

Bennington County Regional Commission News

A LOOK AT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR REGION

JULY/AUGUST 2010

Produced by the staff of the Bennington County Regional Commission

Challenges for Change

The Challenges for Change legislation, which was approved by the Vermont Legislature this year, is an outgrowth of Act No.68 of the Acts of the 2009 adjourned session. A primary driver of the Challenges for Change is closing the gap between available revenue and expenditures. The legislation creates outcome driven changes in services and performance with reduced state funding through efficiencies, reductions, and consolidations. State agencies and departments are specifically addressed together with related outcomes.



The second-floor offices of the BCRC since 2007, located in Bennington

The 'Economic Development Challenge', through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, includes the funding to the Bennington County Regional Commission and the Bennington County Industrial Corporation. This funding will feature new performance based

contracts that will go into effect on February 1, 2010. BCRC and BCIC are working together to implement measures consistent with the legislation. Among the outcomes of the legislation is to be increased employment and income, as well as state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure. The legislation also sets forth a directive that regional service delivery be effective, efficient, and improved for the benefit of Vermont residents, businesses, and visitors.



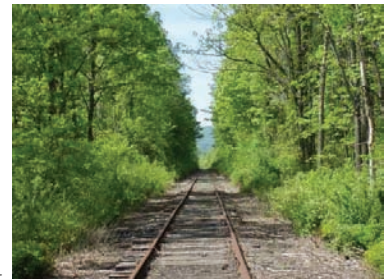
BCRC staff works closely with parties on a variety of regional issues

For additional information contact Rex Burke.

Track 3 Rail Study Underway

The Vermont Agency of Transportation recently was awarded a \$1 million grant from the Federal Railroad Administration to study passenger rail service in southwestern Vermont. The planning study will look at different routes service could make to include the towns of Bennington and Manchester while utilizing the existing Ethan Allan service to Rutland. The Bennington County Regional Commission and the Rutland Regional Planning Commission will be working with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the New York State Department of Transportation on this study that will provide the basis for eventual service through Bennington County. Rex Burke, Executive Director of BCRC, is a member of the seven member board that will be directing the planning study.

The planning study is now underway, and soon VTrans will be going out to bid the project for consultants. The BCRC will be working closely with the chosen consultant throughout the process, as rail service is a major priority for the region. Contact Rex Burke or Jim Sullivan for additional information.



Rail is a major focus of the BCRC. This segment is in North Bennington.



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Region Scenes:



A summer vista on a rural road in Pownal



The new White Rocks Trail pedestrian tunnel



The new Stone Valley Byway signs are up

Flood Hazard Maps

Flood hazard maps in Bennington County are now being updated by STARR, a contractor working for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In 2007 FEMA completed a report detailing the flood study needs in the county. This year FEMA has initiated the process for new county-wide Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMS). These DFIRMS will update the identification of flood hazards using a variety of the latest GIS technologies.

The current flood hazard maps in Bennington County are based on work done between 1974 and 1986. These maps identify areas subject to inundation during a 1% annual chance flood event. On average, sites in this hazard area have a 1 in 4 chance of flooding during the course of a 30 year mortgage. Flood insurance is required for any federally underwritten mortgage in the flood hazard zone. Most towns in the region participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. The owners and renters of homes or other structures in the participating communities are eligible to secure flood insurance.

The preliminary DFIRMS will be available this winter for review and comment. Any questions about the process can be directed toward Jim Henderson, GIS Planner.



Flooding in downtown Bennington

BCRC Helps Homeowners Conserve Energy and Save Money

The BCRC, working with over twenty volunteers in Bennington, Shaftsbury, Manchester, Dorset, and Peru, recently completed “home energy visits,” providing energy-saving advice and materials to 62 households. The program is part of a statewide effort funded through Efficiency Vermont that is intended to increase awareness and understanding of home energy use and to provide information on other programs and incentives that will encourage people to have professional energy audits and to complete recommended energy improvement projects in their homes.

Additional work being conducted through the Commission’s energy planning program has included provision of assistance with municipal energy improvement grant applications, efforts to promote alternative transportation, including rail service, educational efforts associated with the regional energy plan and development of municipal energy plans, and work with local organizations on local food and economy initiatives. The BCRC also has been actively involved with developers and state regulators working on implementation of small hydroelectric projects in Bennington and Pownal, as well as solar electric and biomass thermal and electric projects in Pownal. Contact Jim Sullivan for more information.



A meeting on potential hydro-power taking place at the Pownal Dam.

New Brownfields Grant

Recently the Bennington County Regional Commission was awarded a grant for \$356,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency. This follows the BCRC’s successful 2008 EPA grant, in which the commission assisted in assessments and remediation planning for four sites. The new round of funding will allow for brownfields inventories, planning, environmental assessments, and community outreach. Of this assessment grant \$200,000 is to be directed towards hazardous substance contaminated sites, and \$156,000 is to be directed towards petroleum contaminated sites.

The BCRC is forming a committee to assist in the selection of consultants, the selection of brownfields sites, and for general guidance on the expenditure of these funds. We would like very much to have involvement from each of the Towns and Villages in our Region, especially if there is an interested or experienced resident on the subject. If you would like additional information, or would like to nominate a community member, please contact Jeff Mast. The first meeting of this committee will take place July 19th at 3 pm at BCRC.



Vermont Tissue in North Bennington was a site in the 2008 BCRC program

Special Projects

Household Hazardous Waste Collections:

The BCRC manages the two annual HHW collection events for the Towns of Arlington, Dorset, Manchester, Rupert, Sandgate, and Sunderland. The next event will be held at Fisher School in Arlington on October 2nd. This includes assisting with annual reporting requirements. Additionally, the BCRC applies for and receives annual grant funding through the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources to offset the cost of HHW events for the Towns of Pownal and Shaftsbury.

Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan:

The BCRC is in the process of updating the regional portion of the Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as the municipal annexes of the plan, to ensure compliance with FEMA standards. The plan and annexes must be updated every five years. Municipalities with a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan are eligible for several mitigation grant programs. The BCRC assists municipalities with such grant applications; assistance has been provided to the Towns of Arlington, Bennington, Pownal, and Rupert.

Emergency Planning and Exercising:

The BCRC provides technical and administrative support to the county Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). This includes assisting in the development of one emergency exercise per year on a regional level. For 2010, this exercise will be in a tabletop format in the Town of Winhall, focusing on response to a plane crash with mass casualties and a hazardous materials component. This exercise, planned for this fall, will bring together emergency responders, planners, town officials, hospital personnel, and others, in responding to this mock incident. In addition, the BCRC assists in offering training to primary and secondary responders in the region, as well as NIMS-compliance assistance to municipalities. Municipalities and agencies that are not NIMS-compliant are not eligible for several grant funding programs.

Tier II Reports:

On behalf of the county Local Emergency Planning Committee, the BCRC maintains records of the Tier II filings provided by local businesses, industries, and all entities required to report the use and/or storage of hazardous materials. Such records are made available for public viewing by calling the BCRC office.

Multi-Modal Facility:

The BCRC is assisting the Town of Bennington in obtaining designated FTA earmark funds for the purpose of renovating the existing public transit facility in Bennington into a multi-modal facility. This involves coordination with the county public transit provider, the Green Mountain Community Network, who presently owns the property.



The Multi-Modal Facility will feature covered parking for GMCN buses

Public Transit Service Agreements:

As part of an annual public transit grant application for funding, the BCRC assists the public transit provider and several of the local human service agencies in executing agreements for services under the Elders & Persons with Disabilities funding program. Additionally, the BCRC organizes and holds meetings of the regional Public Transit Advisory Committee.

Integrated Solid Waste Applications Program:

The BCRC is currently assisting the Towns of Arlington, Dorset, Manchester, and Sandgate with contract renegotiations for the East Dorset and Sunderland Transfer Stations. In addition, the BCRC provides administrative support to the above-mentioned towns plus Sunderland for transfer station recycling invoicing on a monthly basis.

Solid Waste Implementation Plan:

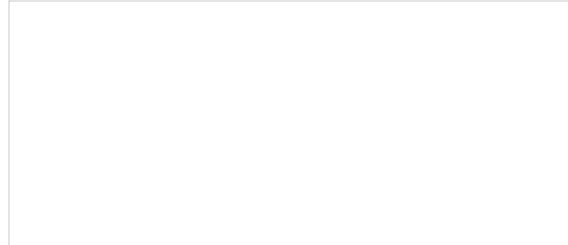
On behalf of eight of the towns in the region, the BCRC assists in the implementation of tasks outlined in the SWIP. This includes education, outreach, promotion of recycling, and compost bin sales. Compost bins are currently offered for sale to residents of Arlington, Dorset, Rupert, Shaftsbury, and Sunderland; contact Lissa Stark at 442-0713 ext. 2 or lstark@bcrcvt.org for more information. The website at: www.bcrsolidwaste.com is a helpful resource for residents and small businesses in the region.

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VISIT US ONLINE AT:
www.BCRCVT.ORG



Dates of Interest

Regular Meetings

BCRC Commission Meeting:

- Aug. 19th at 4:45 PM at the Southside Café

Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting:

- Aug. 10th at 12:00 PM at the Arlington Town Hall

Brownfields Advisory Committee Meetings:

- July 19th at 3:00 PM at the BCRC Offices
- Aug. 16th at 3:00 PM at the BCRC Offices

Stone Valley Byway Meetings:

- July 21st at 2:00 PM at the Pawlet Town Hall
- Aug. 18th at 3:00 PM at the Pawlet Town Hall

Special Meetings

Shires Byway Introductory Meeting:

- July 27th at 12:00 PM at the Arlington Town Hall

***We look
forward to
seeing you
at an
upcoming
meeting!***



BCRC Staff

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