

Proposed BCRC Work Program for FY 2014

Solid Waste Projects

Support Waste Removal and Recycling: Continue to administer contracts and process invoices for towns in the ISWAP group to facilitate municipal waste removal and recycling programs.

Alternatives to Household Hazardous Waste (HHW): The BCRC will continue to investigate alternatives to hazardous products used in the home to encourage people to use safer materials and avoid purchasing and using potentially harmful substances. A report will be posted on the BCRC website.

HHW Disposal and Recycling Resources: The BCRC will continue to organize and manage HHW events for participating SWIP towns. We also are identifying locations where people can take certain types of household hazardous waste for recycling or disposal to reduce the amount of material brought to HHW events. Coordinating events and/or developing a permanent site with the Town of Bennington is under study.

Mercury Law: The BCRC is developing a summary of the new mercury law and will be working with towns on implementation measures, primarily in HHW events if they choose to participate in the program.

Composting: The BCRC continues to work to increase composting of organic wastes in the region and to ensure the success of composting efforts at the new regional site in Bennington being operated by TAM.

Solid Waste Implementation (Material Management) Plan: The BCRC has met with representatives from the nine SWIP towns and with Bennington town officials to discuss the possibility of developing a coordinated regional material management plan (MMP). Additional meetings will be held and will include representatives from Woodford and Stamford as well. Preparation of the new plan will begin this year – emphasis will be placed on strategies to implement the state’s new MMP and to create a suitable organizational structure to maximize effectiveness and cost efficiency for the participating municipalities.

Emergency Management Projects

EHS Sites: The BCRC completed a study of sites that use and transport extremely hazardous substances (EHS sites) last year. That study documented the substances and transport routes. The Commission will be completing a follow-up study this year that will assist in planning for any incidents involving those substances.

Basic Emergency Operation Plan (BEOP) updates: The BCRC will continue to work with towns to ensure that all BEOPS are current and available for use by each town.

Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP): The BCRC will continue to work with towns to complete hazard mitigation plans and to submit them to FEMA for approval. In addition to seeing recently completed plans through the approval process, the BCRC will develop two to three new HMPs with towns that currently do not have an HMP in effect.

LEPC Support: The BCRC will continue to provide staff support to LEPC 7 as needed.

Exercises: The BCRC will assist with exercises run by Vermont Emergency Management and for the Bennington Mass Care/Mass Surge Facility as needed.

Mass Care/Mass Surge Facility: The BCRC has been attending planning meetings for the facility to be located at the Mount Anthony Union High School and will participate in an exercise involving that facility.

Medical Reserve Corps: The BCRC has been asked to assist on the Southwester Vermont MRC, which has been active for a number of years, and is going through a transition period.

LEPC Membership: The BCRC will be working with LEPC 7 to reach out to members from commercial enterprises, utilities, transportation, colleges, schools, nonprofits and other organizations to attend and participate in LEPC meetings and activities.

Natural Hazards Inventory and Plan: The BCRC will 1) use GIS, key informant interviews, analyses of historic records and other data to assess natural hazards across Bennington County, 2) use the results to assess vulnerability and identify locations potentially affected by future natural hazard events, 3) and provide results to towns for mitigation planning, response and recovery.

Transportation Projects

Stamford Sidewalk: The BCRC is the local project manager for a project to construct a new sidewalk in Stamford. The project has been redesigned and is nearing the construction phase.

Applegate – Willow Brook Path: This new path will connect the region’s two largest public housing developments to give residents from the 104-unit Applegate Apartments complex a safe route to walk to school and other important destinations. The boards of both Applegate and Willow Brook have approved the project. The BCRC completed a feasibility study and will be working with the town, development owners, and community groups to see that the project is designed and built. If a state bike-ped grant is received, BCRC will manage that design/build project.

US 7 Crossing Project: The BCRC is managing this project that is intended to provide a safe route across Route 7 at the intersection with Northside Drive and Kocher Drive. The scoping study is nearing completion and if accepted by the town and VTrans, the BCRC will assist with management of the engineering and construction phases of the project.

Northside Neighborhood Plan: This plan will recommend pedestrian, streetscape and access management improvements to the Northside Drive corridor. This year’s work will build on the land use and transportation system inventory that was completed last year.

Franklin Lane and Four Corner Pedestrian Signal Improvements: The Town of Bennington has received a “Transportation Alternatives” grant to complete a scoping study for improvements to the Franklin Lane corridor in downtown Bennington and to advance signalization improvements at the nearby “Putnam Square” intersection (Routes 7 and 9) to enhance pedestrian access and safety.

Public Transit Needs: The BCRC will evaluate the current public transportation system, identify service gaps and needs, and recommend improvements. Particular attention will be paid to intercity bus service, including potential direct service from Bennington to major transportation hubs in the Albany, NY area.

Bennington to North Bennington “Ninja Path”: The BCRC has been working with the Town of Bennington, the Chamber of Commerce, and a subcommittee of a local economic development group to develop a safe bicycle route between downtown Bennington and North Bennington Village. A route has been mapped out and the BCRC will continue to work with project partners to create both on and off-road segments of the pathway. The first segment will reach from downtown to Silk Road and the Bennington College access road (which can be followed to North Bennington Village). Additional off-road segments will be developed as time permits.

North Bennington Intersection Improvements: The BCRC is serving as the municipal project manager for an improvement project that will redefine the Bank Street–Water Street intersection, while adding sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, landscaping, and an improved stormwater drainage system. Construction is planned for the summer of 2013.

Bennington Rail Trail: The BCRC will assist the Town of Bennington to move a rail-trail project forward that has stalled due to a obstacles presented by VT Railway and to difficulty in acquiring right-of-way. The project enjoys robust public support and if built would be a valuable regional amenity.

Benmont Avenue Improvements: Benmont Avenue has been identified by the town and through a healthy community design project as a corridor needing significant streetscape, including bicycle-pedestrian, improvements. The BCRC will develop recommendations and conceptual plans for pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape improvements to Benmont Avenue.

Transportation Guide Update: The Transportation Project Guide will continue to be updated and expanded to include projects and needs for all transportation modes throughout the region.

Project Implementation Activities: The BCRC will pursue opportunities to implement specific projects from the Transportation Guide as opportunities present themselves. For example, a pedestrian connector from Arlington Village to the local recreation center – identified in the Guide and in a healthy community design project – will be scoped by the BCRC so that it will be able to compete for construction funds. The BCRC also is updating a project feasibility study looking at alternative streetscape traffic designs for Depot Street in downtown Manchester.

Codes & Standards Outreach: The BCRC will conduct outreach to municipalities to explain the benefits of adopting the latest codes and standards, a prerequisite for receiving FEMA Public Assistance and mitigation funding.

High Risk Rural Roads Program: Based on regional crash statistics, we will identify two high crash locations and two high crash corridors on rural roads and invite the affected municipalities to participate in VTrans’ High Risk Rural Roads Program, a grant program for low-cost safety improvements.

Trail Mapping: The BCRC will continue to provide GIS mapping and related support services for regional trail networks developed and maintained by municipalities and nonprofit organizations.

Vermont Online Bridge and Culvert Inventory Tool (VOBCIT): The BCRC will update this inventory for the region’s transportation infrastructure and ensure that the data meets all reporting requirements.

Local Roadway Sufficiency Ratings: The BCRC will continue to inventory and apply rating criteria to critical local roads to facilitate local transportation and financial planning.

Town Planning and Community Development Projects

Enhanced Consultations: BCRC staff has met with each municipality in the region to review conformance of their local plans with the planning and development act and to determine areas of local concern and needed assistance. The BCRC will offer training and assistance to help address identified issues and will continue to consult with municipalities in advance of preparation of new/updated plans.

Peru Town Plan Update / Village Economic Development Study: The BCRC recently worked with the Town of Peru to complete a revised town plan and an economic development study. BCRC staff will work with town officials on key implementation measures, including provision of support for re-establishment of a general store in the historic village center.

Bennington Economic Development Strategy: The BCRC worked with the Town of Bennington to create an economic development strategy and implementation plan. That plan has been adopted by the Select Board; the BCRC will continue to work with the town and economic development partners to advance specific short and long term implementation measures identified in that document.

Dorset Buildout Study and Plan Update: The BCRC will work with the Dorset Planning Commission to evaluate results of a townwide survey (recently conducted by the town and BCRC) regarding future development/character of the community. That information will inform a buildout analysis for the town by helping to determine appropriate input measures and assumptions.

Bennington Housing Study: The BCRC will work with the Bennington town planning commission to complete a housing study for the community that focuses specifically on workforce housing needs. The study will include an assessment of data, an inventory of existing housing stock/availability, interviews with employers and business groups to identify areas of need, a review of successful housing initiatives in similar towns, and a plan for addressing identified needs.

Employer-Based Intern Program: The BCRC continues to provide direct assistance to the Bennington School and Workforce Partnership, the Bennington Region's Workforce Investment Board (WIB). With four colleges, several high schools and a vocational center in the region, there are many potential qualified interns who can gain valuable experience and learn about local career opportunities. Existing intern programs are run from the schools and colleges and sometimes fail to reach all employers or to result in good internship matches. The BCRC will work with businesses and those academic institutions to develop a system where business internship opportunities are clearly communicated and properly managed.

Natural Gas Initiative: A developer recently proposed a plan to the BCRC for extending a natural gas pipeline from North Adams, Massachusetts to the Bennington area. The BCRC will work with the recently formed ad hoc natural gas committee and the regional energy committee to evaluate the idea, help facilitate communication with key interests, and explore alternative ways to bring natural gas service to the area.

Energy Generation Siting Plan: The "Energy Generation Siting Policy Commission" recently completed its study of Vermont's process for reviewing and approving new energy generation facilities; their report recommends a significant role for regional planning commissions in both planning for sites and reviewing proposed projects. If the legislature acts to fund those recommendations, the BCRC will develop a regional siting plan as part of its regional energy plan.

Bennington Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs): The BCRC will lead an effort to build a process and enthusiasm for the creation of a Bennington Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Bennington is one of the regions in Vermont without a CEDs plan and both the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the EDA are actively encouraging those regions without plans to begin developing them. The recently adopted (by the town) Bennington Economic Development Strategy and efforts by BCRC to encourage the Northshire to undertake similar planning efforts could serve as a solid basis for the development of a Bennington Region CEDs which would open up our area to potential economic development project funding by the EDA.

Bennington-Windham Joint EDA-Disaster Recovery Project: The BCRC and the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) have received a joint Disaster Recovery Grant application from the United States Economic Development Administration. As part of this project, the BCRC will develop detailed maps of several village centers and the Manchester downtown area. The BCRC will work with those communities to pursue village center or downtown designations and will coordinate efforts with business recovery officers to identify key needs and structure initiatives to help respond to those needs.

Land Use Regulation Reviews: The BCRC will work with other RPCS and the ACCD to refine a system for reviewing local zoning and subdivision regulations to determine if they are effectively implementing their local comprehensive plans and addressing statewide planning goals. The BCRC will use the review process with towns and villages as needed, but most particularly after adoption of a new or updated plan to determine what, if any, bylaw amendments are needed.

Training for Local Officials: The BCRC will conduct training for local officials on topics where a need has been identified, to include at least: procedures for boards and commissions; village center, neighborhood, and other designation programs, housing and neighborhood development areas, land conservation tools and strategies, and state regulatory proceedings (Act 250 and Section 248).

Healthy Community Design Projects

Regional Food System: The BCRC will continue to work with the Bennington Farm to Plate Council, Bennington College, and other partners to update the local food system action plan and to advance specific implementation activities. A central effort will be expand outreach efforts using the new “TriLocal” logo and campaign. Similar efforts will be initiated in the Manchester food hub area.

Access to Recreational Sites Study: The BCRC completed a geographic assessment that considers accessibility of recreational sites in the region to community population centers, with a special focus on existing barriers to access. The BCRC will work with the Alliance for Community Transformations and local officials to address identified issues including the need for a new/expanded indoor recreational facility in Bennington and a safe bike-ped connection to the Arlington Recreation Park.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Planning: Bicycle and pedestrian facility work described under the Transportation Projects section will be integrated with related efforts to improve community health. In addition to advancing specific projects such as expanded sidewalk systems in Manchester Center and North Bennington, the BCRC and the Alliance for Community Transportations will work to increase local awareness and understanding of Vermont’s “complete streets” initiative – using the VT DOH’s manual as a training tool.

Mixed Use Development Study: The BCRC completed a mixed use development study for all towns and villages in the region. The Commission will provide those findings to all of the communities and discuss ways to implement recommendations that focus on expanding the diversity and density of land uses in defined compact centers.

Healthy Community Design Forum: The BCRC and the Alliance for Community Transformations will be bringing nationally recognized healthy community design expert and speaker, Mark Fenton, to the area in October. Mr. Fenton will be reviewing plans and regulations, visiting key sites, and conducting a series of meetings and a large public forum to raise awareness of healthy community design and to support specific initiatives.

Local Walking and Biking Maps: The BCRC and the Alliance for Community Transformations will be using and refining existing walking and biking maps for Bennington and Manchester (and possibly for Arlington as well). The maps will be printed for local distribution and submitted to area websites and to the Trailfinder.info site.

Brownfields Projects

The BCRC was unsuccessful in securing a Brownfield Assessment grant for the coming year. The current grant will be closed out at the end of the summer and all funds are expected to be expended at that time – no further work can be accomplished unless additional funding is obtained next year, although the BCRC will work cooperatively with the Agency of Natural Resources on any projects they pursue in the region.

Vermont Tissue Redevelopment (Bennington):

South: The Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment, Corrective Action Planning and cleanup has been completed and a certificate of completion is issued. Re-licensing of the hydropower facility is underway and redevelopment activities are about to begin.

North: The Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment and The Corrective Action Plan are complete; the BCRC will continue to work with the property owner and potential purchasers on remediation and redevelopment/re-use planning.

Alcaro Property Assessment and Clean-up Plan (Bennington): The Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment has been completed. The BCRC has been meeting with prospective purchasers/redevelopers to discuss remediation requirements and options.

Barlow Gravel Pit Assessment and Redevelopment Plan (Pownal): Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment and Corrective Action Planning have been completed. The BCRC has been meeting with the owners to discuss remediation steps and possible pathways to redevelopment.

P&S Garage (Arlington): The Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment and Corrective Action Plan are complete; the BCRC is helping the property owner complete final remediation actions.

Mack Molding (Pownal): The Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment has been completed; the BCRC has worked with the owner and the regional development corporation to identify reuse possibilities.

Saint Paul's Catholic Church (Manchester): The Phase 1 Environmental Site has been completed.

Bernstein Display (Bennington): The Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment and the removal of the above ground petroleum storage tank have been completed. Phase II work is nearing completion.

Vermont Arts Exchange: The BCRC is working with the owners and a potential purchaser to cooperatively conduct environmental assessments and facilitate sale of the property.

Bennington Downtown Western Gateway Area-Wide Plan: The BCRC is working with the Town of Bennington to inventory brownfield sites, infrastructure, and potential redevelopment opportunities in a key 35 acre area located at the western entrance to Bennington's downtown.

Potential Future Projects: Ideal Fuels (Bennington), Ford Dealership (Bennington), Benmont Mill (Bennington) – to be pursued depending on interest and funding.

Environmental Projects

Fluvial Erosion Hazard Regulations: Fluvial Erosion Hazard zones have been mapped on the Batten Kill, Walloomsac River, Hoosic River, Mettawee River and their major tributaries. The BCRC will continue to provide outreach and coordination for the adoption of local Fluvial Erosion Hazard Regulations.

Flood Hazard Area Map and Bylaw Updates: The BCRC will continue to work with towns to develop an understanding of the updated Bennington County Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) and to update their flood hazard bylaws to reference the new maps and confirm that the regulations meet or exceed the standards needed to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. The BCRC and Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation are providing assistance to municipal officials that need to schedule and complete updates on their flood hazard area bylaws.

Regional Forest Stewardship Plan: The BCRC will cooperate with other RPCs in the development of tools to allow municipalities and other interested parties make more effective use of forest resource planning data, maps, and strategies.

Regional Plan

Comprehensive Regional Plan: The Bennington Regional Plan will be updated to reflect current data, conditions, and issues. It also will be reformatted to make it more user-friendly and will incorporate recent issue-specific regional plans such as the regional energy plan, regional transportation plan, and the regional forest stewardship plan. The plan update will give consideration to the regional plan review recently completed by Place Sense.