



Bennington County Regional Commission

News and Notes

January 2020

January BCRC Meeting in Bennington

Thursday, January 16 - 5:30 PM * Loose Cannon Café

[139 Main Street — Bennington](#)

With most of the region's land in the Hudson River Watershed, we sometimes overlook the fact that parts of the region lie in two other major watersheds. The first part of January's meeting will focus on one of those: the **Deerfield River Basin**, part of the larger Connecticut River Watershed. Marie Caduto, Watershed Coordinator for The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources will present the draft Water Quality Management Plan for the Deerfield River Basin.

Developed by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, The Water Quality Management Plan includes details about the types of projects that will be needed to maintain and improve water quality in the Deerfield River Basin which includes the Deerfield, Green, North, and Fall Rivers, and Broad, Crosby, and Whetstone Brooks. The draft plan outlines actions that the state and local community organizations can take to protect, maintain, and improve surface waters by targeting cost effective improvement and protection projects to areas of greatest benefit to water quality and aquatic habitat.

Copies of the draft plan may be obtained on-line at: [Deerfield River Tactical Basin Plan](#) or by requesting a copy by email (Marie.Caduto@vermont.gov). The public comment period runs until January 20, 2020. Comments received by this date will be addressed in a responsiveness summary.

The second part of the meeting will provide an overview of the **Working Communities Challenge**. The BCRC recently submitted an application for the initial round of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's Working Communities Challenge, a Vermont-focused adaptation of the original Working Cities Challenge that supported Southern New England's post-industrial cities. The Working Communities Challenge is an intentionally broad and ambitious grant program, calling for local collaborative efforts that build healthy communities and increase economic opportunity for residents with lower incomes. Earlier in 2019, the Boston Fed identified a number of "Priority Communities" around Vermont, inviting representatives from those communities and other interested parties to submit applications on behalf of either a single Priority Community or from a multijurisdictional project area

that included at least one Priority Community. (Bennington was the region's only Priority Community, but the application submitted includes the neighboring towns of Woodford, Pownal, and Shaftsbury to align with Supervisory Union geography.)

BCRC staff developed the application with a core team of local partners, including the Town of Bennington, the Lightning Jar, Start-Up 802, the Bennington Area



Makers, UVM Extension, the Community College of Vermont, and the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union. Although the details have yet to be finalized, the group observed that the town is home to three distinct entrepreneurial assets: the Lightning Jar, Start-Up 802, and the new BAM makerspace. Fully realized, these assets could be catalysts for stronger connections between residents of all ages, allowing for a transfer of knowledge and skills that welcomes all comers, builds relationships between participants, encourages curiosity and creativity in the work, and ultimately builds confidence. From the application: “we envision a confident and risk-ready Bennington that offers connections and opportunities to its residents, and embraces a new role as a rural leader in the modern economy. This Bennington boasts a network of problem-solvers at home and at work, and its businesses, both emerging and existing, draw on lasting pipelines for innovation and talent. To bring this vision to bear, we have identified two goals for our project: to create new systems for economic empowerment within our community, and to enable the intergenerational transfer of cross-disciplinary skills among our residents.”

If the application is successful, Bennington will be one of eight Vermont communities to receive \$15,000 as well as technical assistance during a six-month planning phase in the first half of 2020, during which the details of the proposed program will be worked out more fully. Of those eight communities, four will then be selected to receive a three-year, \$300,000 award to implement the program. The project team will learn in January whether the Bennington proposal will proceed into the planning phase.

The meeting will be held at the Loose Cannon Café on East Main Street. Refreshments will be available at 5:30 PM and the business meeting will begin at 6:00 PM. The meeting is free and open to the public. For more information about watershed planning in the region, contact Jim Henderson, the BCRC’s environmental program manager: jhenderson@bcrct.org. To find out more about the Working Communities Challenge initiative, contact Jonathan Cooper, the BCRC’s community and economic development specialist: jcooper@bcrct.org.



Rupert's Sheldon Store Project Receives Preservation Trust Grant

The Preservation Trust of Vermont recently announced the recipients of the Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants. A total of \$625,000 was awarded to seven community projects across Vermont, including one that offers key support for revitalization of an historic building in Rupert.

The Preservation Trust of Vermont works with groups that are committed to supporting historic downtowns and village centers, including the restoration of centrally located buildings such as granges, schools, downtown commercial buildings, churches, libraries and more.



The Sheldon Store grant will support structural and roof repairs on the main building and porch. The Sheldon Store has been a part of Rupert's community and history since it was first opened as the Farmers' Exchange and the Grange Hall in the late 1800's. The building is still intact and holds most of its original characteristics and fixtures. Bringing it back to life as a community center and café will make it possible to showcase this history to the community and visitors alike, as well as add economic activity to an area currently without any stores or cafes.

BCRC Receives Internship Grant

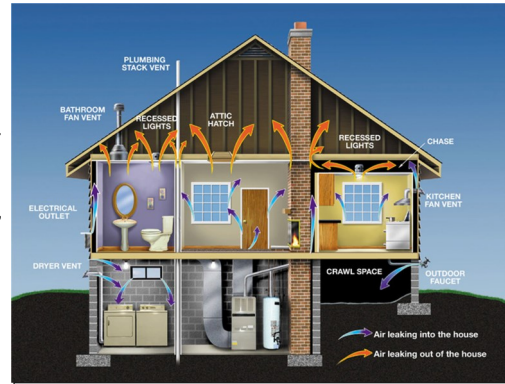
The BCRC has been awarded a \$25,000 grant through the Department of Labor's Vermont Internship Program grant, which will support two complementary programs: the SoVermont Internship Program and the Emerging Leaders Program, with funding divided evenly between the two. This is the second year in a row that BCRC has received funding through the Vermont Internship Program.

The SoVermont Internship Program merges a newly developed program focused on post-secondary internships with the more established Emerging Leaders Program that places Career and Technical Education (CTE) enrolled students in internships. The ultimate goal of the SoVermont Internship Program is job placement, in order to develop, attract, and retain a skilled workforce in Bennington County. The SoVermont Internship Program will help employers establish internship positions with substantive opportunities, match specific interns with relevant work-based learning, and develop new positions as needed. This grant targets 20 interns served, with a focus on a population consisting of post-secondary interns and CTE enrolled students.

The Emerging Leaders Program works with students at our region's CTE, the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center (CDC) in a full year program to explore and develop education, career, and leadership skills. Over the year, students are exposed to educational options including technical training, apprenticeships, certifications, and college degrees through the Community College of Vermont, and they receive career and educational pathway coaching through monthly sessions with VDOL, CDC, and CCV partners. They also participate in a professional meetup event, take part in two weekend leadership retreats, and complete a 40-hour summer internship.

Events Focus on Home Energy Efficiency and Heating Options

The BCRC, working with Efficiency Vermont and local energy committees, recently hosted two home energy workshops. A “Button-Up” workshop in Bennington attracted 35 residents to learn about techniques and incentives for home weatherization. The BCRC presented basic information on home energy efficiency with local energy experts, Jim Goodine and Bill Christian, offering specific recommendations and answering questions on a wide range of topics. Over a dozen residents signed up for home energy visits or detailed home energy audits by NeighborWorks of Western Vermont. For information on Efficiency Vermont home weatherization programs, go to: [EVT Home Weatherization](#).



Weatherization improvements save money and make living spaces more comfortable.



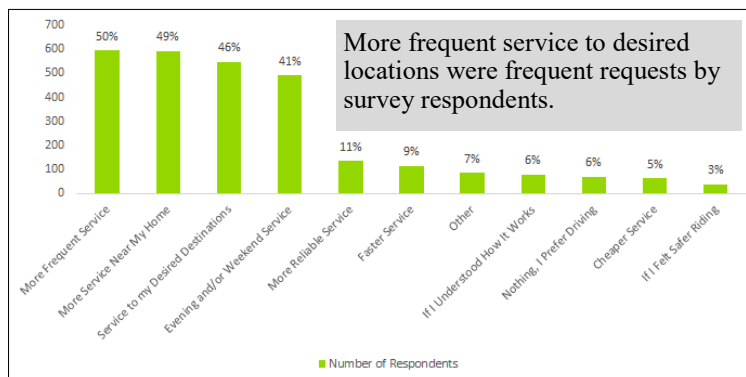
Wood is an abundant local resource that can be an efficient and cost-effective way to heat your home. The BCRC invited Emma Hanson, Wood Energy Coordinator with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation to present information on wood heating technologies and incentives at a workshop held at [Union Underground](#) in Manchester. Residents from nine towns attended the event. Emma’s presentation can be viewed at: [Heating with Wood](#). Bill Drusic, owner of Union Underground and a bulk supplier of wood pellets, kicked off the meeting with a tour of the building’s state of the art pellet heating system.

Information on Efficiency Vermont purchase incentives for wood heating stoves, furnaces, and boilers can be found at: [EVT Advanced Wood Heating](#).

Public Transit Policy Plan draft released for public review

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) has released a draft of the Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) for public review. The PTPP quantifies Vermont’s transit needs and recommends programmatic and policy initiatives to strengthen the statewide transit system, outlining a ten-year vision for transit service in Vermont.

The PTPP will serve as a guide for AOT and its partners to make decisions on implementing and funding transit projects that facilitate mobility for Vermonters, minimize duplication of services, leverage limited funds, maximize ridership, and improve coordination of services. The draft PTPP is available for review and comment on [the AOT website](#). For further information, contact : Jackie Cassino, Agency of Transportation at 802-272-2368 or Jackie.Cassino@vermont.gov .



Vermont Clean Water Investment Report

The [Vermont Clean Water Initiative Investment Report](#) provides details on the type and location of state investments in water quality. The categories of investment include:



Agriculture

Installation or application of conservation practices that reduce sources of nutrient and sediment pollution from farm production areas and farm fields.



Developed Lands (Stormwater)

Installation of stormwater practices that treat polluted stormwater runoff from developed lands, such as parking lots, sidewalks, and rooftops.



Developed Lands (Roads)

Installation of stormwater and roadside erosion control practices that prevent erosion and treat road-related sources of nutrient and sediment pollution.



Wastewater

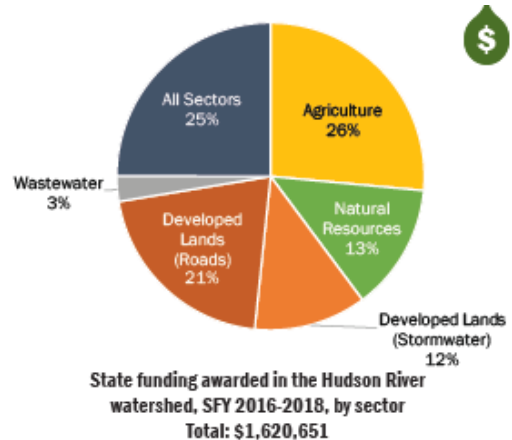
Improvements to municipal wastewater infrastructure that decrease nutrient pollution (e.g., phosphorus and nitrogen) from municipal wastewater systems through treatment upgrades, combined sewer overflow abatement, and refurbishment of aging infrastructure.



Natural Resource Restoration

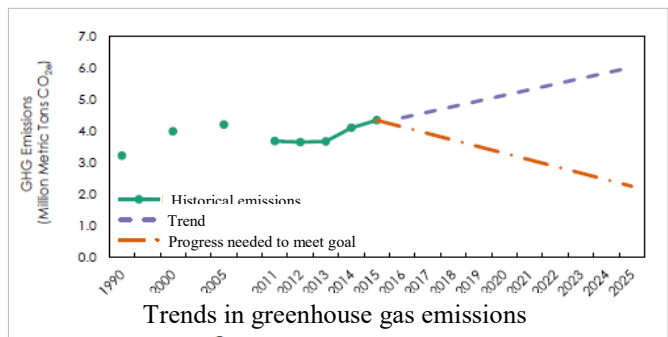
Restoration of “natural infrastructure” functions that prevent and abate nutrient and sediment pollution. Natural infrastructure includes floodplains, river channels, lakeshores, wetlands, and forest lands.

The range of investments in our region (the Hudson River Watershed, which covers the majority of our region) is illustrated in this graph. For more information on specific clean water activities in our region, contact Jim Henderson at the BCRC (jhenderson@bcrcvt.org). Go to: [Clean Water Investment Report](#) to read the full report.



Vermont Transportation Energy Profile

The 2016 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan included three goals and nine supporting objectives related to reducing transportation sector energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The [2019 Vermont Transportation Energy Profile](#) is the fourth installment of a biennial reporting series that evaluates the State’s progress toward achieving these transportation sector goals and objectives. As illustrated in this graph from the Profile, realizing those goals will require a combination of reducing vehicle miles traveled and reducing the GHG intensity per mile traveled by switching to more efficient electric vehicles.



Food Access Tool Kit

Vermont Farm to Plate has released a resource document entitled [Local Planning for Food Access](#). This toolkit focuses on improving food access through municipal and regional plans. Plans alone won't solve hunger, but the planning process can raise awareness and build broad public support for food access initiatives. Through local and regional planning, with widespread input from diverse community members, a planning commission gathers data and community input, assesses and inventories available resources, identifies existing needs and gaps, and then develops goals, policies, and action items to lead the community into the future. Despite hunger and food access not being among the required elements in Vermont plans, there are a wide variety of ways to address food access in plans.



Vermont's regional planning commissions, including the BCRC, participated in the production of the report, which discusses food access issues related to each element of a local plan and provides examples of policies and actions that can facilitate access to affordable and healthy food for residents of a community, while also strengthening the local food system.

The [Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund](#) can provide more information about this project and other food systems planning resources, and is a good contact for the [Vermont Farm to Plate Network](#), including the [Food Access Cross-Cutting Team](#).

Bennington Launches New Website



The Town of Bennington launched a new tourism site called [Vermont Begins Here](#) with some fantastic local writers and photographers contributing to blog posts and social media. The website provides a wealth of important information about the area, including information about upcoming events, places to eat, drink, shop, and stay, and even a comprehensive listing of relocation resources and opportunities.

Locals and visitors can sign up for the monthly e-newsletter to learn about upcoming events and attractions at:

BENNINGTON
VermontBeginsHere.com

Digital Historical Aerial Photos Available

The Vermont Center for Geographic Information has recently published two collections of aerial imagery from 1962-1964 that provide a fascinating look at the way some things have changed and others have not over time. These photos may be a great resource for visualizing and understanding landscape change as communities develop new plans.

There's a brief description of the imagery, along with download links, examples and related resources here:

[:https://vcgi.vermont.gov/data-release/1962-aerial-imagery-now-available-statewide-non-georeferenced](https://vcgi.vermont.gov/data-release/1962-aerial-imagery-now-available-statewide-non-georeferenced)



Energy Upgrade at the Publyk House Restaurant



The owners of the Publyk House in Bennington took part in Efficiency Vermont's Deep Energy Retrofit program, which helps businesses cut energy use by at least 50%. Since their retrofit was completed the restaurant now serves 42% more meals, while the energy used to serve each meal was cut in half.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Efficiency Vermont Releases New Home Heating Guide

There are a lot of options for new and replacement home heating systems. Unfortunately, it can be overwhelming to find one that is right for your home. With a new guide from Efficiency Vermont, you can compare facts on some of the most popular choices for home heating systems., including air-to-water heat pumps, boilers, centrally-ducted heat pumps, fireplaces, furnaces, heat pump wall units, pellet stoves, space heaters, and wood stoves. Use the guide at: [Home Heating Systems](#).



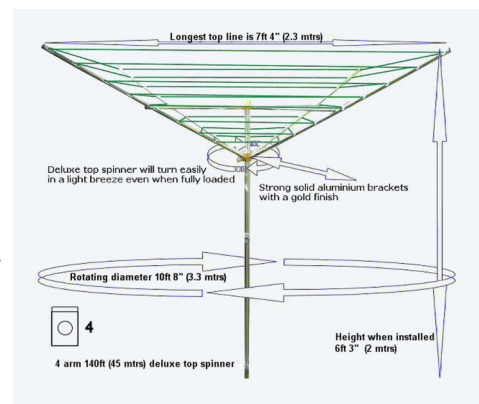
Calculate Your Electric Efficiency Savings

Efficiency Vermont's [Electric Usage Chart](#) helps you see how quickly your energy bill can add up when you use appliances and lighting not manufactured with energy efficiency in mind, and calculate how much you can save by making some changes. For example, take a look at lighting. If you have ten lamps in your house, each with a 100W incandescent bulb, you can expect to pay about \$160 to light your home each year. Energy efficient bulbs will keep those lamps lit for around \$47. Plus, they last six to eight times longer. With help from BCRC intern River Scoggins, we took it one step further and determined that changing those lightbulbs would net about \$179,000 in annual savings in a town like Shaftsbury and over \$2.3 million considering all households in Bennington County. And remember to turn lights off when not needed, an action that will boost the savings even more! We often think that doing these small things doesn't make a difference, but collective action makes a huge difference, benefiting our local economy and the environment.

For another example, River calculated that air drying six loads of clothes per week for six months of the year would save over 450 kWh of electricity per household—that's about \$75 in electricity savings. For a town like Shaftsbury, that amounts to 735,000 kWh (\$125,000) and for the County, 9.5 million kWh (\$1.6 million). Not only is it energy efficient and cost saving, it's a nice relaxing activity (we know—here's the clothes pole model used by one of our staff at home!):

The point is that changes at the individual and household level can make a difference. Indeed, we will never meet our collective energy and climate goals without behavioral change at the individual level. Efficiency Vermont has a variety of Tips and Tools available, in addition to the electric usage chart, to help you calculate savings and find out about rebates and incentives. You can find a full list of them at:

[Efficiency Tips and Tools](#) .



Events and Opportunities....

Tuesday, January 14 - Buzzword Bingo at The Lightning Jar (194 North Street, Bennington) - 5:30 pm



Who doesn't love bingo!! Anyone who has ever watched enough TED Talks or Shark Tank knows that after awhile you start to here the same buzz words over and over again. Break-even. Margin. Overhead. Here's where the fun starts: get a random board with such buzz words, play against others and watch how no one nods off but hangs on every word just to shout "BINGO!" Enjoy food, drink, prizes, and most of all - TONS of fun!

1772 Foundation Historic Preservation Grants

In cooperation with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, the 1772 Foundation has announced that funding in the form of 1:1 matching grants of up to \$10,000 will be made available for the following historic preservation projects: exterior painting, finishes and surface restoration, fire detection/lightning protection/security systems, repairs to/restoration of porches, roofs and windows, repairs to foundations and sills, and chimney and masonry repointing. *Deadline to submit Letter of Interest: January 15, 2020.* Invited applications will be due March 6, 2020. For more information: [1772 Foundation Grants](#) .



Thursday, January 16 - BCRC January Meeting at The Loose Cannon Café in Bennington

Topics will include the Deerfield River Basin and the Working Communities Challenge. See the article on page 1 for more information or contact Jim Sullivan at the BCRC (jsullivan@bcrcvt.org).



Saturdays, January 18 and 25 - Lego Robots * at the Bennington Area Makerspace (239 Main Street in Bennington)

Learn to build lego robots in this interactive workshop for kids 4th -8th grade. Pre-register through email at kimberly.griffin@uvm.edu to reserve your spot. This two session workshop is limited to 12 students. Fee of \$5 covers both sessions. Jan 18 and 25 from 1 - 3 pm.

Startup 802: An Entrepreneurial Mindset - Community College of Vermont - Bennington

6 Weeks | Wednesdays, 6:00-8:30 pm | [January 22 - February 26](#)

Being an entrepreneur is a lot more than simply creating or managing a business. Develop the skills and mindset needed to recognize opportunity, innovate, explore creative ideas, and learn what it take to start a business. Learn more [here](#) or contact Nicole Stetson at CCV-Bennington: (802) 447-2361 or nicole.stetson@ccv.edu .



January 30 - Transportation Climate Initiative Public Meeting Manchester Community Library Cemetery Avenue in Manchester Center. 7:00 PM.

Involved Vermont state agencies are seeking input on the [Transportation and Climate Initiative \(TCI\)](#), a new draft proposal for a regional program to establish a cap on global warming pollution from transportation fuels and invest millions annually to achieve benefits through reduced emissions, cleaner transportation, healthier communities, and more resilient infrastructure. People, companies, organizations, and communities are encouraged to provide input to inform the final program design.



Better Buildings by Design 2020—Annual conference—February 5th & 6th. Double Tree by Hilton Burlington Hotel in South Burlington, Vermont.

Better Buildings by Design is the region's premier design and construction conference, featuring interactive learning about building durability, efficiency, and value for both residential and commercial projects. This annual not-for-profit conference sponsored by Efficiency Vermont brings together top talent in building technology and design from across the country, and helps keep Vermont-area professionals at the forefront of their fields. For more information and to register, go to: <https://contractors.efficiencyvermont.com/bbd> .



The **Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund and the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund** programs are requesting submittal of applications for projects to be listed on this year's Project Priority Lists. **Completed applications must be submitted by February 24, 2020.**

The CWSRF program can fund municipal and private traditional wastewater and stormwater projects, such as wastewater collection system and treatment facility construction, upgrade, or refurbishment projects; combined sewer overflow (CSO) elimination and stormwater treatment, as well as water and energy efficiency or environmental innovation; community decentralized wastewater disposal systems; watershed projects; and solid waste projects and brownsfields projects where they relate to water. For more information on the CWSRF program and other funding opportunities administered by the Water Infrastructure Financing Programs, please refer to this [Web Site](#) or contact Tom Brown at thomas.brown@vermont.gov or by phone at (802) 622-4205.

The DWSRF program provides low and no interest loans to municipalities and privately-owned public water systems for planning, final design and construction of water system improvements that protect public health and facilitate compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). For more information on the DWSRF program and other funding opportunities administered by the Water Infrastructure Financing Programs, please refer to this [Web Site](#) or contact Celia Riechel at celia.riechel@vermont.gov or by phone at (802) 585-4904.

The Department of Housing and Community Development is pleased to announce the availability of approximately \$375,000 in **Downtown Transportation Fund Grants (DTF)** to support revitalization efforts in [Designated Downtowns](#) and an additional \$179,000 in Clean Water Initiative funding for eligible storm water implementation projects.



The Downtown Transportation Fund is a financing tool which assists municipalities in paying for transportation-related capital improvements within or serving a Designated Downtown. Past projects include streetscape improvements, bicycle & pedestrian amenities, utility relocation, street lighting, way-finding signage and other transportation related projects. Since its inception in 1999 the program has awarded over \$10 million for 123 capital improvement projects in 23 designated downtown communities leveraging over \$30 million in investments.

Grant applications for Downtown Transportation Fund Grants are due March 9, 2020.

See the [2020 Downtown Transportation Fund Program Description](#) for eligibility, funding and application requirements and contact [Gary Holloway](#), the Downtown Program Manager at 802-522-2444 if you have questions or need assistance with the DTF application.

SAVE THE DATE! April 9th *Create Places People Love: Third Annual Placemaking Workshop* Town Hall Theatre, Middlebury

The workshop is free and open to the public, registration will be required. Agenda & Registration details will be available after the New Year. To stay in touch email Kelly: kstoddardpoor@aarp.org .