

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

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Healthy People, Strong Communities Implementation Grant Awards

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) is pleased to announce the grant awards from the NRPC Healthy People, Strong Communities project. Fourteen projects in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties were awarded a total of \$212,000. NRPC received 36 applications, requesting over \$610,000. The selected projects will make an impact in our communities and implement the overall goal of the Healthy People, Strong Communities project: to improve community health and economic opportunity.

Healthy People, Strong Communities is a regional partnership between community members, community-based organizations, businesses and local governments. Leading this partnership, Northwest Regional Planning Commission is working directly with these groups to: gather information and develop strategies for workforce development, career mentorship, substance abuse prevention, and disaster resiliency; ensure that the region is safe and inviting for all transportation modes including walking and biking; and to increase physical activity. Through over 20 public meetings and conversations with hundreds of residents of the region, the Steering Committee developed goals that served as the guide for these implementation grants.

THE LIST OF AWARDS:

Community Walking and Running Path

St. Albans City Elementary School: Install ½ mile walking and running path amidst 30 acres of athletic fields, gardens, orchards and forests for the benefit of students and the public.

Food Pantry Vehicle

Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity: Purchase a new Food Pantry Vehicle to support Northwest Family Foods food pantry program.

Dirt Divas

Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union (Partnering with Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union): Make mountain bikes and associated equipment available to students and residents within each Supervisory Union. Establish after school and summer programs involving mountain biking.

Senior Center Renovations

Islands in the Sun Senior Center: Renovate the now closed Senior Citizen Center in Alburgh. The Center will be used as a space where all members of the community can enjoy many of the opportunities available in larger towns for healthy activities and community building.

Parents and Substance Abuse

Franklin County Caring Communities: The implementation of two courses of "Guiding Good Choices," an evidence-based program for parents of youth ages 9-14. The implementation of a "Rocking Horse Circle of Support" group for pregnant and parenting women affected by substance abuse or addiction. Recruitment of parents of middle/high school youth for "Safe Homes Parent Network of Northwest Vermont," a group that promotes family policies discouraging underage alcohol and other drug use.

Cold Storage Project

Fairfield Farmers Market: Establish a centrally located community site for the storage of local food products. This site will help increase access to year round, local foods, within the community.

Highgate Arena Dehumidification

Town of Highgate: Upgrade the dehumidification systems of the Highgate Arena which is a critical component to the overall health of the facility.

Healthy Roots Farm to Plate

Franklin County Industrial Development and Northwestern Medical Center: Hire a part-time Healthy Roots Coordinator to address the needs of the local diversified agriculture sector. Coordinator's



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focus will include education (product and consumer), marketing, and distribution opportunities (locally and outside of Vermont) and developing transportation opportunities. Promote the benefits of locally produced foods while working to increase accessibility across public and private sectors.

St. Albans Recreation Reserve for Hard'ack and Aldis Hill Friends of Northern Lake Champlain

Create a sustainability plan for Hard'ack and Aldis Hill Recreation Reserve.

Regional Workforce Development through Franklin County Internships Franklin County Workforce Investment Board

Linking secondary and post-secondary students with Vermont employers through internships and/or direct job placement. Align with the regional economic development strategies, serve the needs of businesses and build the future workforce of Vermont.

Business Matters in the Islands

Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation: Helping businesses grow and become sustainable in the Champlain Islands through a multi-pronged approach and with affordable and local workforce training, access to capital and partnerships.

Island Line Planning

Local Motion: Meet with local officials on trail development and recreation opportunities based on recommendations from the 2004 Champlain Islands Trail Report and the 2009 Lake Champlain Bikeway/Island Line Improvement Plan.

Cornerstone Bridges Sustainability and Growth Richford Cornerstone

Cornerstone Bridges to Life Community Center will continue to provide a facility for all ages to learn and engage in healthy, fun, and safe activities. The grant will be used to increase the number and types of programs offered.

Deer Brook Town Park

Town of Georgia: Phase 1 recreation trail development and construction to include local and state permitting.

For further information contact Shaun Coleman at 802-524-5958 or at scoleman@nrpcvt.com.

Regional Hydroseeder Program for Franklin County Municipalities

The NRPC has received a grant from the Vermont Ecosystem Restoration Program to create a regional hydroseeder program for Franklin County municipalities.

The grant will promote and accelerate the use of vegetation stabilization for roadside ditches and steep side slopes by **purchasing a hydroseeder** to be shared by at least six towns in Franklin County.

Establishing vegetation in roadside ditches has clear water quality benefits including 1) improving water quality by filtering runoff, 2) mitigating excessive sediment loss from ditch by holding nutrient-rich soils within the ditch and 3) making the ditches more resilient during flood events.

Currently, Franklin County communities are establishing vegetation by manually broadcasting seed and mulch (straw). Hydroseeding has better results for establishing vegetation and doing so more quickly than hand broadcast seeding and mulching.

The Regional Hydroseeder Program will be modeled after the successful Lamoille County hydroseeder project, established in 2000.

Each participating municipality will contribute \$500 to the hydroseeder fund in the first year to buy into the program and \$50 each year after. This will cover unit maintenance, trailer registration, the first year of hydroseeding materials and other operational costs. The NRPC will be responsible for managing the hydroseeder program including coordinating the participating municipalities, managing the hydroseeder operations account, scheduling maintenance and establishing the online hydroseeder sign-out calendar. The unit will be stored at one of the town's garage and each town will get the hydroseeder for a minimum of 10 days (not necessarily consecutive) during prime ditching season (June-September).

What is hydroseeding?

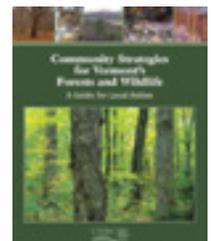
Hydroseeding is a planting process which utilizes a slurry of seed and mulch. The slurry is transported in a truck or trailer-mounted tank and sprayed over prepared ground. Hydroseeding has many advantages over using traditional seeding methods for roadside erosion control.



New Publication: Strategies for Vermont's Forests and Wildlife

VNRC unveiled a new report, Community Strategies for Vermont's Forests and Wildlife: A Guide for Local Action; available for download at www.vnrc.org/programs/forests-wildlife/guide/. Over the years, VNRC has supported Vermont communities by offering proactive solutions to reduce forest fragmentation and parcelization in Vermont to maintain the rural character of our state. There are many different ways that communities can help sustain forests and wildlife at the local and regional levels.

This guide is a great resource for town officials and interested citizens with both regulatory and non-regulatory tools; it also is a good tie to NRPC's Forest Stewardship project. For more information on that project please see the next article.



Looking at How We Manage Our Forests

Although Northwestern Vermont is considered an agricultural community, 43% of the region is forest cover. Forests are a pivotal piece of our economy, landscape, and livelihood in Vermont. Interestingly the majority of this forest land is owned by private landowners and therefore planning for the “use” of the land occurs on a parcel by parcel basis. However when considering factors such as forest health, habitat connectivity, and a strong wood products industry, a bigger picture view of the surrounding area and communities is needed to ensure these factors are sustainable. Addressing this regional scope is the crux of NRPC’s Forest Stewardship project.

The Forest Stewardship project is a statewide collaboration between Vermont’s Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and the Vermont Division of Forests. The first phase of the project consists of using mapping technology and a stakeholder engagement process to inventory and assess forest resources, identify forest threats and limitations to forest sustainability, and produce strategies for forest management and conservation.

Four RPCs took on this effort in 2011 and produced a publication of Landscape-Based Forest Stewardship Planning – A Regional Approach. A copy of the report is available on NRPC’s website at <http://www.nrpcvt.com/ForestStewardship.html>. NRPC is one of four additional RPCs that joined the project in the Summer of 2013 for Phase 2 to examine these themes in Northwestern Vermont.

A diverse Steering Committee made up of private land owners, the County Forester, forest based business owners, loggers, and conservation organizations is assisting NRPC in the development of this project. The Committee met in July and October to discuss the project and forest resource values. The next meeting will be in January and the Committee will discuss economic trends in the forest industry, barriers, and potential strategies for maintaining a healthy forested landscape.

Some of the potential strategies identified from Phase 1 of this project include regulatory and non-regulatory actions, such as alternatives to large lot zoning, small-scale timber processing, overweight policies, and town forests.

NRPC hopes to gain input from a variety of voices from the forest ranging from conservationists, town boards and commissions, land owners and forest based industries from across the Region. If you are interested in contributing feedback to this project or would like to know more contact Amanda Holland at 802-524-5958 or at aholland@nrpcvt.com.

VTrans Seeks Regional Input on Pavement Leveling Projects

VTrans is seeking input from NRPC’s Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on candidate pavement leveling projects in the region for state fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015). While the TAC has prioritized other VTrans projects on an annual basis—such as state bridge, town highway bridge, roadway and safety projects—this will be the first time the TAC has ranked pavement leveling projects.

In addition to the ranking the roadway segments in the table below, the TAC has the option to add more potential projects to the list. Only state highways are eligible for the program. **Class 1 town highways or other municipal roads are not part of the leveling program.**

What is a pavement leveling project?

A pavement leveling project is where an asphalt overlay is applied over the existing road surface in an especially rough section as a temporary stop-gap measure to provide the traveling public with an adequate surface until funding is secured for more comprehensive maintenance. Leveling typically does not address shoulder work on an existing road.

Route	Town Begin	Mile Begin (MM)	End Town	Mile End (MM)	Length (Miles)
105	Enosburgh	2.270	Berkshire	1.300	4.197
104A	Fairfax	0.000	Fairfax	1.150	1.150
104A	Georgia	0.200	Georgia	3.300	3.100
105	Richford	0.000	Richford	1.546	1.546
105	Swanton	3.800	Sheldon	2.000	2.100
105	Swanton	0.500	Swanton	3.800	3.300

The TAC will prioritize these roadways at its next meeting, January 9th at 6:30 PM. Please contact Bethany Remmers with any questions or comments at 802-524-5958 or bethany@nrpcvt.com.

Estimating Your Household’s Housing and Transportation Costs

Before your next move, check out this new tool to see how affordable your new community truly is based on where you live and work. The U.S. Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Transportation have unveiled the **Location Affordability Portal (LAP)**, a cost calculation tool that allows users to estimate housing and transportation costs for neighborhoods across the country. The tool lets users input information about their specific housing and transportation conditions and based on the data provided it can help users compare the affordability of various locations.

Housing affordability encompasses much more than the rent or mortgage payment and includes the impact of transportation costs on housing location choices. The LAP will help consumers and communities better understand the combined costs of housing and transportation associated with living in a specific region, street, or neighborhood and make better-informed decisions about where to live, work, and invest. This tool is available at <http://www.locationaffordability.info/>.

Northwest Regional Board of Commissioners

Alburgh Town:	Terry Tatro Vacant Seat
Alburgh Village:	Vacant Seat Vacant Seat
Bakersfield:	Dennis DeBevec Bill Irwin
Berkshire:	Claude Charron Richard Ross
Enosburg Falls:	Michael Manahan Vacant Seat
Enosburgh:	Ronald Duso Vacant Seat
Fairfax:	David Shea Colleen Steen
Fairfield:	Marilyn Savoy Jason Booth
Fletcher:	Lynn Douglas Mary Jane Featherstone
Franklin:	Yvon Dandurand Clark Hubbard
Georgia:	Jerry Baitz Kirk Waite
Grand Isle:	Edvin Gelinis David Borthwick-Leslie
Highgate:	Richard Noel Tom Racine
Isle La Motte:	Paul Hinman Sylvia Jensen
Montgomery:	Carol McGregor Vacant Seat
North Hero:	Vacant Seat Vacant Seat
Richford:	Rowena Brown Vacant Seat
Saint Albans City:	Lazarus Scangas Jeff Young
Saint Albans Town:	Bruce Cheeseman Albin Voegelé
Sheldon:	Patrick Howrigan Greg Stebbins
South Hero:	Bob Buermann Michael Guernsey
Swanton Town:	Harold Garrett Ross Lavoie
Swanton Village:	Christopher Leach Neal Speer

Congratulations to Municipalities on the 2014 Planning Grant Program Awards Total Regional Funding: \$46,707

Town of Highgate—Infrastructure Planning

The Town of Highgate will develop a Capital Improvement Program, establishing a system of procedures and priorities to evaluate and prepare for future public improvement projects.

Town of Fairfax—Infrastructure Planning

The Town of Fairfax will evaluate the conceptual alternatives and constraints for pedestrian connectivity between North and South Village with preliminary cost estimates for further engineering, project administration and construction.

City of St. Albans—Housing Study

The City of St. Albans will conduct a study of housing needs and facilitate public discussion to address community concerns regarding housing.

Town of St. Albans—Zoning and Subdivision Bylaw Update

Employing the principles of smart growth, the Town of St. Albans will update the zoning and subdivision bylaws to reflect the vision of the Town Plan and create clear and understandable regulations.

Municipal Plans Must Address Flood Resiliency

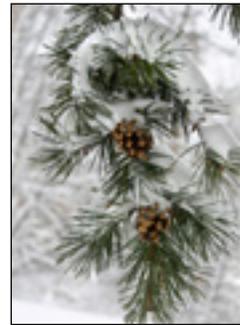
At the end of the 2013 legislative session Governor Shumlin signed Act 16 into law. Act 16 requires that after July 1, 2014 municipal and regional plans include a flood resilience element. Plans adopted before that date will continue to remain in effect until expiration or until they are amended or readopted, at which point they must include the new flood resilience plan element.

The bill also requires ANR to establish a program to aid and support municipalities in adopting the new plan element. The plan element is meant to accomplish two things - identify areas at risk of flood damage or storage through a map, and the recommend ways to protect these areas and to minimize flood damage. Any communities that are working on plan revisions or are planning to revise their plans soon should include this chapter. Staff at NRPC can provide assistance.

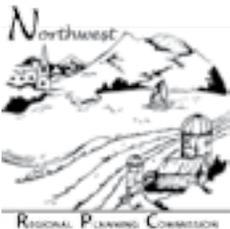
View Summary of Act 16: Municipal and Regional Flood Resiliency Plan Legislation may be found at <http://www.vtwaterquality.org/> or at Northwest Regional Planning Commission website www.nrpcvt.com/EmergencyPlanningMitigation.html.

Save the Date

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, will be hosting a Municipal Day on March 31, 2014 at the National Life Building in Montpelier, VT. More information to follow in a future newsletter.



*Wishing
Everyone a
Happy
New Year!*



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