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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Vaughn T. Collins, Executive Director
Vermont Council on Rural Development
89 Main St. PO Box 1384
Montpelier, Vermont 05601
(802) 828-6024
e-mail: vcrd@sover.net
website: www.sover.net/~vcrd

I. Executive Summary

On October 14, 1999, over forty State, Federal and quasi-governmental agency leaders met in Stowe to discuss issues critical to rural Vermont. This was the fourth annual Rural Development Summit, and the third one to be held in Stowe. Again, the Vermont Council on Rural Development hosted the Rural Summit, and, for the second year, the event was co-sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Administration. The 1999 Rural Summit differed in two distinct ways from previous Rural Summits. First, the 1999 Summit focused the discussion on three specific issues that challenge rural communities – water and sewer issues, youth issues, and downtown development issues. These three issues have all been common themes in previous Rural Summits and are priorities for the Dean Administration. Second, Governor Dean actively participated in the 1999 Summit by attending the afternoon session to hear the Action Step report-outs and provide feedback and insight.

The main goal of the Rural Summits is to improve communication and collaboration between and among State government, Federal government, and statewide quasi-governmental agencies. The hope is that improved communication and collaboration will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of resources that flow to rural citizens. Progress toward this goal is accomplished by identifying specific “action steps,” which, when addressed, will improve resource utilization.

The Rural Summit also provides a great forum for agency leaders to keep current on the various State, Federal, and nonprofit programs that exist to help rural citizens, and to develop or expand existing relationships with other attendees. Rural Summits provide the only opportunity for agency leaders to meet face to face and discuss rural issues and search for strategic solutions from a cooperative strategic planning perspective.

The participants at the 1999 Rural Summit identified sixteen action steps. They range in scope from simply convening workshops to the challenge of working to change existing legislation. These action steps will be addressed over the course of the next two years and the eventual result will be an improved quality of life in rural Vermont.

II. Summit Theme and Three Issue Focus

The theme of the 1999 Rural Summit was “building healthy communities.” Toward this end the Summit focused attention on three specific issues that were identified in the “Summary of Systemic Issues in Rural Vermont Communities” completed last year.

These issues were topics of discussion at previous Summits as well as priorities of the Dean Administration. The selected issues listed below were presented along with possible outcome areas around which to center discussion.

1. Water and Sewer Challenges

- State and federal funding is allocated to the greatest advantage.
- All rural communities get fair access to available resources.
- Municipal water and sewer infrastructure does not promote sprawl

2. Youth Issues in Community

- Youth are productively engaged during after-school hours.
- Youth are interested and participate in civic activities.
- Hard-to-reach teens are not overlooked.

3. Downtown Development Issues

- Second and third floors are utilized in downtown buildings.
- State policies and local zoning are coordinated.
- The location of federal offices is coordinated with state policies.

III. 1999 Rural Summit Action Steps

Water and Sewer Issues

1. The goal is to insure that all available water and sewer resources are leveraged and maximized for the creation of healthy environments, communities, and economies through the cooperation of involved agencies and communities. Toward this end, an analysis will be prepared that will outline the options for changing the cost and terms of loans (both State Revolving Fund loans and USDA loans) and what the results would be, if changes were made to the programs.

Lead People: Robbie Harold of USDA with assistance from ANR and VEDA

When: June 2000

2. Involved agencies and communities will cooperate on growth issues at the same time as resource allocation. Agencies will create a definition of "healthy communities". Communities will be engaged in this process and indicators will be developed.

Lead People: Rob Miller of ACCD with assistance from ANR, and AHS

When: January 2001

3. Review current water and sewer funding to understand how decisions affect growth / change. Include what we look for from the congressional delegation - maybe a semi-annual time to touch base.

Lead People: Scott Johnstone of ANR

When: May 2000 (Congressional contact needs to be made by February in future years)

4. Integrate the existing indicators that are used by water and sewer funding agencies.

Lead People: Scott Johnstone of ANR, assistance from ACCD, AHS, AOT

When: May 2000

5. Implement the necessary changes (in funding programs) identified by the work accomplished as a result of the 1999 Summit Action Steps.

Lead People: ANR, ACCD, AHS, USDA, AOT

When: July 2001

Youth Issues in Community

6. Give youth voting rights (roll participation) on boards/councils/committees where decisions affecting them are made. Identify organizations (public and private) that are willing to give youth voting rights (roll participation) on their boards. Possible groups include: HRIC Youth Council, VT Marketing Council, VT Arts Council, UVM College of Agriculture Advisory Board.

Lead People: Steve Gold, Tom Altemus, Alex Aldrich, John Bramley

When: November 99

7. Inventory public and private sector organizations that could (in the future) place youth on their boards.
Lead People: David Tucker, Tom Altemus
When: June 2000

8. Reach out to youth that might be capable and willing to serve on boards, and develop a list of youth to match with organizations.
Lead People: Steve Gold, John Bramley, Alex Aldrich,
When: June 2000

9. Promote / require the study of “civics” in secondary schools. Toward this end, the Vermont Board of Education and the Department of Education will be engaged to discuss possible standards and frameworks.
Lead People: Steve Gold, John Bramley, Alex Aldrich, David Tucker
When: July 2000

10. Twelve regional meetings will be convened to identify strategies to engage youth and communities in activities which make youth feel valued. The planning process that was used for the 1999 Governor’s Youth Summit will be replicated.
Lead People: Cheryl Mitchell, Charity Clark, Marge Petit
When: June 2000

11. Develop a resource list of options for youth (YMCA, YWCA, Teen Centers, Art Centers, etc.).
Lead People: Bob McNamara, David Murphey, Jolinda LaClair
When: February 2000

12. With respect to the Governor’s Youth Initiated Grants Program, identify agencies which will allocate a percent of their existing grant funds (could be pooled funds). Also, explore what mechanism could be used to get funds keyed to the 12 regions.
Lead People: Cheryl Mitchell
When: May 2000

Downtown Development Issues

13. Develop a Public Relations / Public Education campaign to define land consumption's effect on wildlife, access, and environmental quality.

Lead People: Agency Leaders, Governor, Department of Tourism

When: July 2000

14. Increase transportation choices that bolster downtowns.

Lead People: Brian Searles at AOT, and Partners

When: Undefined

15. Draft new legislation that 1) update enabling statutes that encourage downtown development, 2) reinforce the local planning process, 3) withhold funds from non-compliant towns, 4) make state infrastructure investments contingent upon conformance with an approved town plan. Also, coordinate the lobbying efforts necessary to forward such legislation.

Lead People: Greg Brown, and RPCs

When: October 2000

16. Convene a group to develop a network to assess and develop technical assistance and resources for town planning and ensure that an effective delivery system for technical assistance exists.

Lead People: Fred Schmidt, Greg Brown, and Vermont Downtown Network

When: June 2000

APPENDIX