

## Vermont Climate Council Subcommittee Descriptions and Major Milestones for Consideration

### Overarching Objectives for all the Subcommittees

In addition, the specific initiatives, strategies and programs identified in the Plan must further the following objectives:

- Prioritize the most cost-effective, technologically feasible, and equitable GHG emissions reduction pathways, adaptation and preparedness strategies;
- Provide for GHG emissions reductions that reflect the relative contribution of emissions from different sectors;
- Minimize negative impacts on marginalized and rural communities and individuals with low and moderate incomes;
- Ensure that all regions of the state benefit from GHG emissions reductions;
- Support economic sectors and regions of the state that face the greatest barriers to emissions reductions, especially rural and economically distressed regions and industries;
- Support industries, technology, and training that will allow workers and businesses in the state to benefit from GHG reduction solutions;
- Support the use of natural and working lands to reduce GHG, sequester carbon and increase resilience; and
- Maximize the state's involvement in interstate and regional initiatives and programs designed to reduce GHG emissions, and build upon state, national, and international partnerships and programs.

### Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee

The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee will focus on pressures climate change will place on Vermont's transportation, electricity, housing, emergency services and communications infrastructure, with particular attention to the challenges faced by rural communities across the state in addressing these pressures.

The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee shall identify, evaluate and analyze existing and new strategies and programs that build resilience and prepare the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change. This work is anticipated to emphasize reducing Vermonters' energy burden and seeking opportunities for nature-based solutions within the built environment.

The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee shall (by statute):

1. Develop a "municipal vulnerability index" to identify those communities that may be most adversely affected by climate change;
2. Develop best practice recommendations specific to rural communities for reducing municipal, school district, and residential fossil fuel consumption; fortifying critical

transportation, electricity, and community infrastructure; and creating a distributed, redundant, storage-supported local electrical system;

3. Recommend a means of securely sharing self-identified vulnerable residents' information with State and local emergency responders and utilities;
4. Recommend tools for municipalities to assess their climate emergency preparedness, consider land use changes that reduce vulnerabilities, evaluate their financial capacity to address infrastructure resilience, and prioritize investment in that infrastructure;
5. Review existing planning efforts, including local and regional land use planning, transportation planning, energy planning and operations planning, and identify opportunities to better integrate and support these efforts in service of GHG emissions reductions, building resilience and designing a resilient future.
6. Utilize Vermont Emergency Management biennial reports to recommend program, policy, and legislative changes that will enhance municipal resilience to increased hazards presented by climate change.

In addition to these statutory mandates, it is anticipated that the Subcommittee will consider additional areas of work including, but not necessarily limited to, the role of nature-based solutions in enhancing landscape resilience in the built environment. Work around nature-based solutions will require early and close coordination with the Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee committee to establish the roles of each Subcommittee related to adaptation and community resilience.

#### Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee

The Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee will focus on comprehensively identifying scientifically and technologically feasible initiatives, strategies and programs available to achieve the GHG emissions reductions requirements of the GWSA. It should be noted that local and regional land use planning and decision-making has long-term impacts on GHG emissions that should be incorporated into the work of this Subcommittee. Initiatives, strategies and programs found to be feasible will then be evaluated through economic analyses to determine the economic case and relative cost-effectiveness of each initiative, strategy or program.

The Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee will establish a framework for consistently evaluating initiatives, strategies and programs, with support from the Science and Data Subcommittee. The framework should include, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

- CO<sub>2</sub> mitigation potential;
- Cost-effectiveness;
- Affordability and impacts on vulnerable populations;
- Ability to identify and track measurable outcomes;
- Demonstrated/proven effectiveness;
- Legal authority (existing or needed) to support implementation;
- Co-benefits.

In service of this effort, it is anticipated that the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee will need to establish sector-specific working groups to ensure the capacity and expertise needed in

order to identify and evaluate a full range of sector-specific initiatives, strategies and programs. Because of the scope of this Subcommittee, the membership may need to be somewhat larger than the other Subcommittees.

In preparing its annual GHG emissions inventory, the State of Vermont currently tracks emissions from the following sectors: agriculture; buildings (residential/commercial/industrial); electricity (consumption); fossil fuel; industrial processes; transportation; and waste. The GWSA also specifically calls for strategies that limit in use of chemicals and substances or products that contribute to climate change. It is anticipated that the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee's work will be organized consistent with these sectors, with particular attention given to the building and transportation sectors given the outsized role these sectors play in Vermont's GHG emissions profile. The Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee will require early coordination with the Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee to establish the roles of each Subcommittee related to the agriculture sector, including where strategies related to agricultural emissions will be taken up. Once formed, this Subcommittee will determine a work structure regarding sectors to be reviewed and approved by the Council at its March meeting.

#### Just Transitions Subcommittee

The Just Transitions Subcommittee will develop principles to guide the work of the other Subcommittees to ensure that the initiatives, programs and strategies necessary to achieve the State's GHG emission reduction requirements and build resilience and climate adaptation of Vermont communities and natural systems support all residents of the State fairly and equitably. The Subcommittee will review the SOV Equity Impact Assessments as a starting place to inform the principles to guide this work, but will further consider job, economic and demographic impacts of various proposed recommendations set forth by other Subcommittees. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that climate policy is developed in a manner that is based on mutual respect and justice for all, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

It is anticipated that, once the set of principles that will be used to guide Vermont's climate have been established, members of the Just Transitions Subcommittee will: 1) offer tools or processes for evaluating both existing and recommended programs and strategies through a just transitions filter or lens, 2) to the extent they are able, join and participate in the other Subcommittees to ensure that these principles are fully integrated into the more technical components of this work; and, 3) review recommendations from other Subcommittees for their just transition impacts. This approach will help ensure that the initiatives, programs and strategies consider the disproportionate impact of climate change on rural, low income and marginalized communities and that programs and incentives for building resilience are accessible to all Vermonters and do not unfairly burden any groups, communities, geographic locations or economic sectors.

The Just Transitions Subcommittee will also have a leading role in designing a public participation plan that facilitates broad engagement to gain input from all residents of the

State, paying particular attention to creating opportunities for rural, low income and marginalized communities to engage meaningful and with voice and influence. The Just Transitions Subcommittee will develop tool(s) that can be used to assess the efficacy of community engagement efforts related to the development of the Climate Action Plan.

#### Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee

The Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee shall focus on the role Vermont's natural and working lands play in carbon sequestration and storage, climate adaptation, and ecosystem and community resilience. This work shall emphasize opportunities for nature-based solutions in areas outside the built environment, including actions and policies that restore wetlands, increase carbon stored on agricultural and forest land and in forest products, and support healthy agricultural soils and local food systems.

Specifically, the Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee shall:

1. Develop a full carbon budget for the State of Vermont that quantifies carbon emissions and sequestration associated with biomass growth, management and utilization, in support of the GWSA requirement to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across all sectors;
2. Identify initiatives, programs and strategies that achieve sequestration and storage of carbon and promote best management practices to achieve climate adaptation and resilience on natural working lands;
3. Identify the co-benefits of strategies for such factors as water quality, quality of life, food security, and economic resilience and sustainability; and
4. Identify initiatives, programs and strategies for mitigation to reduce gross and net annual greenhouse gas emissions from Vermont's agricultural and forested working lands.

Establishing the scope of work for this Subcommittee will require close and early coordination with both the Cross-Sector Mitigation (CSM) and Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittees, particularly as related to opportunities for climate change work within natural and working landscape that extend beyond sequestration.

#### Science and Data Subcommittee

While the GWSA did not explicitly contemplate the need for a Science and Data Subcommittee, it did provide the opportunity for the Council to create other Subcommittees to advise the Council and undertake the work needed to create the Plan. The Science and Data Subcommittee will be responsible for reviewing the latest information on direct and indirect effects of climate change, drawing on existing data and studies, as well as identifying critical scientific information needs. In addition, the Science and Data Subcommittee will be responsible for establishing and energy use and emissions baseline, including reviewing the suitability of Vermont's current GHG emissions inventory for assessing progress toward meeting the requirements of the GWSA.

Specifically, the Science and Data Subcommittee shall:

1. Work in partnership with the other Subcommittees to advise on the best available science to inform their work.
2. Establish an energy use and emissions baseline based on current state and regional policies, as well as an assessment of options for meeting Vermont's energy needs through 2050, including appropriate allowances for efficiency and growth, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions in an economically viable and just manner.
  - a. Review the State of Vermont's approach to preparing the existing GHG emissions inventory and recommend modifications or adjustments, if needed, so that the inventory can serve as the basis for measuring progress toward meeting the GHG reductions requirements established in the GWSA.
3. Build scenarios based on the work of the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee and in concert with the technical contractors including:
  - a. The cost to the State of doing nothing in response to climate change; an emissions analysis of draft greenhouse gas reductions strategies proposed by the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee; and an economic analysis of the draft emissions- and adaptation-related strategies proposed by the Subcommittees.
  - b. Reflect the relative contribution of each sector or category of source of emissions.
4. Identify critical scientific information needs pertaining to priority research and monitoring of state-based changes in the climate and its impacts.
  - o Strengthen research and development and monitoring of climate mitigation and adaptation practices.
  - o Bring in technical and regional experts to advise on, collaborate on and discuss climate science.
5. Recommendations for monitoring and tracking the Climate Plan's progress over time.

#### Major Milestones for Subcommittees

The following are the major milestones for the work of the Subcommittees. As the Just Transitions and Science and Data Subcommittees are largely in service to the other Subcommittees, an understanding of these milestones will be necessary to inform the scope and timing of their work in support of the Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Cross-Sector Mitigation and Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittees.

1. Subcommittee composition will be finalized by the end of February.
2. Subcommittee workgroups, if deemed necessary for the cross-sector mitigation Subcommittee, will be identified and staffed by mid-March.
3. Each Subcommittee will present the full proposed scope of its work to the full Climate Council for consideration at the March VCC meeting, including contractor work needed to enable Subcommittees to craft their recommendations.
4. Evaluates potential pathways for presentation to the Council at its April meeting. The pathways should be thought of as packages of strategies – An example of a pathway

could be “90,000 EVs on the road by 2025” which you would also link to the specific reduction in emissions.

5. Draft framework and strategies for presentation to the Council at its May meeting, including policy options, and cost and equity considerations.
6. Participate in public engagement process around draft framework and strategies to be completed by end of June.
7. Revise framework and strategies and prepare recommendations, including financing options, based on public comment for presentation to the Council at its July meeting.
8. Work with your team to knit together the work of the Subcommittees into the Climate Action Plan in August.
9. Council will review and revise the Climate Action Plan in September.
10. Public engagement in October.
11. Finalize the Plan in November.

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