



# *News and Notes*

## *September 2023*

### **September BCRC Meeting - Shaping the Future of Electricity in VT**

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**Thursday, September 21st at 5:30 PM**

**The Arlington Common  
3938 VT Route 7A  
Arlington, VT**

*A light meal will be provided.*

After the meal, join us for a renewable electricity listening session facilitated by BCRC staff, Callie Fishburn and Samantha Page. The Public Service Department has partnered with BCRC and other regional planning commissions to ensure your voice is heard as critical energy policies are updated. Help us determine the future of electricity in Vermont! Together, we want to hear from Vermonters about:

1. What are your priorities when thinking about where Vermont's communities get their electricity?
2. How can our policies and programs better support those priorities?

This is the first of two regional listening sessions hosted by BCRC. The second session will be cohosted with Windham Regional Commission and take place on September 27th in Wilmington.

After the listening session, Samantha Page will give a brief presentation about future land use maps in Vermont.

**No RSVP necessary**

## July 2023 Storm Response

As we are all too aware, the storms that swept through Vermont beginning on July 9<sup>th</sup> wrought havoc throughout the state. While it appears our area may have been spared the worst of these storms, we know there were portions of our region that experienced significant impacts. BCRC is here and ready to assist all our towns and businesses as needed in the coming days, weeks and months as recovery efforts take shape.

First, thanks go out to our new Emergency Program Manager Dara Zink who has handled the many tasks that come with that role in these times with amazing competence and grace despite just over a month on the job at the BCRC. She has been very ably supported by Jim Henderson, whose experience and great contacts at all the towns have been invaluable, and Scott Grimm-Lyon who has stepped up to do whatever is necessary to assist.

BCRC was in regular communications with all our towns to offer support and to get damage reports entered into our own spreadsheets as well as into the statewide database (WebEOC).

BCRC next transitioned to assisting towns and businesses in any recovery efforts and in engaging with FEMA, including sending information to the towns regarding what to do, as well as not do, now in preparation for FEMA outreach and support.

Callie Fishburn quickly developed a new Storm Response button accessible from the landing page of the BCRC website ([www.bcrct.org](http://www.bcrct.org)) and this page has been updated with resources and information regularly.

## Attend the Electric Vehicle Show in Pownal on September 30th!

Join the Bennington County Regional Commission for an electric vehicle show on September 30th as part of National Drive Electric Week. Attendees will be able to talk with EV owners about their experiences driving electric and learn about different EV models and available incentives.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to view e-bikes, and learn about energy efficiency incentives and rebates. The event will be held at the Hilltop Farm Store in Pownal from 10-1pm, simultaneously with the Bennington Farmers Market which offers live music and several local produce vendors. EV owners who would like to show their vehicle at the event are encouraged to RSVP at the event page:

[National Drive Electric Week • Bennington EV Show • Pownal, VT • Sep 30, 2023](#)

### BENNINGTON ELECTRIC VEHICLE SHOW

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2023  
10AM-1PM  
BENNINGTON FARMERS MARKET  
2970 ROUTE 7  
POWNA, VT**

- Different EV models and e-bikes will be on display
- Information about purchase incentives and other energy efficiency rebates
- Enjoy local food and music at the Bennington Farmers Market



Presented by  
Plug In America, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure, SIERRA CLUB, EVHYBRIDNOIRE

Hosted by the Bennington County Regional Commission and the Bennington Farmers Market



## Southern VT CUD Celebrates Major Milestone

Representatives of several Bennington County towns were among the fifty or so individuals who were on hand to attend the Southern Vermont Communications Union District's celebration of its Universal Service achievement, along with US Senator Peter Welch, VCBB Assistant Director Rob Fish, and officials from Consolidated Communications, the CUD's private-sector ISP partner.



The achievement, which will bring best-in-class fiberoptic service to unserved and underserved areas of the fourteen CUD towns, means that more than 99 percent of the district's residents will be on the right side of the digital divide less than thirteen months after the CUD and Consolidated received a \$9 million construction grant from VCBB. BCRC staff members Jonathan Cooper and Callie Fishburn, who have worked with the CUD in a staffing and administrative role since the CUD's formation, were invited to join in the ceremonial ribbon cutting. Ms. Fishburn, who has a nose for the political moment, was able to secure a spot next to the Senator for this momentous occasion.

## Bennington Awarded Additional Federal Funding for Ninja Path

The Town of Bennington was awarded a VTrans Bicycle/Pedestrian grant of \$211,000 of additional federal funds to construct Phase II of the Ninja Path, raising the total funding for the Ninja Path project to \$1,742,000. The Bennington County Regional Commission serves as the Municipal Project Manager for the Ninja Path Project.

Phase II is the Ninja Path Project's most challenging phase and will connect the interim path north of Furnace Brook with Morse Road. It consists of a paved 1,065' shared use path, an 85' steel bridge over Furnace Brook, and 75' of boardwalk across the adjacent wetland.

The project has secured all necessary permits, rights of way, and design approvals. It is expected that the Town of Bennington will advertise for construction bids for Phase II this winter with a goal of construction in the spring and summer of 2024.



When all three phases are complete, the Ninja Path will establish a 2.12-mile safe route for walking and biking between Bennington's urban core and the Village of North Bennington and will connect to key destinations like Bennington College and the Northside Drive/VT67A commercial corridor.

## Sign-up for SoVT Get on Board!

Want to know how to make things happen in your town? Want to be more involved in your community? Are you already involved but want to know more about how things work?

This program will give you practical skills to become an effective and active participant in the civic life of your Southern Vermont community. Gain big-picture knowledge to inspire and inform, and most importantly, find connections to support you.

Course will be led by statewide and local experts with the region-specific knowledge and experience to help you turn ideas into action.

For more information - <https://www.sovermontzone.com/details>

## BCRC Receives Clean Water Development Grant

Since 2013 BCRC has worked with seven, mostly rural municipalities, and Vermont DEC to secure grants for the creation of Storm Water Master Plans (SWMPs). Most of the road networks in these towns are gravel and follow closely along rivers and streams. These SWMPs have proven to be crucial components of many successful stormwater project grant applications. Completed stormwater projects have addressed high priority projects identified in the respective SWMPs.

Most of these SWMPs are over five years old and require re-prioritization of projects. Municipal staff, appointees and volunteers may have turned over several times since these plans were created, subsequently current staff may not know of the existence of their town's SWMP. BCRC recently received A Clean Water Development Grant to review each SWMP, identify those projects which have been completed and to conduct a re-prioritization of those remaining projects. Re-prioritization will be accomplished through in person meetings with each town's Select Board and Road Foremen. This initial Select Board meeting will be followed by site visits with each municipality's Road Foreman.



New stone-lined culvert in Shaftsbury

One project per town will be selected to move towards design and/or implementation. If needed, BCRC or a consultant will develop basic concept drawings for the purposes of educating stakeholders and gaining support. BCRC will conduct project site visits with the Road Foremen, any private property owners, and those parties responsible for operation and maintenance to assess interest and secure support for the proposed project. BCRC will also review potential natural resource concerns, identify potential permitting needs for the project, and will discuss potential grant funding with the project partners. BCRC staff will coordinate with Vermont DEC and VTRANS staff to attend any site visits when necessary. More complex projects identified in the urban municipalities may require engineering consultation to move towards grant applications and implementation.



## Permanent Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility Opens at Bennington Transfer Station

On Monday, July 31st, The Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance (BCSWA) opened the region's new Household Hazardous Waste collection facility to the public.

The facility will be open each week on Mondays and will allow residents from 13 Towns in Southwest VT an opportunity to safely dispose of items like cleaning products, paints, pesticides, and pressurized propane tanks, canisters, and fire extinguishers. The Facility will be open seasonally each year from May through October.

The facility was built with a mix of state and local municipal sources. Including a grant from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation which is financed 60% of the costs for the \$106,750 facility. The facility will be more convenient for residents, and reduce costs for local towns, with previous years of hosting collection events costing approximately \$32,000 (plus disposal costs) and facility operations costing approximately \$24,000 (plus disposal costs). Disposal costs are also expected to be reduced, as the facility will also allow waste to be bulked into 55 gallon drums which will reduce shipping, recycling and incineration charges.

Safe disposal and recycling of the collected waste is managed by Heritage Environmental Services, who also provides safety certified staff to collect waste from residents, then sort and package the waste for transport. Heritage was hired to staff the facility after a competitive bidding process this spring and has been working to safely dispose of hazardous waste since 1972.



## Town of Manchester Awarded VTrans Bike/Ped Grant for Main St.

The Town of Manchester was awarded a VTrans Bicycle/Pedestrian grant of \$60,000 for a scoping study to assess potential measures to enhance bicycling safety and comfort along Main Street/Route VT7A from Barnumville Road in the Town of Manchester to Prospect Street in Manchester Village. Despite the short distance (1.3 miles) separating the Town of Manchester's village center and Manchester Village, narrow road shoulders, substantial traffic volumes (AADT 8,600 - 11,500), and sharp granite curbs deter many individuals from cycling. The Town of Manchester is the grant recipient but will develop the study in partnership with Manchester Village to jointly address these issues.

## Forest Economy Project Grant Competition Opens

\$4M in grants are available this fall from The Forest Economy Program for community development, workforce training, business planning, public infrastructure, education and more. Eligible projects must directly support the forest industry. **The Northern Border Regional Commission is accepting Letters of Interest until September 22, 2023.** For more information, see the [Forestry Economic Program web page](#).

## Walk to Shop Program Comes to Bennington

Walk to Shop, a statewide project of Net Zero Vermont in partnership with Vermont Clean Cities Coalition is now in Bennington! Walk to Shop partners with local organizations to distribute high-quality shopping trolleys in communities. The Green Mountain Community Network and Sunrise Family Resource Center have received grants from the VT Foodbank to purchase and distribute trolleys for free to people in need. The goal of the program is twofold; reduce transportation emissions by encouraging people to "walk to shop" rather than drive, and improve equity by giving people who have to walk or take public transit a safe and convenient means of transporting groceries. The Walk to Shop team visited Bennington on August 16th and distributed over 45 free trolleys to bus riders at the station on Pleasant Street.



## What BCRC Staff are Reading/Listening To

Bill is reading "[The Country Has Come Apart. Rural America Has a Cure](#)" from the Washington Post, "[When It Comes to Parking Reform, Spokane is Leading the Pack](#)" from Strong Towns, and "[Can ADUs help solve the housing crisis?](#)" from the Norman Transcript.

Callie just read [Homelessness is a Housing Problem](#) by Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern.

Several BCRC staff are currently reading [Dream Play Build](#) by James Rojas and John Kamp as part of the new staff book club.

Jim Henderson has been reading [Shays' Settlement In Vermont](#) by Stephen D. Butz. Butz weaves together the tale of the initial archaeological investigation on Egg Mountain in Sandgate, along with Daniel Shays's heroic life in the Continental Army, his role in the infamous rebellion that bears his name, his escape from Massachusetts militia to The Republic of Vermont, and his influence on American Federal law.

## Events and Opportunities....

### Municipal Energy Resilience Program Assessments Available

Municipalities can apply for free building energy assessments which will qualify them for project implementation funding. Apply by October 31, 2023!

Apply now: [Municipal Energy Resilience Program | Buildings and General Services \(vermont.gov\)](#)

### Designation 2050 Design Summit | September 12th at Vermont State University

Join local officials, planners, business and property owners, statewide leaders, and more at the Designation 2050 Design Summit. Hear Designation Program Evaluation findings and help design the future of these programs – and Vermont. [Register now! VT Designation 2050 Program Design Summit | Designation Vermont](#)

### **Energy Action Network Summit | Sept. 28-29 at Sugarbush Resort**

EAN's 2023 Network Summit will include a chance to connect with other Network members and public sector partners, learn more about where Vermont stands relative to our energy and emissions reduction commitments, and help choose Network priorities to make breakthrough energy progress, while creating a more just, thriving, and sustainable future for Vermonters. New in 2023, there will also be a second half-day for Network Action Teams to collaborate, learn from one another, and problem solve together. [2023 EAN Summit – Energy Action Network \(eanvt.org\)](https://eanvt.org)

### **Renewable Energy Vermont Conference | Oct. 18-19 in South Burlington**

Now in its 23rd year, the **2023 REV Conference** will take place in-person on Wednesday & Thursday, October 18-19 at the DoubleTree Hilton in South Burlington, Vermont. Join us this October to hear leaders and innovators in renewable energy discuss how to realize Vermont and New England's clean energy future. [Annual REV Conference](#)

### **New Flood Recovery Funding from Efficiency VT**

Starting September 5th, Efficiency Vermont will launch new flood recovery programs making \$36 million available to assist Vermont homeowners, renters, and businesses affected by the summer floods. The programs will help income-eligible Vermonters with costs related to replacing home heating systems, water heating systems, and other home appliances. Efficiency Vermont will also help businesses replace equipment damaged or destroyed by the floods. [Learn more here.](#)

### **Municipal Planning and Bylaw Modernization Grants**

This year's round of Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs) and Bylaw Modernization Grants opens soon and will be due on November 1st. Municipalities interested in either of these grant opportunities can contact Janet Hurley at [jhurley@bcrcvt.org](mailto:jhurley@bcrcvt.org) to discuss project ideas.

### **Regional Electricity Listening Sessions**

Shape Vermont's Electricity Future! BCRC will be hosting two regional events in September:

September 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30PM at the Arlington Common – listening session will take place during

BCRC's bimonthly commission meeting

September 27<sup>th</sup> at 5PM at the Wilmington Town Office – co-hosted with Windham Regional Commission.

Learn more at <http://www.bcrcvt.org/electricity-listening-sessions.html>

### **BCRC Staff Contacts**

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