



VECAN

VERMONT ENERGY & CLIMATE
ACTION NETWORK

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January 2022 E-News

Dear Local Energy Leaders,✕

Happy New Year! We hope you had relaxing and rejuvenating holidays spent with family and friends. It's stacking up to be a busy and exciting 2022, with the legislative session kicking off, the recent adoption (and now the implementation!) of the Climate Action Plan, and an unprecedented influx of federal funding to support Vermont communities. In the year ahead, VECAN hopes to be a resource for all of you, continuing to lift up and promote the critical work you're all doing to lead your communities through Vermont's energy transition. ✕

Find more information about the following events, funding opportunities, and news below:

EVENTS

- **VECAN 2022 Workshop Series** - We kicked off the first installment of our 2022 workshop series this past Wednesday, with a workshop on regional and local capacity-building and staffing. [Find a recording of that workshop here](#), and [register for the upcoming workshops in our new series here](#), including our next workshop on January 19th, Supporting Low-Income Vermonters in Energy Efficiency and Weatherization.
- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding And Your Town - Getting Involved and Maximizing the Opportunity - January 14th** - Join VCRD's Vermont Community Leadership Network for a workshop aimed at helping interested Vermonters understand the different parameters for spending ARPA funds in their communities. [Register here](#) and learn more below.✕
- **VNRC's Climate Action and Resilience in Vermont Webinar Series - Starting January 14 at Noon** - Join VNRC this Friday for the first session in their webinar series to learn about many of VNRC's policy priorities through the lens of climate action, and how their work on forests, water, and smart growth can make Vermont more resilient to inevitable climate disruptions. Learn more below and [register here](#).
- **Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) Virtual Town Energy Committee Roundtable - January 31st at 6 PM** - Join CCRPC and Chittenden County town energy committees for an Energy Committee Roundtable to learn more about the State Climate Action Plan (CAP) and how it might inform local energy committee projects. [Join the meeting here](#).

UPDATES & OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

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Share

We are always looking for great stories of local action for our blog, social media and as helpful resources for our network. Please consider sending along anything you or others have accomplished or are working on by responding to this email or emailing rkuster@vnrc.org

About Us

VECAN is a network of statewide Vermont organizations helping communities across the Green Mountain State to reduce energy costs and climate impacts through conservation, increased energy efficiency and conversion to renewable energy sources.

VECAN's mission is to start, support and strengthen town energy committees.

Committee Changes?

Help us keep our network up to

date! Email changes in committee leadership or contact info to rkuster@vnrc.org

- **2022 Legislative Session Kicks Off** - The 2022 legislative session began last week, virtually for the second year in a row. Stay updated on what's happening this session on climate and energy by tuning into [VNRC's weekly Climate Dispatch](#), and find more ways to stay informed and connected throughout this session below.
- **VNRC's Small Grants for Smart Growth Accepting Applications Until January 17th** - Do you have a great idea to strengthen your community, but just need a little support to get it off the ground? Small Grants for Smart Growth is offering a special \$5k grant for local community solutions. Applications due Monday, January 17th. [Learn more here](#) and below. ✕
- **CCRPC Announces Available Funding for Local Transportation Projects - Applications Due January 21st** - CCRPC has increased funding to support transportation-related projects in Chittenden County. If you have a project in mind and have a 20% local match available, CCRPC encourages you to apply for this federal funding by Friday, January 21st. [Learn more about this opportunity here](#) and below. ✕
- **In Case You Missed It: Climate Council Adopts Initial Climate Action Plan** - Vermont's Climate Council has adopted the state's first-ever statutorily required [Climate Action Plan](#), the culmination of a year's worth of hard work by Council members, subcommittee leaders and thousands of Vermonters. [Read more here](#) and below. ✕
- **All VECAN Conference Materials Available** - Did you miss any of the VECAN conference sessions or want to go back and review some of the session resources? You can now find all conference materials, including recordings, slides, links to further resources, and more at [the VECAN website here](#). ✕
- **A Climate Report Card for Vermont Schools** - This spring, the Underground Workshop of VT Digger, in partnership with the [Vermont Energy Education Program \(VEEP\)](#), is offering a collaborative reporting project for Vermont's students comprising an evaluation of their schools' progress toward sustainability. [Learn more here](#) and below.

OP-EDS OF NOTE

- **Peter Sterling: Vermont's dirty secret: State government is anti-renewable energy** - "Vermonters need a state government that truly leads the fight to stop climate change by removing barriers to electricity from clean, safe, reliable and affordable in-state renewables like solar and wind power. But the record is clear: Vermonters are not getting what we need," writes Peter Sterling, Interim Executive Director of Renewable Energy Vermont. [Read Sterling's full commentary here](#). ✕
- **Catherine Crawley: Vermont's Climate Action Plan offers solutions to crisis** - "The Vermont Climate Action Plan, recently adopted by the Vermont Climate Council, puts forth more than 230 tangible actions that Vermont can take to both reduce our emissions as well as create an adaptive and resilient future for Vermont communities." [Read Crawley's full commentary here](#). ✕
- **Jane Stromberg: Comprehensive Energy Plan** - "Although this [Comprehensive Energy] plan has strengths, we find it lacks the guidance for mobilizing Vermonters in their energy resiliency and independence as we do not see substantial reference to utilizing in-state renewables to meet Vermont's current or future energy needs," writes Jane Stromberg, Outreach

and Policy Coordinator at Green Mountain Solar. [Read Stromberg's full commentary here.](#)

IN THE NEWS

- **VTDigger: Which Pieces of the Climate Action Plan Will Lawmakers Take Up This Session?** - The Climate Action Plan adopted last month lays out more than 230 proposed actions. [Find out which ones the legislature plans to take up this session here](#), including environmental justice, weatherization, a clean heat standard and more.
- **Seven Days: The Climate Council Doesn't Want Its Plan to Burden Vermonters. Did it Deliver?** - "The Council's road map differs markedly from Vermont's past efforts to address climate change by emphasizing equity, particularly its calls for greenhouse-gas-reducing incentives and subsidies to be focused on low-income, vulnerable and historically marginalized groups." [Read the full article here.](#)

PODCAST HIGHLIGHT

- **Climate One: This Year in Climate** - Listen to this Climate One episode reviewing the top climate stories of 2021 – from Joe Biden's climate agenda to the extreme weather events, to the COP26, to the passage and signing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal. [Listen to this Climate One episode here](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

As always, thanks for all that you do.

Best,

Bekah Kuster, Community Energy Coordinator, AmeriCorps Member, VECAN
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EVENTS

ARPA And Your Town - Getting Involved and Maximizing the Opportunity - January 14th, 10:30 AM-12:00 PM



The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated nearly 180 million dollars directly to Vermont's municipalities to spend on projects related to economic recovery. Across Vermont, elected local leaders will be developing plans to invest these funds for maximum impact.

Join the Vermont Community Leadership Network on January 14th at 10:30 a.m. for a conversation with Katie Buckley of the Vermont League of Cities & Towns, and other local leaders. This online workshop is designed to help interested Vermonters understand the different

parameters for spending ARPA funds. It will also include tips on how to most effectively work with other community members, potential partners, and the municipality to achieve desired outcomes. The final portion of the workshop will be an opportunity for idea-sharing and story swapping from local leaders across the state.

[Register to attend here.](#)

Climate Action and Resilience in Vermont Webinar Series: 2022 Legislative Preview - January 14th at Noon



Join the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) this Friday, January 14 at noon, for the first session in their *Climate Action and Resilience in Vermont Webinar Series: 2022 Legislative Preview*.

[Register here.](#)

We are living in pivotal times when the decisions we make about how to transition to clean energy, manage our forests, protect our rivers and wetlands, and where and how to build housing will have lasting impacts on Vermont's resilience to climate change.

The first session will highlight VNRC's priorities in the 2022 legislative session, and how we can act on the recommendations in the Climate Action Plan. Future sessions will focus on the role of healthy forests and clean water, how smart growth can inform our need for affordable housing, and the need to address clean heating, transportation, and environmental justice.

The dates and times for future sessions will be announced soon.

Chittenden County Regional Energy Committee Roundtable - January 31st, 6 PM



Join CCRPC and Chittenden County energy committees for a virtual Energy Committee Roundtable on January

31st at 6 pm to learn more about the State Climate Action Plan (CAP) and how it might inform local energy committee projects. Ann Janda, Energy Project Manager at CCRPC, will provide a high-level overview of what is in the plan, followed by a brief facilitated Q&A with Climate Council Member and Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee member, Johanna Miller. Then you will have the chance to share ideas with other energy committees about what projects your committee can do in your town to align with the actions laid out in the CAP.

[Join the meeting here.](#)

UPDATES & OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Stay Informed and Connected This Legislative Session



The 2022 legislative session began last Tuesday. Here are some ways to stay tuned into what's happening at the State House and how you can make your voice heard:

Check out VNRC's weekly "Climate Dispatch" – a short, timely update every Friday on key climate action opportunities. Don't miss the first installment of the [2022 Climate Dispatch and the legislative session here](#) to

get a high-level overview of the new Transportation Innovation Act, which was just introduced. And [find full episodes, sign up and encourage others to sign up to receive the Climate Dispatch every week!](#)

- Sign up for weekly legislative email updates at our partner organization, [Vermont Conservation Voters](#). Click "Join Us" in the top right corner to be added to their email list.
- Tune in online to all aspects of the legislative session, including committee meetings which are live-streamed on YouTube. [Click here for streaming links](#). Find the full schedule of committee meetings at legislature.vermont.gov/committee/meetings/2022
- Be sure to stay connected to [your legislators](#) and follow the process.

VNRC's Small Grants for Smart Growth Accepting Applications Until January 17th



VNRC continues its Small Grants for Smart Growth program with a new approach. To support the ability of communities to implement the smart growth recommendations included in the recently released Vermont Climate Action Plan, they are offering one larger grant of \$5,000 in a competitive grant round for affordable housing, sustainable transportation, or climate resilience/adaptation solutions that meet smart growth criteria. Applications are due Monday, January 17th, 2022. Applications for awards of up to \$1,500 will still be accepted on a rolling basis. Learn more at <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/> ✕

CCRPC Funding Available for Community Transportation Projects - Applications Due January 21st



✕Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission announced increased funding for transportation-related projects through its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP is the mechanism to implement the strategies for the region outlined in the [ECOS Plan](#), and helps municipalities implement their local plans. Updated annually, the UPWP summarizes the transportation and land use planning activities of CCRPC staff, its member agencies, and other transportation and planning agencies conducting work in the Chittenden County region. Through an open process, CCRPC solicits project requests from municipalities and the public on how they should invest public funds towards transportation and other planning programs in Chittenden County. ✕

This year, CCRPC has substantial funding to support projects in Chittenden County. If you have a transportation-related project (transportation, equity, stormwater, energy, climate, walkable community zoning, etc.) and have 20% local match available, CCRPC encourages you to apply for this increased federal funding by Friday, January 21st. CCRPC is eager to get these resources invested in your community. You can find information about the [FY23 UPWP \(Unified Planning Work Program\) application process and forms here](#).

IN THE NEWS

Initial Climate Action Plan Adopted by the Vermont Climate Council



Last month, the 23-member Vermont Climate Council, which was established by the Global Warming Solutions Act, adopted the initial Climate Action Plan; [view a summary here](#). ✕

Key policies include a clean heat standard (like a renewable energy standard for the heating sector); a dramatically-scaled up weatherization program; a suite of transportation investments; and a recommendation to adopt an environmental justice policy.

The plan also calls for the adoption of smart growth policy priorities that will support more climate-resilient communities through well-sited housing and other development in compact

community centers, paired with stronger protections for our forests, farmland, wetlands, rivers and other vital natural resources.

[Learn more here](#) about why the Climate Action Plan provides an important foundation for progress.

A Climate Report Card for Vermont Schools



This spring, the Underground Workshop of VTDigger, in partnership with the [Vermont Energy Education Program \(VEEP\)](#), is proud to offer a collaborative reporting project for Vermont’s students: “A Climate Report Card for Our Schools.” The project invites students from across the state to collect data, stories and interviews, comprising an evaluation of their schools’ progress toward sustainability. Participation is open to students in middle school, high school and college.

The “report card” will use five criteria to evaluate progress: heat, electricity, transportation, food systems, and curriculum. Each of these criteria will be the basis for one in a series of articles, organized by the Underground Workshop’s student editors, to publish in May/June. Each article in the series will include a feature story about a specific school, along with data and examples compiled from all participating schools, providing readers with a statewide view of the issues. ✎

The goal of this project is to give students leverage with policymakers and voters in their school communities and help play a small part in affirming Vermonters’ commitment to sustainability.

[Learn more about this project here.](#)

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