



Bennington County Regional Commission

News and Notes

May 2018

BCRC Annual Dinner Meeting - May 17

*** West Mountain Inn * Guest Speaker: Vermont FPR Commissioner Michael Snyder *
Bongartz Award Presentation to Rob Woolmington**

The Annual Meeting of the Bennington County Regional Commission will be held this year on May 17 at Arlington's West Mountain Inn. A social hour will begin the evening with appetizers and a cash bar at 5:00 PM. After a delicious meal, we will hear from Michael Snyder, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation about the critical role of forests and other natural resources in our quality of life and in the economic prosperity of our region and state.



We also will be recognizing Rob Woolmington with the presentation of this year's Bongartz Award for Community Service.

Rob has been a leader in land conservation efforts locally and statewide, has worked tirelessly on community service projects in and around his community of North Bennington, and, of course, has provided invaluable legal counsel to towns, villages, and regional planning commissions. The Bongartz Award is named after Ferdinand "Nundy" Bongartz who was a founding member of the Bennington County Regional Commission and a dedicated volunteer, working to improve his home town of Manchester, the region, and the state.

The meeting provides a great opportunity to spend time with BCRC commissioners and staff, local officials, business leaders, and residents from across the county. Go to www.bcrct.org or contact [Jim Sullivan](mailto:Jim.Sullivan@bcrcvt.org) at the BCRC for registration details.



Michael Snyder was appointed Commissioner of Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation in December 2010. Prior to that he served as Chittenden County Forester, providing land stewardship assistance to private landowners and municipalities. He also has taught courses in Forestry at the University of Vermont and continues to write the [Woods Why's](#) column for Northern Woodlands Magazine. Previously he worked in forest ecosystem science and management in New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Sweden. Michael lives in Stowe and owns and manages a 91-acre forest in the northern Connecticut River Valley. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in forestry from the University of Vermont.

Rob Woolmington, a long-time resident of North Bennington, has made profound contributions to his local community and to other towns and villages across the region and the state. As President of the Fund for North Bennington, Rob has overseen many investments in Village improvements and has spearheaded numerous land conservation and trail construction projects in the area. He also has a long tenure as Moderator for the North Bennington School District. Among his many roles in state-wide organizations, Rob has chaired the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Vermont Community Foundation, and the Castanea Foundation. All of that while, of course, providing highly valued legal representation for many of our local governments.



Pop-Up Park at Stark Street

With financial support from AARP VT, Stark Street Playground off Dewey St near downtown Bennington will be the site for a [pop-up park](#) on June 16 and 17. A pop-up park is a temporary installation of amenities that encourages better use of public space through improved bike/pedestrian access and features like sitting areas, greenery, and activities. Typically, this planning strategy is tapped to help residents imagine possibilities that are difficult to visualize or fund otherwise. This is certainly the case for Stark Street Playground, which has been underused for several years and has limited access points. On the day of the pop-up park, bike/ped lanes, a crosswalk, art installations, temporary playground equipment, and other activities will attract neighbors to the site to experience the park anew and provide input on how it can be improved in coming years.

This demonstration strategy can be deployed anywhere a community is interested in enhancing public space, but lacks a common vision or funding to pursue improvements. For example, pop-up events can occur in downtowns where residents would like to see more safe, walkable destinations, new businesses to fill vacant storefronts, or parklets with greenery and sitting areas. A [Better Block event in Bethel](#), VT in 2016 successfully slowed traffic along their main street with bike/ped lanes, crosswalks, and bump outs, trialed several pop-up businesses, and strengthened local enthusiasm for a vibrant downtown. See the [AARP video from the event here](#). If you would like to support the Stark Street Pop-Up Park, or are considering this strategy for your own community, contact BCRC staff Catherine Bryars for more information (email cbryars@bcrcvt.org or call 802-442-0713 x310).



Funding Sought for Regional Marketing and Recruitment

Working with colleagues at the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, the BCRC recently submitted a formal application to the USDA for \$30,000 to support the Southern Vermont Sustainable Marketing and Recruitment Project (SMRP). The SMRP is designed to help regional employers increase their retention of workforce recruits. The Program was originally developed with federal funding during the Post-Irene recovery period to promote a unified brand that would attract both visitors and workforce to the region. This USDA funding would provide capacity to reactivate existing commitments and partnerships, and to begin implementation of a regional strategy to bring more people to the area. Southern Vermont entities already have committed over \$100,000 of cash and in-kind support to the project, including support from Southwestern Vermont Health Care; Dorset Theatre Festival; Town of Bennington; The Bank of Bennington; Peckham Industries; MSK Engineering and Design; and TPW Real Estate.

VCF Funding Supports Entrepreneurial Programs

The Vermont Community Foundation recently strengthened its endorsement of BCIC's work in the entrepreneurial sector, committing \$25,000 to assist in permanent staffing for the Lightning Jar. BCIC board members and BCRC staff are working closely to maximize the impact of the donation, which brings the total secured through the VCF for entrepreneurial programming in the past 10 months to \$42,500. At the end of 2017, the VCF supplemented their initial \$15,000 grant, obtained by BCIC staff, with another \$2,500 to support programming for entrepreneurs. This funding has been used to continue underwriting venue and catering costs related to the Lightning Jar Speaker Series, and continuing the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, which is now in its second session.



Pownal and Arlington Receive Trail Grants

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (VT FPR) announced that Recreational Trail Program grants were awarded to projects in Pownal and Arlington. The Pownal grant will be used to develop a trail on town-owned property along the Hoosic River in North Pownal, and in Arlington funds will be used to restore the walking path at the Recreation Park.

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federal assistance program of the United States Department of Transportation, administered at the State level by VT FPR, providing funding for the development and maintenance of recreational trail projects. Both motorized and non-motorized trail projects may qualify for assistance. RTP grants typically range from \$5,000 to \$50,000, and are awarded for well-planned trail projects that help to develop, protect and maintain trails and trail systems that are open and maintained for public recreational use.



Local Emergency Operations Plans Due By May 1st

Local Emergency Operations Plans (LEOPs) should be completed and submitted to the BCRC by May 1. Municipalities should continue to use the Base Plan available at the Vermont Emergency Management [website](#). Appendices are optional, but they serve as an additional resource for municipalities to enhance emergency preparedness. Contact [Allison Strohl](#) at the BCRC for further information or assistance.



Green Mountain National Forest Schedule of Proposed Action

For more information on any of the following projects in the Green Mountain National Forest, go to the project websites or contact the Manchester Ranger District at 802-362-2307.

- Replace 6 existing bridges on snowmobile and cross country trails, 100 feet of trail relocation on a cross country trail. [Project website.](#)
- Increase acres of early successional habitat for neotropical migrant songbirds and other wildlife species using primarily commercial timber harvests. A maximum of approximately 17,000 acres would be harvested over the next 15 years. [Project website.](#)
- Upgrade and repair the Upper Loose Moose, Mountain, Hawthorne, Shea's and Danish Delight Nordic ski trails. Work includes the removal of boulders, removing 10 trees, installation of 9 culverts, and some widening and short reroutes of trails at Prospect Mt. [Project website.](#)
- Designate 1.6 miles of existing snowmobile trail on a powerline and FR280. Grade trail, install water bars, ditches, 2 culverts, inspect bridge. Remove/block off 2 unauthorized access trails. Remove snowmobile use on 4 miles of Dome Trail, FT393. [Project website.](#)
- Reissue expired permit for 20 years to State of VT for 2 hiking trails that connect to Woodford State Park. Relocate one trail out of Aiken Wilderness. Trail right of way will be 4 ft v by 1.36 mi long for 0.43 acres. [Project website.](#)

Opportunity Zones to Increase Investment in Low-Income Areas

Twenty-five census tracts in sixteen different communities across the state have been created in the Tax Cuts & Jobs Act of 2017. Aimed at increasing investment in low-income areas, the new tax incentive is for investors who make qualified investments in businesses and communities in these Opportunity Zones, to defer or reduce their federal tax liability. Two census tracts in Bennington, including the downtown, were designated, giving those areas a new tool to attract private capital and spur job creation and community development. Read more at:

<http://accd.vermont.gov/opportunityzones>.

New Model Flood Hazard Bylaws

The River Corridor and Floodplain Protection Program provides model flood hazard bylaws to assist municipalities in the development of their flood hazard regulations. The model text is presented in a format to provide flexibility in meeting individual community needs, and can be downloaded from:

<http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/rivers/river-corridor-and-floodplain-protection/municipal-assistance>.

Flooding is Vermont's most common natural disaster. Communities regulating flood hazards to at least the minimum standards of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) enables residents to secure flood insurance and makes the community eligible for federal hazard mitigation grant funding to prepare for the next flood event.

The federal minimum requirements are insufficient to ensure community resilience against flooding. In particular, they allow for continued filling and encroachment in floodplains, resulting in increased flood heights and velocities over time, and do not sufficient consider potential damage from erosion. The model bylaws serve as a starting point for consideration, and the text may be tailored to meet community needs.

These models contain standards that exceed NFIP minimum requirements and approximate the standards adopted by the State in its regulation of floodplains and river corridors. Questions about the models and community options should be directed to your [Regional Floodplain Manager](#) or to [Jim Henderson](#) or [Michael Batcher](#) at the BCRC.

Better Roads Projects Receive Funding

The Vermont Better Roads Program provides technical support and grant funding to municipalities to promote the use of erosion control and maintenance techniques that save money while protecting and enhancing water quality around the State. Landgrove, Pownal, Rupert, and Sunderland received a total of \$25,908 for road inventories, with additional funds awarded for these improvement projects:

- POWNAL West Carpenter Hill Rd. (2 sites) Culvert - Replacement / Stone Lined Ditch—\$37,765
- RUPERT Dole Rd. Grass Lined Ditch / Stone Lined Ditch— \$20,000
- RUPERT Perkins Rd. Culvert - Replacement / Stone Lined Ditch—\$20,000
- SANDGATE Sandgate Rd. Culvert - Upgrade / Grass Lined Ditch / Stone Lined Ditch—\$13,576
- SANDGATE Wuerslin Rd. Culvert - Replacement / Stone Lined Ditch—\$12,868.00
- SHAFTSBURY Cider Mill/Cold Spring/Holy Smoke/Murphy Hill/West Culvert - Replacement / Stone Lined Ditch—\$20,000.00
- SUNDERLAND Prouty Hill Rd. Culvert - Replacement / Culvert - Upgrade / Stone Lined Ditch - \$20,000.00
- SUNDERLAND Barney Orchard Rd. Culvert - Replacement / Culvert - Upgrade / Stone Lined Ditch - \$17,240.00

Career Month at Vermont Mill Open House

Career Month programming coordinated by BCIC's Workforce & Education Committee has been popping up across the region throughout the month of April. On April 21, nearly three dozen individuals came to the Vermont Mill on Benmont Avenue in Bennington for an Open House and tour of the mill and its businesses. In contrast to the Open Houses of previous Career Months, which focused on one business, this year's version highlighted the wealth of entrepreneurial activities and options in one location. Tours were led by Jon Goodrich, President of Vermont Mill Properties, and other VMP employees. The Open House included tours of the shop floors of GVH Studio, PortaBrace, and TempurTech Manufacturing, with stops along the way at Mountain Peony Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine, JDP Lighting, MAYCA Studio, K&L Associates, and Latypova & Guild Periodontists. Guests included former employees of previous businesses at the mill, as well as the descendants of employees of the Holden-Leonard days in the early 1900s.



Tour of the Vermont Mill—one of many Career Month activities in the region.

Events and Opportunities....

Somerset Integrated Resource Project Open House: May 2, 2018 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Base Lodge East Wing at the Stratton Mountain Resort, Base Lodge Road, Stratton Mountain
Learn about the proposed Somerset Integrated Resource Project located on the Green Mountain National Forest, Manchester Ranger District . The project area includes over 71,000 acres primarily within the towns of Dover, Glastenbury, Searsburg, Somerset, Stratton, Wilmington, and Woodford, but also includes small portions of Sunderland and Wardsboro. For more information, go to the project website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53706>.

Teens & E - Cigarettes, Vaping & Juuling, What You Need to Know: May 3rd from 5:30 to 6:45 PM

Spiral Press Café at the Northshire Bookstore in Manchester

A forum hosted by The Collaborative to discuss E-cigarettes, vaping, and Juul products; the hidden risks of flavored tobacco products, misconceptions about E-cigarettes, and marijuana use in vape products.

Email: info@thecollaborative.us or call 802-824-4200 for more information.

Vermont Arbor Day Conference: Thursday, May 3rd from 8:30 AM to 3:45 PM

VT College of Fine Arts, Montpelier

Registration is now open for the [2018 Vermont Arbor Day Conference](#). Come learn, celebrate, and network with the citizen tree stewards, municipal leaders, and professionals of our state's urban and community forests. Diane Cook and Len Jenshel, photographers and authors of *Wise Trees*, are this year's keynote speakers. There will be four simultaneous tracks geared toward separate audiences, with 16 workshops.

2018 Vermont Walk Bike Summit: May 4, 2018

Barrette Center for the Arts—White River Junction, Vermont

This year's Summit will include interactive mobile workshops, peer exchanges, a highly-acclaimed keynote, Russ Roca, co-owner of The Path Less Pedaled – a bike travel blog-turned-business – and a variety of dynamic presentations and topics including advocacy and education, safe and healthy communities, economic development, the built environment, and a track to demo ideas. For information and registration, go to: <https://vtwalkbikesummit.com/summit-program/>.

Local Emergency Management Director Course: Two-day course—May 8th and 9th from 5-9 PM

Bennington Fire Department, located at 130 River Rd. in Bennington

This course will prepare the local Emergency Management Director to perform their duties through all phases of a local emergency: Preparation, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation. According to Vermont Statute, an Emergency Management Director has direct responsibility for the organization, administration, and coordination of the local organization for emergency management. If a town does not appoint an Emergency Management Director, the executive officer or legislative branch becomes the Emergency Management Director.

Topics covered will include, but are not limited to:

- Desired Attributes of an Emergency Management Director
- Local Emergency Operations Planning
- Animal Response
- EMD-Responder Relationship
- Models for Mobilizing Community
- Designing an Emergency Operation Center
- Public Information and Communications
- The Disaster "Process"
- State Resources
- Interaction with FEMA

To register for this course, please log into the State's Learning Management System via the following link: [Local Emergency Management Director Course](#).

For registration assistance or questions, please contact Brittany Marquette at brittany.marquette@vermont.gov or 802-241-5414.

Vermont Community Development Association Spring Conference: May 10, 2018

Mountain Top Inn & Resort in Chittenden, Vermont

“Telling Your Community's Story: Local and Regional Marketing In the Modern Economy “

For information and registration, go to [VCDAs Spring Conference](#).

Household Hazardous Waste Event: May 12, 2018 from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Bennington Transfer Station - Houghton Lane, Bennington

The Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance will hold a household hazardous waste event; FREE for residents of Arlington, Bennington, Dorset, Glastenbury, Manchester, Pownal, Rupert, Sandgate, Searsburg, Shaftsbury, Stamford, Sunderland and Woodford. Small businesses can also bring materials and must pay disposal costs and register by April 27, 2018. We will be accepting materials with labels that say CAUSTIC, TOXIC, CORROSIVE, POISON, FLAMMABLE, DANGER, WARNING, CAUTION, USE IN AN OPEN ENVIRONMENT or similar warnings. Visit www.bcswavt.org for more information. Contact Joe Gay at John.Gay@casella.com or (802) 236-5973 for more information or for businesses to register.

VBSR's 28th Annual Spring Conference: May 15, 2018

UVM Davis Center, 590 Main St, Burlington, VT

The conference will feature workshops designed to help professionals find new opportunities through values-led work. Attendees will enjoy a localvore menu, visit with 40+ exhibitors, and enjoy a Vermont-themed Cocktail Reception and networking opportunities with more than 300 forward-thinking business professionals. Robert Craven CEO of MegaFood will be the Keynote Speaker. [Registration](#).

Bennington County Regional Commission Annual Dinner Meeting: May 17 from 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM

West Mountain Inn—Arlington

Go to: [BCRC ANNUAL DINNER MEETING](#) for a registration form.

VLCT Planning and Zoning Forum: May 23, 2018

Franklin Conference Center (in the Howe Center), Rutland, VT

This workshop is for all local officials involved in the planning and development review process. Zoning administrators, planning commissioners, DRB/ZBA members, town administrators and managers, municipal planners, and regional planning commission staff are encouraged to attend. The sessions will provide a mix of legal information, practical solutions, and policy discussions with opportunities to discuss pressing issues in municipal planning and zoning with knowledgeable officials from across the state. [Click here](#) to learn more and register.

Vermont Business Expo 2018: May 24th, 2018

Hilton Hotel, South Burlington

Presented by the VT Chamber of Commerce, this event is the largest business-to-business conference and trade show in Northern New England. Visit <https://vtexpo.com/> for more information and to register.

Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit: May 30, 2018

Grand Summit Resort, Mount Snow - Dover, Vermont

The Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit is a daylong event for municipal, community, and business leaders that will focus on the region's developing economy. This year's topic is Growing Southern Vermont's People, Potential, and Partnerships. The day will highlight projects with innovative and unique partnerships, and initiatives and ideas that focus on growing our population and improving the economic outlook for Southern Vermont communities. The day will close with a reception co-hosted by the Southern Vermont Young Professionals and Shires Young Professionals, celebrating notable achievements by some of Southern Vermont's up-and-coming community and business leaders. For information and registration, go to: <https://www.sovermontsummit.com/>.

Historic Preservation and Downtown Conference: June 8, 2018

Bristol, Vermont

The opening plenary will be held at Holley Hall and will feature keynote speaker Dar Williams, a touring musician and author whose recent book “What I Found in a Thousand Towns” discusses what she calls Positive Proximity or the social capital-building that allows towns to become unique, prosperous and self-reliant. Williams muses on why some towns flourish while others fail, examining elements from the significance of history and nature to the uniting power of public spaces and food. Drawing on her own travels and the work of urban theorists, Williams offers real solutions to rebuild declining communities. For a full agenda and to register, go to: <http://ptvermont.org/our-work/conference/> .

