

Vermont Climate Action Plan

SUMMARY



The Vermont Climate Action Plan

Vermont and the world are facing the impacts of climate change and it's time to act. The initial Vermont Climate Action Plan, released on December 1, 2021, outlines steps to cut climate pollution and help Vermonters prepare for extreme weather and other impacts caused by climate change.

Vermont must get ready for a changing climate and cut its climate pollution, such as carbon and methane emissions, in half by 2030 to meet the target in Vermont's Global Warming Solutions Act. To do this, Vermont will need to prioritize helping the people who will be most affected by climate change.

The Legislature established the Vermont Climate Council to draft the plan. As they drafted the plan, the Climate Council incorporated ideas and feedback from a wide range of Vermonters. In addition, the Climate Council developed this plan in coordination with the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan (released November 2021), which details energy opportunities and challenges for the state. Five subcommittees shaped the plan: Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Agriculture and Ecosystems, Cross Sector Mitigation, Just Transitions and Science and Data.

The initial Vermont Climate Action Plan is a first step in climate action and will be updated at least every four years. The plan includes an implementation section for legislators and other state-level stakeholders to inform decision-making. The Climate Council will continue to build out the framework for measuring and assessing progress that government, nonprofit, private sector and municipal partners across the state can use to evaluate their impacts in achieving plan goals.



Vermonters must be part of determining and implementing solutions to climate change. The Just Transitions subcommittee created *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition* to provide a framework for the Council and subcommittees to evaluate, adjust and prioritize recommendations based on how they will impact Vermont's impacted and frontline communities including those who are highly exposed to climate risks; experience oppression and racism, are excluded from opportunities or have less resources to adapt to climate and economic change; bear the brunt of pollution and negative effects from fossil fuels and extractive economies and are more likely to experience a job transition as Vermont addresses climate change.

Guiding Principles for a Just Transition



- Ensuring **inclusive, transparent, and innovative engagement** in the development of the plan and associated policies and program.
- Creating **accountable and restorative** recommendations that recognize inequality and seek to resolve them using clearly identified strategies.
- Moving at **the speed of trust** to provide adequate time to incorporate people's voices and prepare Vermonters for the transition to a sustainable climate future.
- Incorporating **solidarity** to create inclusionary spaces for all traditions and cultures, particularly for Indigenous communities, recognizing them as integral to a healthy and vibrant Vermont.
- Prioritizing the **most impacted first** through recommendations that address the needs of impacted and frontline communities first, providing the greatest benefits of transitions to these communities.
- Developing **supports for workers, families, and communities** that consider and plan for potential impacts on workers, families and their communities based on the implementation of Vermont's Climate Action Plan.

Climate Change in Vermont



The last decade was the warmest on record. The disruptions are already being felt, from extremely hot days in the summer to increasingly severe storms. If action isn't taken soon, when young Vermonters reach retirement age, summer in Vermont will feel similar to northwest Georgia, with more than 17 days a year exceeding 95°F.

Climate change presents [many risks](#) for Vermont. Not everyone is affected equally. This includes outdoor workers, low-income community members, BIPOC Vermonters, the old and young, people with health conditions or a disability, LGBTQ2 community members and others.

Here's what Vermont is facing:

- **More rain and flooding:** Precipitation will increase and become more frequent and intense, particularly in mountainous areas with an 80% increase in the likelihood of flooding threatening homes, businesses, infrastructure, communication and transportation systems.
- **Changes to agriculture:** Shifts in growing season lengths and more rain will complicate growing conditions for many crops, including apples and maple syrup, increasing the likelihood of crop damage or crop failure. Rising temperatures can also lead to heat-stress for livestock.
- **Different forests:** Ecosystems will be increasingly threatened by invasive species and shifts in the seasons.

Extreme weather events disrupt lives, and place people, communities, farms, forests, waterways, businesses and livelihoods at risk. At the same time, tackling the challenge of climate change presents opportunities. Reducing emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change improves people's health, protects Vermont's farms, forests, and water bodies, and supports new jobs in clean energy.

ENERGY ECONOMY AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO CLIMATE ACTION

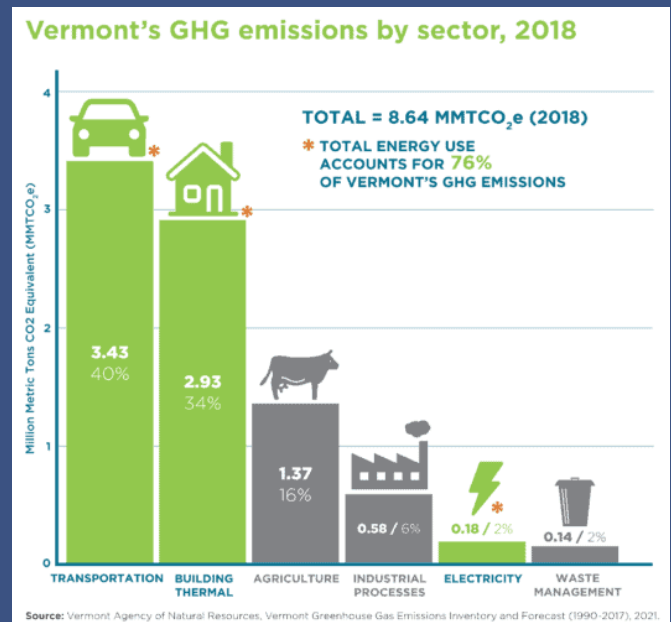
Vermont's current dependence on fossil fuels leads to high and unpredictable energy costs for Vermont households and businesses. Some are more burdened by energy costs than others. For example, renters and low-income Vermonters pay a greater percentage of their income for energy and rural households tend to spend more on transportation.

Transitioning off fossil fuels presents significant opportunities for Vermonters including lower energy costs, greater investment in the regional economy and more high-paying jobs in the weatherization, electricity and clean energy sectors.

With federal, state and utility incentives, the up-front costs of electric or renewable energy options can often be lower than costs for new fossil fuel equipment and less expensive to operate. For example, electric vehicles can save rural Vermonters more than \$1,500 per year on average to operate, require less maintenance and cost less due to incentives.


Delivering clean energy is also an opportunity for local energy providers, helping home and business owners weatherize buildings and install heat pumps or other alternatives. In 2020, clean energy jobs made up 6 percent of total employment in Vermont, with the median wage being higher than the statewide median. Growing this sector can be a win for the local economy, workers, and Vermont households.

In Vermont, emissions come from the following sources and are addressed in the Climate Action Plan:




Vermont Climate Action Plan Pathways and Strategies

The Vermont Climate Action Plan is organized into five impact areas:



Cutting Climate Pollution
Reducing emissions from transportation, buildings, energy and products.




Capturing Carbon
Removing carbon from the air and storing it in soil or plants.



Resilient Working and Natural Lands
Preparing farms, forests and ecosystems for climate change.



Cross-Cutting Solutions
Investing in communities and workforce development.



Vital Communities
Protecting people and infrastructure from climate impacts.

The criteria used to evaluate strategies in the Vermont Climate Action Plan included the ability to reduce climate pollution and prepare for climate impacts, cost effectiveness, and how actions will have the most benefit and harm reduction for frontline communities.

A summary of each impact area is outlined in the Pathways, Strategies and Actions table. For more information including the cost effectiveness, co-benefits and feasibility of the actions visit <https://climatechange.vermont.gov>.