



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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

2010 Annual Report

Programs through 2010

- Community Visit Program
- ▲ Creative Communities Program
- e-Vermont: The Vermont Community Broadband Project
- ◆ Broadband Facilitation

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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2010 BOARD MEMBERS

FEDERAL

Molly Lambert, USDA Rural Development

Colleen Madrid, Green Mountain & Finger Lake National Forest

Robert Paquin, Farm Services Agency

STATE

Roger Allbee, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Kevin Dorn, Agency of Commerce & Community Development

Jonathan Wood, Agency of Natural Resources

LOCAL

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Ruth Wallman, Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce

NON-PROFIT

Paul Bruhn, Preservation Trust of Vermont

Hal Cohen, Central Vermont Community Action Council

Thomas Hark– SECRETARY, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

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PRIVATE

Bob Ackland – TREASURER, Consultant

Michael Dupee, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

Joe Fusco, Casella Waste Systems, Inc.

Marie Houghton – VICE CHAIR, IBM

Mark Young, First National Bank of Orwell

NON-VOTING CONGRESSIONAL LIAISONS

Tricia Coates, Office of Congressman Welch

Jenny Nelson, Office of Senator Sanders

Chuck Ross, Office of Senator Leahy

Working Forward

As we began the process of preparing this annual report and reviewing our accomplishments, it seemed important to go back to first principles. What are we all about? What do we stand for?

VCRD has evolved over time, with new board members and through a series of rural policy areas from water and sewer funding to the creative economy and e-commerce. As we change we are often called upon to revisit the principles embedded at our foundation in the VCRD by-laws. Our purpose, stated there, is to: **“Enable and empower all Vermonters and Vermont communities to create a prosperous future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of local, state, federal, educational, and private resources.”** We do that through community partnerships and processes in all corners of the state and by facilitating non-partisan rural policy discourse around issues that we believe to be of historic importance.

But there’s another clause in our purpose statement. It says that we fulfill this core function of supporting communities and coordinating/collaborating, **“In part through the integration of the working landscape with the social, economic, cultural, and environmental fabric of Vermont.”**

With all the diversity of the communities we’ve worked with and the issues we’ve confronted, VCRD’s mission has constantly come back to the land, to the special sense of place in Vermont, to the special connection we have between nature and community in Vermont’s working landscape. It’s not just because it’s in the by-laws...it seems to be in the hearts of the people we serve.

The **Council on the Future of Vermont** showed us that Vermonters want the state to make progress—not by having ‘Progress’ happen to us, but by taking leadership to use the best tools available—online tools, for instance, that support community prosperity. But Vermonters were also clear that they want the best of Vermont, the look and feel of the place and the special quality of rural Vermont, to survive and thrive. It’s not just the view; it’s the connection to downtowns, the farm and forest families, and the untold wealth of which they are the stewards.

In 2010 VCRD embarked on the largest project in our history: **e-Vermont: the Community Broadband Project**, helping towns throughout rural Vermont use the Internet in myriad ways to improve the community and its economy. We have also framed a **Working Landscape Partnership** and initiated a campaign for the future of Vermont’s farm and forest economy. Two sides of a coin—of Vermont’s inventive and creative energy tied to our unique place.

We welcome your partnership as we work to fulfill the best of our traditions and our greatest hopes for the future of Vermont. Please join us in the work ahead!



Marie Houghton
VCRD Board President



Paul Costello
Executive Director

2010 Program Updates

Community Visit Program: Marlboro and Fairfield

Through the 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 2010, VCRD conducted two Community Visits; one in **Marlboro** and the other in **Fairfield**.

With over 150 people involved in the process, Marlboro demonstrated the highest proportional commitment to exploring issues and setting priorities of any town that has participated in the program. Marlboro residents set up priority efforts to **Build a Community Center** and **Improve Walk-Ability by Expanding Bike and Walking Paths**. They also united behind work to better plan for wildlife corridors in town and to strengthen the already solid efforts of the Marlboro Energy Committee.

In Fairfield, over 140 community members participated in the process with support from 33 visiting resource team members. Residents identified three key priorities for action and formed task force groups in December to: **Advance Agriculture Development, Advance Community Communications and Coordinate Fairfield Volunteerism**, and **Implement a School Enrichment Program**.

At the conclusion of each visit, VCRD produces a report for each town that includes the input and thinking each step of the way as the community chose their priorities for action as well as resource team member recommendations and contact information. It also includes the workplan that each task force group built at their first meeting. As task force groups move priorities to action they are supported with resources from federal, state, regional, local, non-profit, and business leaders who participated in the process in their community.

Also in this past year VCRD has provided strategic advice in follow up to Community Visits in **Shoreham, Randolph, Killington, Rutland, Richmond** and **Richford** and has provided strategic planning/development campaign support to **Windsor**.

VCRD is working to systematically advance our capacity to provide Community Visits and customized neutral facilitation in support of rural communities in Vermont and is identifying towns to work with in 2011, 2012 and beyond. In addition to formal Community Visit programs, VCRD provides strategic planning resource and referral services to dozens of communities annually as part of its ongoing statewide discussion of local visioning and strategic project development.

Marlboro residents reading the list of opportunities together on "Community Meeting Day."

PHOTO: DAVID HOLZAPFEL



e-Vermont Community Broadband Program

In line with the goal of full broadband access in Vermont, VCRD has worked for over 10 years to facilitate local and regional aggregation, to document community demand and attract and support private-sector broadband suppliers, thereby providing broadband network solutions in the weakest rural markets. Historically, this 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. With state and ISDA RD support over the years, VCRD has assisted over 50 Vermont communities in their efforts to obtain high speed Internet service locally; established WiFi systems in businesses throughout the Northeast Kingdom; worked to educate demand and expand economic opportunities in the lodging, food, and tourism industry; and worked with Northeast Kingdom communities to increase Internet usage by small businesses, individual residents and communities.

In May of 2010, the Vermont Council on Rural Development launched the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project to build a culture of innovative Internet use in rural Vermont that can strengthen local communities and support economic development and job creation. It is funded through a federal program for Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA). The goal of SBA is to improve household subscription rates in areas that have recently received broadband coverage. e-Vermont's approach is to improve the value of the Internet through programs that use online tools to reach local goals in everything from business to government to education.

In 2010, the Vermont Council on Rural Development began work with 24 communities across the state in collaboration with 7 e-Vermont partners who are



each delivering a distinct service to participating towns. A brief overview of their activities includes:

- **Digital Wish** provided Netbooks to 665 students in grades 4 - 6, provided 79 educator trainings, and 764 participant trainings, totaling over 1,000 training hours to advance the use of new technology in Vermont classrooms.
- **Front Porch Forum** had over 2,000 subscribers to their online neighborhood conversations and started to see towns reach a critical mass for rapidly adding subscribers (for example 59% of Middlesex households, 31% Bristol, 23% Cambridge)
- **Department of Libraries** worked with public librarians to develop specifications for purchasing 42 computers to improve public Internet access. Some libraries have larger projects such as an iPad lending program in Bristol and e-learning center in Arlington.

- **Vermont State Colleges** scheduled almost 40 trainings combining in-person workshops and a new webinar series.
- **Snelling Center for Government** hosted a regional workshop in December and built guidance materials for municipalities to use in designing websites.
- **Small Business Development Center** provided one-on-one advising to 32 businesses and presented 11 workshops with 84 businesses participating.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development serves as project leader for e-Vermont and two Community Directors coordinate activities in each town. Community Directors also help implement additional, town-selected projects. These projects have included building wireless access zones downtown, developing a better system for posting community events, creating an online platform for citizens to follow the permitting process for a controversial biomass facility and building a digital archive of local historical documents. Find out more at www.e4vt.org

In 2010, VCRD also completed the **e-Biz Contest** for the Northeast Kingdom. In this contest one hundred diverse businesses built new business models using new Internet applications to drive design, marketing, business efficiencies and communications. Winners received cash prizes and the provision of services ranging from new websites to business consultations to help them implement their new designs.

Community and Economic Development Strategic Support

VCRD is committed to supporting communities who have participated in Council initiatives including the Community Visit Program and Creative Communities Programs. These programs compliment many Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development efforts to stimulate vibrant downtowns, create new commercial ventures and develop sustainable local businesses. Thousands of residents in 30 towns have benefited from these programs and many request additional facilitation, technical support, and implementation assistance. VCRD has provided consultation to communities and statewide efforts additional to those above in this report including **Essex**, **Brattleboro**, and **Waterbury** and served as the resource and referral agent in support of numerous community and policy efforts.

In addition to direct work with communities, VCRD was invited to facilitate processes for a number of groups as they plan their best strategies to serve Vermonters ahead. VCRD facilitated a set of public forums for **Addison North West Supervisory Union**

that led to a set of vision and goal statements in advance of a positive vote for union-wide consolidation. Though subsequently over-turned, this marked the first voluntary consolidation in today's setting...and a model process being looked to statewide. VCRD also participated as a consultant and team member for the **Farm to Plate** effort, and facilitated the **VT Green Summit** for **Central Vermont Community Action Council**. It also led a system facilitation for key partners in advancing energy efficiency through a **High Meadows Fund** effort.

As a nationally-recognized leader in the **Partners for Rural America** organization VCRD led the **Northeast Rural Summit** in April that brought key rural policy and program leaders from 15 states together in Burlington to design regional collaborative strategies and to share ideas for the improvement of federal program delivery systems.

Working Landscape Partnership

VCRD has been dedicated to the future of the state's working landscape since its inception. In 2010 VCRD founded the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership to bring a strategic plan forward to address the fundamental challenge to Vermont's farm and forest economy and systematically address the opportunity for the state to be a national leader in food systems and natural resource development.

Through 2010 VCRD's Working Landscape Steering Committee built a draft **Working Landscape Action Plan**. The team was made up of **Roger Allbee**, then Secretary of Agriculture, **Jonathan Wood**, then Secretary of ANR, **Bob Ackland**, a business consultant, **Gil Livingston**, President of the Vermont Land Trust, **Deb Brighton**, natural resource economist, and **Greg Brown**, retired state and regional planning official. Their bold draft called for Vermont to invest at least \$15 million in farm and forest enterprise development and growth with particular supports for small business infrastructure. This major policy effort will look to advance the working landscape by supporting the businesses that have produced and stewarded that landscape and new innovative enterprise development to advance these industries for a new generation.

On December 10, 2010 VCRD convened the **Working Landscape Summit** at the Vermont State House to bring together over 300 Vermonters – including key state, federal and private stakeholders and community leaders – to review the draft Working Landscape Action Plan, add their critical thinking, and ultimately sign up as partners to advance a unified agenda for the future of the working landscape. On that day, VCRD and summit participants founded the **Vermont Working Landscape Partnership** to unite individuals and groups who care about the working landscape to work together as the foundation of a campaign, over the next year and a half, to implement that plan.

Since its launch at the Summit, over 470 individuals and 170 organizations have signed up as members of the Working Landscape Partnership. VCRD built and is managing the **Vermont Working Landscape Council** whose members are finalizing the plan and will lead the campaign for its implementation. The **Vermont Working Landscape Action Plan** will be published in September 2011.

Join the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership at www.vtrural.org!



PHOTO: CHERYL MORSE



PHOTO: MARGARET GIBSON MCCOY

Other Updates

VCRD Welcomes Staff

We welcomed three new staff members in May as we launched the e-Vermont: Community Boardband Program. **Helen Labun Jordan** is the Director of e-Vermont and **Philip Petty** and **Sean Sheehan** serve as Community Program Directors.



Helen moved to e-Vermont after several years with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture. She is no stranger to VCRD having directed our Creative Communities Program where she worked closely with local teams to jumpstart creative economy development efforts across the state.



Phil brings 30 years of experience as a faculty member at Vermont Technical College where he recently served as Instructional Technology Coordinator and Interim Director of the Center for Sustainable Practices.



Sean worked with the Center for A New American Dream for 12 years and earned his Masters in Public Administration at the Harvard Kennedy School just prior to joining the team.

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. 2010 was a year of major transitions for the VCRD board, partly because of term limits and partly the result of the change in Gubernatorial administrations.

In 2010 a number of board members completed their service including Alex Aldrich, Chris Hart, John Bramley, Meg Mitchell, Tony Elliott and Mark Young. New members who came on through the course of the year included:

- Paul Bruhn, of Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Monty Fischer, from the Center for an Agricultural Economy in Hardwick

- Ruth Wallman, of the Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce
- Michael Dupee, from Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
- Colleen Madrid, from the Green Mountain National Forest
- Tom Leavitt, from Merchants Bank

Then with the change in administrations, 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. New representatives from the state sector were subsequently elected, including:

- Lawrence Miller, Agency of Commerce
- Chuck Ross, Agency of Agriculture and Marketing
- Deb Markowitz, Agency of Natural Resources
- Doug Racine, Agency of Human Services

2010 Vermont Community Leadership Award

Each year VCRD presents an award to an individual or partnership that has exemplified the best spirit of community service in rural Vermont and has had a transformative effect for the good of their community. Past awardees have included:

2005 - Al Stevens, Wells River

2006 - Edgar May, Springfield

2007 - Monica Greene, Alburgh

2008 - Robert McBride, Richard Ewald, Bellows Falls

2009 - The Center for an Agricultural Economy,
Hardwick

The 2010 Vermont Community Leadership award was presented at the Working Landscape Summit to **Al and Marcia Perry** for all the wonderful and dedicated work they have done for their home community of Richford Vermont. They have been

**Al and Marcia Perry, Marie Houghton,
Catherine Dimitruk, and Paul Costello**

tireless advocates for their town and have served as key leaders in a great variety of service projects including the founding of the Richford Renaissance Corporation. With this organization and its many partners, Marcia and Al have been instrumental in the development of affordable housing in Richford, most notably with the redevelopment of the Main Street Mill which transformed the empty Sweat Cummings furniture plant into a village-center grocery store, with affordable apartments and the wonderful Richford Health Center above.



PHOTO: MARIA BLAIS COSTELLO

Partners and Supporters of VCRD Efforts

In its purest form VCRD is a partnership. We build bridges between communities and policy makers and funders. We convene leadership teams around common problems. We believe in democracy and much of our work is designed to support it both at the most local level and statewide. We deeply appreciate the dedication of people throughout Vermont who support rural communities through VCRD. We are honored to work with local heroes like Al and Marcia Perry and we recognize that so

many like them quietly put themselves on the line for their communities every day, without public recognition. So we wish to extend our thanks to all the local partners and participants in VCRD's 2010 efforts, to the members of the Working Landscape Partnership, the Working Landscape Council, our e-Vermont Partners, our Community Visit Team Members, Summit Presenters, Facilitators and Scribes, and all those who have lent their leadership to our common efforts.

2010 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

Bob Ackland	John Ewing	Candy Koenemann	Bob Rosane
Robert Bast	Monty and Cheryl Fischer	Jolinda LaClair	Laural Ruggles
Bill and Ruth Botzow	Kevin and Dawn Francis	Stephanie Lahar	Chip Sawyer
Anonymous	Ernest and Charlotte Gibson	Michael & Sandra Levine	Bill and Kate Schubart
Darby Bradley	Steve Gold	Christine Lilyquist	Leigh Seddon
Charles Brown	P. Alex Graham	Robert Lloyd	Michael and Nancy Sherman
Phillip Cabot Camp, Sr.	Barbara Grimes	Mary Carol Mankin	Tess Taylor
Vaughn T. Collins	Martin Hahn	Robert McDonald	Sarah Waring
John T. Cooper	Jan Herder	Glenn McRae	Richard White
Paul Costello	Paul and Vicki Hill	Linda Prescott and Michael Katzenberg	Marjorie White Southard
Karl Decker	Marie Houghton	Ron Miller	Christopher Wing
Sen. William Doyle	Bob and Cora May Howe	Scudder Parker	Julie Wolcott
Michael Dupee	Jessica Hyman	Andy and Jilda Pomerantz	Enid Wonnacott
Tony Elliott	Kathleen C. Keenan	Martha Reid	Irene Wrenner
	Alice S. Kitchel		

Organizations

Anonymous	Lamoille Economic Development Corporation	Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission
Brattleboro Housing Authority	Lyndon State College	Union Bank
Business Development Services	Marlboro College	US Small Business Administration
Butternut Mountain Farm	Matteson Associates	Vermont Association of Architects
Cabot Creamery	National Bank of Middlebury	Vermont Association of Realtors
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	Northeastern Vermont Development Association	Vermont Association of Snow Travelers
Concept2, Inc. Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation	Northern Community Investment Corp.	Vermont Community Loan Fund
Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC	Pizzagalli Construction	Vermont Performance Lab
Duey Associates	Randolph National Bank	Vermont Woodlands Association
GMFL National Forests	RavenMark, Inc.	Vermont Woodnet, Inc.
Green Mountain Coffee Roasters	Richford Economic Advancement Corp.	Vermonters for a Sustainable US Population
Karme Choling Shambhala Buddhist Meditation Center	Shelburne Farms	Vermont Energy Investment Corp.
King George School	Springfield Housing Authority	
	The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.	
	Vermont Youth Conservation Corps	

Leadership Donors (\$500+)

Casella Waste Systems	Henry Jordan, MD	Rutland RPC
Chroma Technology Corp.	Main Street Landing	Vermont State Employees Credit Union
Community National Bank	Northfield Savings Bank	Vermont Transco - VELCO
FairPoint Communications	Passumpsic Savings Bank	Waitsfield & Champlain Valley Telecom
	Pizzagalli Properties	Yankee Farm Credit

Foundations and Special Project Funders

Eagleridge Fund of the Vermont
Community Foundation
The Vermont Community Foundation
Union Mutual of Vermont
Vermont Agency of Commerce &
Community Development

Community Visits

Ben & Jerry's Foundation
Community National Bank
University of Vermont's Center
for Rural Studies
Vermont Mutual Insurance Company

PRA Summit Sponsor

FairPoint Communications
USDA Rural Development c/o Partners
for Rural America

e-NEK contest

Burke Mountain Operating Company
Charter Business
Comcast Business Services
Vermont Business Education Corp

Working Landscape Partnership

Cabot Creamery Cooperative
The High Meadows Fund, Inc, a
supporting organization of the
Vermont Community Foundation
The Lintilhac Foundation
Vermont Agriculture Innovation Center

Working Landscape Summit Sponsor

Cooperative Insurance Companies
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Greater Burlington Industrial Corp.
National Life Group Charitable
Foundation
Pomerleau Properties
The Windham Foundation, Inc.
The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.
USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation
Service
USDA Rural Development
Vermont Land Trust
Vermont Law School

e-Vermont: Community Broadband Project

Jan & David Blittersdorf Foundation
The Evslyn Family Foundation
Eagleridge Fund of the Vermont
Community Foundation
The Vermont Community Foundation
University of Vermont's 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

VCRD deeply appreciates our special partnership with the **Vermont Community Foundation** and are especially grateful to **Mary Evslyn** and the **Evslyn 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, 2011
Vermont's Working Landscape Summit, 2010
Regions Connecting for Rural Innovation, 2010
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
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

Councils:

Vermont Working Landscape Council, 2010-12
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

Other Efforts:

Vermont Working Landscape Partnership
e-Vermont: The Community Broadband Project
Forest Products Marketing Initiative
Vermont Rural Broadband Project, 2000-present



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