



Bennington County Regional Commission

News and Notes

November 2019

November BCRC Meeting in DORSET

Thursday, November 21 - 5:30 PM

The BCRC's November meeting puts the spotlight on Dorset, where a number of interesting initiatives have taken place in recent months. We'll hear from BCRC personnel, town officials, and private sector representatives to get an update on how issues around energy, walkability, zoning, land use, outdoor recreation, and economic development will impact Dorset, its residents, and its visitors. The meeting will be held at the Dorset Field Club and will include a light meal. Agenda topics:

- ◇ Mark Anders: Dorset Village Center Pedestrian Plan
- ◇ Billy Brownlee: H.N. Williams Store Expansion
- ◇ Cat Bryars: Effective Use of Energy Plans in Section 248 Proceedings
- ◇ Rob Gaiotti: Community Values and Recreation at Raptor Lane and Owl's Head
- ◇ Madison Kremer: Visualization Tools for Zoning By-law Amendments

The Dorset Field Club is located at: 132 Church Street in Dorset.

[Click for DIRECTIONS](#)

For more information, contact [Jonathan Cooper](#) at the BCRC.



PUBLIC FORUM ON RURAL BROADBAND BUILDOUT

Access to broadband is essential to economic development, education, public safety and civic engagement. But existing internet companies do not provide adequate service to many rural areas in Vermont. Without high-speed internet, rural economies wither, young people seek better opportunity elsewhere, and many older Vermonters become more isolated and left behind.

In 2019, the Vermont legislature passed H.513, an important rural broadband bill. H.513 empowers local municipalities to determine the connectivity solutions most appropriate for their communities and provides financing programs and technical support to get local initiatives off the ground.

To help local residents learn more about this bill, and the tools it offers, Rep. Kathleen James (D-Manchester) and Rep. Robin Chesnut-Tangerman (P-Middletown Springs) are hosting a public forum on Friday, November 8 from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at the Park House at Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park in Manchester (350 Recreation Park Road).

Presenters include Rep. Laura Sibilio (I-Dover), a key proponent of the bill; Clay Purvis, director of the telecommunications and connectivity division of the Vermont Department of Public Service; and Stan Williams, CFO of ValleyNet (EC Fiber), a nonprofit that is bringing high-speed fiber-optic networking to underserved towns in Vermont and New Hampshire.

The evening will include an overview of the bill, how communities can apply for a planning grant, and tips on how to get started, plus a question-and-answer period.

Questions? Contact Rep. Kathleen James by email (KJames@leg.state.vt.us) or cell: 802.733.1435.

Better Ways to Get to School!

BCRC Completes Bike Parking Study for Local Schools



Bike Racks at Mount Anthony Union Middle School

The Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU) asked the Bennington County Regional Commission to evaluate school bike parking at SVSU's eight schools. Active school transportation, such as walking or biking, increases physical activity levels which has health and academic benefits for children.

Good bike parking is an inexpensive way to increase active transportation trips to school. According to a 2014 [CDC study](#), after adjusting for factors such as distance students live from school, three factors were shown to significantly affect the percentage of students walking or biking to school: paid or volunteer crossing guards, providing promotional materials to students and families on walking or biking to school, and **bike racks**. The adjusted odds of having 26% or more students walk or bike to school was significantly higher among schools with bike racks.

Six of the eight schools evaluated had bike parking. (Woodford and Pownal elementary schools are on state highways and are not safe for students to bike to and do not have bike racks.) Specific recommendations were made for the type, location, and number of bike racks for each school. The full report can be obtained at BCRC's website: [SVSU Bike Parking Study](#). For more information on biking to school, or any other destination, contact the BCRC's transportation program manager, Mark Anders (manders@bcrcvt.org).

Way to Go! to School Transportation Challenge

[Way to Go! to School](#) is a voluntary, incentive-based, recognition rewards program to help schools develop new transportation habits. Whether it's by bus, bike, walk, roll or carpool, there are many ways students, staff, and teachers can get to and from school; it's all about adopting better and healthier transportation habits. The program has activities designed to help your school improve transportation habits over time. The state had seventy-six schools participate last year, and is aiming for even more this year.

This year, the [Way to Go! program](#) will be open year-round, giving your school more freedom to participate in one activity, or several, whenever it works best for your school. By participating, you'll receive points along the way to earn you great incentives, awards, and prizes.

The program is a partnership between the Vermont Agency of Transportation, Department of Health, Go! Vermont, and many others.



Vermont Legislature Climate Solutions Caucus—Bennington County Forum

The Vermont Legislature's Climate Solutions Caucus is hosting a series of forums around the state to outline its priorities for the 2020 legislative session and seek input from Vermonters on the solutions they'd like to see advanced. Local legislators Rep. Kathleen James, Rep. David Durfee and Sen. Brian Campion invite you to join them for one of the events in this series on:

Wednesday, November 13 from 6:30 to 8 pm at the Federated Church of East Arlington.

Rep. Sarah Copeland-Hanzas, co-chair of the nonpartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, will be the lead presenter.

"Everyone—including every state and nation—has a role to play in addressing this challenge as soon as possible. Vermont is no different," says James. "The forums are intended to focus attention on this critical issue, present practical solutions, and help set the stage for continued action."

"We look forward to connecting with as many people as possible to share ideas on solutions we think will begin to meet that obligation, as well as bring real economic and public benefits to all Vermonters," says Durfee.

A series of recent reports from the world's leading scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as the U.S. federal government in its 2018 National Climate Assessment made clear that dramatic action is required in the next decade to radically reduce fossil fuel use and mitigate the far-reaching effects of a warming world, including serious impacts to human health, ecosystems and economies.

"Vermonters want us to do our part on this pressing issue," says Campion. "They also recognize that taking action can also save people money, improve public health and put people to work in the clean energy economy. We have to get serious, and we look forward to working with as many Vermonters as possible to do that in a way that benefits everyone in our state."

For information on the event, email James: KJames@leg.state.vt.us

Transportation Climate Initiative Update

Following a series of stakeholder meetings, including one in Manchester, [a framework for a draft regional policy proposal](#) to reduce greenhouse gas pollution from transportation has been made available, and interested individuals and organizations are encouraged to provide feedback on the draft framework through the [TCI portal](#). This high-level framework represents an important milestone in the jurisdictions' bipartisan regional collaboration this year, and reflects extensive public engagement, technical analysis, and consultation. A draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) building on the framework is anticipated in December of 2019. After considering further public input, a final MOU is expected in the Spring of 2020, at which point each jurisdiction will decide whether to sign the final MOU and participate in the regional program. TCI jurisdictions encourage all interested parties to provide input and feedback on the draft framework in writing via the [online portal on the TCI website](#). Feedback on the draft framework is most helpful if received by November 5.

Home Energy Efficiency Monitors

A Home Energy Monitor measures how much energy is being used by the devices or appliances you may have, such as space heaters, air conditioners, computers, or even toaster ovens. [A study by the Natural Resources Defense Council](#) found that the energy use from "always on" devices across the U.S. accounts for 23% of power consumption in the average household, or about a quarter of any given electricity bill. A HEM can show you your 'Always On' – also known as your vampire load. You can even track it over time, so you can see the progress as you turn off forgotten lights and devices sitting on 'standby' that don't really need to be. Find out how you can get a discounted Home Energy Monitor by participating in this Efficiency Vermont program: <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/sense>.

Emerald Ash Borer Update

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture and Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation have provided an update about Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). An **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle was detected in a tree located in Londonderry, VT**. The [mapped area in Vermont](#) to which [“Slow-the-Spread” recommendations](#) apply now covers:

- All of Londonderry, Windham, and Landgrove;
- Most of Jamaica, Winhall, Peru, Weston, Andover and Grafton; and
- Extends into Chester, Townshend, Stratton, Athens, Mount Tabor, and Wardsboro.

We are now in **non-flight season** and [Recommendations to Slow the Spread of Emerald Ash Borer](#) are now in effect when moving ash from the infested area. With the heating season underway, and firewood deliveries actively occurring, it's important to remember that untreated ash firewood should never move out of infested areas. Be sure that your purchase or transportation of both log length and split firewood will not unnecessarily spread EAB.



VT Culverts Instructional Videos

A group of short videos was created to serve as training modules and maximize the benefits of the VT Culverts website. The modules are available from the [VTCulverts](#) website allowing users to re-view VTCulvert basics anytime.

VTCulverts is provided by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Regional Planning Commissions. VTCulverts is your source for Vermont town-maintained bridge and culvert inventories. The intent of the VTCulverts tool is to store town-maintained culvert and bridge inventories completed by the Regional Planning Commissions on behalf of towns. It is our hope that the videos will increase the use of the website by municipalities for capital planning, grant applications, and maintenance activities. Please go directly to the [help section](#) of the web page or click a link below.

- ◆ [Introduction to VT Culverts](#) (2:57 minutes)
- ◆ [Introduction to the Map](#) (3:55 minutes)
- ◆ [Introduction to the Search Function](#) (3:17 minutes)
- ◆ [Introduction to Exporting Data and Statistics](#) (3:56 minutes)

BCCD Welcomes New Director

BCCD's new district manager, Katy Crumley has started work as the Bennington County Conservation District's new district manager. Katy has a background in wildlife and land management and a growing interest in farming. You can reach Katy at: 802.442.2275 or bccd@sover.net.

Thank you to outgoing director Shelly Stiles for her years of dedicated service to Bennington County. The land and people of the region have benefitted in numerous ways from Shelly's efforts!

Winter Weather Safety

With winter right around the corner, it is important to prepare for severe weather, such as snow and blizzards, sleet, freezing rain, ice, ice jam flooding, and extended power outages at home and when travelling.

First and foremost, be aware of upcoming storms. Pay attention to the National Weather Service Albany website (<https://www.weather.gov/aly/>) and don't travel unless you need to during a storm. In addition, VT Alert is a free platform operated by the state to alert residents of emergencies. To sign up, visit <https://vem.vermont.gov/vtalert> and follow the links.

Emergency preparedness should start at home. Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working properly and have working batteries. Gather supplies, such as canned food and bottled water (one gallon per person per day, and more for pets, for at least 3 days), medications, infant and pet supplies (such as special formulas or foods), flashlights and extra batteries, extra cell phone battery, hand crank radio, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and money. Know where your town shelters are in case you can't stay in your house, and keep your gas tank full (or your battery charged). Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning by using generators properly and only outside, and never heat your home with an oven. It is also important to check on neighbors.

For vehicle and travel safety, it is important to winterize your vehicle by putting snow tires on, and checking fluid levels and lights before the season begins. Make sure to have jumper cables, bottle of windshield wiper fluid, ice scraper, and phone charger in your vehicle. In case your vehicle becomes stuck, it is good to also have flares, blankets, and cat litter or sand to help with tire traction. Roadside safety kits can also be purchased in many retail stores. Never drive through flood water. Six inches of water can cause a vehicle to lose control and possibly stall, and a foot of water can carry most vehicles. If you are travelling, make sure you share plans with friends or family and check in regularly.

For more information and detailed lists for emergency kits, visit <https://www.ready.gov>, and for winter weather, visit <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>.

IF YOU ARE UNDER A WINTER STORM WARNING, FIND SHELTER RIGHT AWAY

Stay off roads.



Use generators
outside only.

Stay indoors and
dress warmly.



Listen for emergency
information and alerts.

Prepare for
power outages.



Look for signs of hypothermia
and frostbite.



Check on neighbors.

Events and Opportunities....

VCDA Fall Conference: A LOOK DOWN THE PIPELINE: IMPROVING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE.

November 5 * Brandon Town Hall Hear from professionals and community leaders and engage in discussions about community-based strategies around infrastructure projects to improve wastewater solutions, address traffic and safety, improve downtown and village aesthetics, and boost economic development and community vitality. [Click for information and to REGISTER.](#)



2019 Farm to Plate Network Annual Gathering. The theme for this year's Gathering will be: **At The Crossroads: Our Food and Farm Culture and Economy.** November 7-8 at the Killington Grand Resort.

We are at an inflection point in Vermont agriculture. The Network will identify how we can keep something so significant to our present and past, and discuss how to move our culture of food and agriculture forward.

[Click here for the full agenda and to learn more about this year's Gathering.](#)



BCIC's 61st Annual Meeting. Bennington Museum on Thursday, November 7, from 4:00-6:00 PM . The networking and social hour will feature a full cash bar and catering prepared by the Mount Anthony Country Club. This year, the BCRC and BCIC are honored to welcome **Lindsay Kurrle**, Secretary of Vermont's Agency of Commerce and Community Development, as our featured speaker. The BCIC has played an important role in some significant developments: the ground-breaking of the Putnam Block Redevelopment; the launch of a new workforce recruitment tool; and the completion of a comprehensive economic development strategy, among others. For more information and to register, [CLICK HERE.](#)

Public Forum on Rural Broadband Buildout. Friday, November 8 from 6 :00 to 7:30 pm at the Park House at Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park in Manchester (350 Recreation Park Road). For more details, see the article on page 1.

Western New England Greenway Conference. Bennington Museum on Saturday, Nov. 9, 2019, from 10 AM to 3:30 PM. Join us as we continue to develop this continuous bike route from New York City to Montreal - including a presentation from the BCRC on our study of the potential for a "Trolley Line Trail" link between Williamstown and Bennington. [CLICK here for more information and to register.](#)



Button Up Bennington County. Sunday, November 10, 2019 - 2:00pm at the Bennington Fire Station, 130 River Street, Bennington, VT. Ready to stop burning money? Weatherizing your home is often one of the best financial investments you can make. This workshop will help get you started. We'll answer these questions:

- What does weatherization look like in your home?
- What are the benefits of weatherization?
- What incentives are available to help you get started?
- What can you DIY and when should you work with a contractor?



Whether you're new to weatherization or have detailed questions about your next project, energy experts will provide guidance and answer your questions and talk through the new incentive to cover half of your project costs (up to \$4000). You'll also be able to set up a free home energy visit to discuss your best opportunities to make your home healthier and more comfortable.

For more information, contact: **Mary Rogers** mary.r.rogers@gmail.com 8024477687.

Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network Gathering. November 13 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. **Natural Climate Solutions for All** - The annual RCP Network Gathering brings together conservation practitioners, planning professionals, land-use managers, researchers, funders, and more in a workshop-based event to build the capacity of RCPs, land trusts, and partners to protect and use land and nature in support of more resilient communities and regions. Our “whole landscape” approach to this year’s event will rely on story exchange and cross-sector networking hand in hand with sharing new tools and collaborative approaches to integrating natural resource protection into local and regional planning. Go to: <https://www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/2019-rcp-network-gathering> for more information and to register.

Vermont Legislature Climate Solutions Caucus. - Bennington County Forum. Wednesday, November 13 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the Federated Church of East Arlington. See article on page 3 for more information.

Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants. The Preservation Trust of Vermont has \$625,000 available for roof repair or replacement, structural repairs, window and door restoration, and fire safety improvements. Grants will be made in increments of \$50,000-\$100,000. Deadline to submit Letter of Interest is November 18, 2019. For more information, go to: [Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants.](#)



BCRC November Meeting: New Projects and Initiatives in Dorset - November 21 at 5:30 PM at the Dorset Field Club. See article on page 1 for more information.

Transportation Alternatives Grant Program. Transportation Alternatives Program funding (roughly \$2.2 million) is available for all eligible activities as described in the Vermont Transportation Alternatives Fall 2019 Application Guide per the link below. Applications are due in-hand or by e-mail by Friday, November 22, 2019. <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt> .

Better Roads Grant Program. The goal of this grant program is to promote the use of Best Management Practices for erosion control and maintenance techniques along municipal roads that save money while protecting and enhancing Vermont’s lakes and streams. Please note that the application and scoring of this year’s Better Roads Program have been revised to better align with the program goals and that of the State’s Clean Water Act (Act 64), as well as the recently issued Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP). In an effort to prioritize funding for projects that are providing significant water quality improvements, this year applicants must indicate whether or not the projects that they intend to construct will be in full compliance with the MRGP. Applications for funding will be accepted until November 22, 2019. For the most up-to-date information or to download a copy of the application go to: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/better-roads> .

12th Annual Vermont Community Energy and Climate Action Conference. December 7th at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee. This year, VECAN will be showcasing local energy success stories and potentially transformative strategies. For more information, contact Alex Baad, Community Energy Coordinator, Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network—abaad@vnrc.org .

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A WINTER STORM THREATENS

Prepare NOW

Know your area's risk for winter storms. Extreme winter weather can leave communities without utilities or other services for long periods of time.

Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping. Learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups.

Pay attention to weather reports and warnings of freezing weather and winter storms. Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.

Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Do not forget the needs of pets. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights.

Create an emergency supply kit for your car. Include jumper cables, sand, a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water, and non-perishable snacks. Keep the gas tank full.

Learn the signs of and basic treatments for frostbite and hypothermia. For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/index.html.

Survive DURING

Stay off roads if at all possible. If trapped in your car, stay inside.

Limit your time outside. If you need to go outside, wear layers of warm clothing. Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.

Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows. Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven.

Reduce the risk of a heart attack. Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow.

Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia and begin treatment right away.

Check on neighbors. Older adults and young children are more at risk in extreme cold.

Recognize +RESPOND

Frostbite causes loss of feeling and color around the face, fingers, and toes.

- **Signs:** Numbness, white or grayish-yellow skin, and firm or waxy skin.
- **Actions:** Go to a warm room. Soak in warm water. Use body heat to warm. Do not massage or use a heating pad.

Hypothermia is an unusually low body temperature. A temperature below 95 degrees is an emergency.

- **Signs:** Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness.
- **Actions:** Go to a warm room. Warm the center of the body first—chest, neck, head, and groin. Keep dry and wrapped up in warm blankets, including the head and neck.

Take an Active Role in Your Safety

Go to **Ready.gov** and search for **winter storm**. Download the **FEMA app** to get more information about preparing for a **winter storm**.

