



Department of Environmental Conservation
Strategic Plan 2016 – 2018

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Message from the Commissioner

It is New Year's Eve. Vermonters across the state are filled with anticipation for what tomorrow will bring. The moment is ripe for the release of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan.



This plan is about results. For a Department of approximately 300 employees and a \$50 million budget, it is a lean plan. Created after many robust conversations, refinements and reflections, it charts a course towards clean air, clean water, healthy and safe communities and efficient and effective government. Furthering the mission of the Department “to preserve, enhance, restore, and conserve Vermont's natural resources, and protect human health for the benefit of this and future generations,” the plan outlines key strategies to achieve our desired outcomes.

In the process of developing this plan, we asked ourselves: “How much do we do?” “How well do we do it?” and “Is anyone better off?” and considered the answers. We then drew upon the Department's culture of continuous process improvement and performance measurement as we finalized the plan. In combination with the strategic planning process, systems have been developed to measure our progress towards achieving our goals to protect Vermont's natural resources.

The 2013-2015 Strategic Plan we leave behind encapsulates a time of noteworthy environmental policy advancements, including: the passage of a critical lakes and ponds shoreline protection law; universal recycling to ensure consistent, convenient collection recycling and organics collection statewide; and strong, new surface water protections focused on reducing pollution from stormwater run-off.

As the Department launches the 2016-2018 Strategic Plan, we are at a time of full implementation of these recent environmental advancements, while maintaining a consistent level of service across all programs. We will succeed in our implementation as we also strengthen our internal business practices by increasing electronic permitting and records management and applying Lean concepts to evaluate inefficiencies in our work flow and implement improvements.

A high degree of responsibility and investment has been given to the Department and we are poised to meet, and even exceed, the expectations set in partnership with the Vermont Legislature. This plan will be foundational to our success.

It is a true privilege to work with such talented professionals to achieve the environmental and public health goals that we all share.

Alyssa B. Schuren, Commissioner

Department Mission

To preserve, enhance, restore, and conserve Vermont's natural resources, and protect human health for the benefit of this and future generations.

Department Strategic Planning Process

We initiated our planning process with the Department's executive management team in May 2015, developing a set of high-level strategic priorities for the Department. The draft plan was reviewed and further refined by management and supervisors over the course of the following six months. During the planning process, Department management focused on incorporating Results Based Accountability (RBA) into our plan to measure how well the strategies adopted by this plan are working. This is a streamlined approach, presented in simple language and includes overall population-based indicators along with more specific program-level performance measures. We plan to track progress on our indicators and performance measures annually and make adjustments to the plan, as necessary to achieve our performance targets.

Population-Based Outcomes & Indicators

Clean Air

- Total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per capita
- Total concentration of mobile source air pollutants
- Total number of days with air quality alerts

Clean Water

- Percent of river miles with water quality that meet designated uses (i.e. swimmable, fishable, boatable)
- Percent of watersheds in Vermont where aquatic biota are rated “good” or “better”
- Number of previously impaired waters meeting water quality standards based on corrective actions

Healthy and Safe Communities

- Disposal rate of municipal solid waste (lbs./person/day)
- Total number of acres that has been or will be cleaned up/redeveloped based on sites enrolled in the Brownfields Reuse Environmental Liability Limitation Act
- Percent of communities with asset management plans related to environmental infrastructure
- Annual number of dams reporting an upgrade in condition
- Percent of land in Vermont preserved to reduce flood and fluvial erosion hazards
- Percent of public water systems in compliance with health based standards

Efficient and Effective Government

- Number of Lean (process improvement) events successfully completed across state government

Department of Environmental Conservation Goals (2016 -2018)

Goal 1: Reduced public health exposure and risk from air and climate pollution

- A. Strategy: Support clean and efficient wood burning

Performance Measure 1: Number of uncertified wood stoves replaced with new certified units

Performance Measure 2: Percentage of monitoring locations where particulate Concentration trends (PM2.5) are decreasing during the heating season

- B. Strategy: Advance clean car initiatives, and other programs to reduce mobile source emissions

Performance Measure 1: Number of plug-in hybrid and all-electric vehicles registered

Performance Measure 2: Proportion of air pollutants from mobile sources based on EPA's National Emissions Inventory (NEI) 3-year schedule

Performance Measure 3: Number of charging stations funded in part by the Department

Goal 2: All Vermonters have safe drinking water

- A. Strategy: Ensure communities have technical and managerial capability to provide long-term public health protection through public drinking water systems

Performance Measure 1: Percent of communities that have asset management plans for their water systems

Performance Measure 2: Percent of public water systems in compliance with health-based standards

- B. Strategy: Promote public trust as an integral part of groundwater management and protection

Performance Measure 1: Number of towns with groundwater protection included in their town plans.

Performance Measure 2: Annual number of groundwater samples collected analyzed for arsenic, radionuclides, nitrates, manganese, and other emerging contaminants.

Performance Measure 3: Annual percentage of wastewater systems permitted by the On-site Program since 1989 that have not failed.

Goal 3: Materials are sustainably managed and properties returned to productive use

- A. Strategy: Ensure that all communities have approved Solid Waste Implementation Plans to fully implement Universal Recycling Law

Performance Measure 1: Number of Solid Waste Planning entities with approved Solid Waste Implementation Plans

Performance Measure 2: Amount of public and private funding dedicated toward Universal Recycling Infrastructure

- B. Strategy: Secure adequate funding to support and promote superfund cleanups and Brownfields redevelopment

Performance Measure 1: Amount of funds available each year for Brownfields and Superfund cleanups

Performance Measure 2: Amount of funds leveraged for Brownfields redevelopment

Goal 4: Protect, maintain, enhance and restore Vermont's surface waters

- A. Strategy: Protect our surface waters through flood resiliency and resource protection; protect and restore wetlands, lakes, floodplains and rivers through conservation and protection strategies

Performance Measure 1: Number of acres protected

Performance Measure 2: Number of reclassifications or designations for protection

- B. Strategy: Maintain water quality and resources through regulatory programs and technical assistance

Performance Measure 1: Percent decrease in wastewater treatment facility permit backlog

Performance Measure 2: Number of compliance and inspection-related site visits

Performance Measure 3: Number of entities receiving technical assistance

- C. Strategy: Enhance flow protection at existing wetlands, shorelands and rivers projects

Performance Measure 1: Number of projects with enhanced protection

Performance Measure 2: Number of river miles enhanced

- D. Strategy: Restore water quality through timely implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Lake Champlain, Long Island Sound, Lake Memphremagog, and Lake Carmi and the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 64)

Performance Measure 1: Number of priority projects funded

Performance Measure 2: Percent of required pollutant reduction achieved on VTrans highways and related facilities

Performance Measure 3: Percent of required pollutant reduction achieved on developed land (non-road)

Performance Measure 4: Percent of municipal roads meeting stormwater management standards

Goal 5: Manage infrastructure to protect the health and safety of Vermonters

- A. Strategy: Reduce potential for dam failure risks

Performance Measure 1: Annual number of dams rated in poor condition that have been upgraded to fair or good condition

Performance Measure 2: Annual number of dams in fair condition that have been upgraded to good condition

Goal 6: Develop and maintain a culture of continuous process improvement

- A. Strategy: Increase number of electronic transactions

Performance Measure 1: number of electronic submittals received (permit applications, reporting and certification programs)

Performance Measure 2: Number of unique visitors on the Department's main web page

- B. Strategy: Implement Permit Process Improvement plan to increase transparency, provide opportunities for public input earlier in decision making, timely decisions

Performance Measure 1: Number of different public notice processes used by the Department

- C. Strategy: Develop and apply diversified portfolio of Lean tools and evaluate effectiveness.

Performance Measure 1: Number of Lean events completed

Performance Measure 2: Number of Lean projects that are fully implemented