to the **VCRD 2003 Rural Development Roundtable** to participate in its 'summit-style' development of a rural issues report and action plan. Members will receive VCRD program reports, quarterly newsletters, and listing in future VCRD Annual Reports. Finally, Members may participate as resources to communities and policy dialogues as appropriate. To become a member of VCRD, send contact information and a check for \$25 (individual) or \$100 (organization) to VCRD, PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601.

- **The Vermont Council on Rural Development**

Because of its neutrality and ability to bring diverse interests together, VCRD has a unique public policy role and a responsibility to raise questions that span organizational sectors and have broad historical import for the future of the state. VCRD welcomes your comments, your suggestions, your membership, and your support. Contact Paul Costello, Executive Director, at vcrd@sover.net. For committee lists, board list, or to review the 2002 activities of the Council in detail, please visit www.sover.net/~vcrd.

Vermont Council on Rural Development

2002 Board Of Directors Committees

VCRD Board of Directors

Alex Aldrich, VT Arts Council
Greg Brown, VT Housing & Community Affairs
Hal Cohen, Central VT Community Action Council
Chip Evans, VT Human Res. Investment Council
Jeff Francis, VT Superintendents Association
Joe Fusco, Casella Waste Systems, Inc.
Micque Glitman, VT Agency of Transportation
Barb Grimes, Burlington Electric Department
Cynthia Gubb, Chittenden Bank
Duncan Hastings, Town of Johnson

Steve Kerr, VT Farm Service Agency
Bill Kurtz, US Senator Jeffords Office
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Jim Saudade, Green Mtn. Econ. Dev. Corp.
Fred Schmidt, UVM Center for Rural Studies
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Vermont Council on Rural Development

2002 Sub Committees

Telecommunications

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Chris Campbell, VT Dept. of Public Service
Paul Costello, VT Council on Rural Development
Micque Glitman, VT Agency of Transportation
Barb Grimes, Burlington Electric Department
Jack Hoffman, VT Broadband Council
Jerry Johnson, VT Telecom Advancement Ctr.

Alan Kamman, VT Telecom Advancement Ctr.
Jan Marinelli, Sen. Jeffords' Office
Sally Rice, US Postal Service
Chuck Ross, Sen. Leahy's Office
Janice St. Onge, VT Dept. of Econ. Dev.
Jim Saudade, Green Mtn. Econ. Dev. Corp.(Chair)

Working Landscape

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Tom Berry, Sen. Jeffords' Office
Paul Costello, VT Council on Rural Development
Barb Grimes, Burlington Electric Department
Steve Kerr, VT Farm Service Agency
Jolinda LaClair, USDA-Rural Development

Bob Paquin, Sen. Leahy's Office
Fred Schmidt, UVM Center for Rural Studies
Ed Stretch, Gilman Housing Trust Inc.
David Tucker, VT Office of Economic Opportunity
Jonathan Wood, Bell-Gates Lumber

Forest Products Council

Sen. Susan Bartlett, Lamoille Co. State Senator
Tim Copeland, Copeland and Sons Furniture
Paul Costello, VT Council on Rural Development
Rep. Bill Johnson, Canaan House Representative
Mark Lorenzo, National Wildlife Federation
Connie Motyka, VT Dept. of Forests and Parks
Mary Jeanne Packer, VT Wood Manufacturers Assn.
Jeff Parsons, Beeken/Parsons Furniture
Al Perry, Richford Resident
Charles Shackleton, Shackleton Furniture
Rich Smith, VT Dept. of Economic Development
Jonathan Wood, Bell-Gates Lumber (Chair)

Vermont Agriculture Viability Council

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Ron Allbee, Allbee & Associates
Leon Berthiaume, St. Albans Cooperative
Wayne Bissonette, Hinesburg Dairy Farmer
Mark Boyden, Cambridge Diversified Farmer
John Bramley, University of Vermont
Paul Costello, VT Council on Rural Development
Leon Graves, VT Dept. of Agriculture
Paul Harlow, Windham County Organic Farmer
Beth Kennett, Vermont Farms!
Steve Kerr, Vermont Farm Service Agency (Chair)
Sen. Sara Kittell, VT Senate Agriculture Committee
Roberta MacDonald, Cabot Creamery
David Major, Westminster Sheep Farmer
Dean Moreau, Yankee Farm Credit
Rep. Ruth Towne, VT House Agriculture Committee
Sandy Witherell, Addison County Apple Grower
Julie Wolcott, Franklin County Farmer
Alex Wylie, Vermont Land Trust