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Vermont Hosts Diverse, Growing Climate Action Movement

Annual “Community Energy and Climate Action Conference” garners praise from Senator, Congressman and locals

Montpelier – Vermont’s community-based efforts to tackle the challenges of climate change and ever-more-limited traditional energy supplies were the focus of an energy conference last Saturday.

The 2013 Community Energy and Climate Action Conference in Fairlee, which drew about 270 people, focused on building partnerships at the local level and growing the climate action movement in Vermont.

Attendees were given tools, guidance and a venue for strategic coordination with the key constituencies that make up Vermont’s growing climate action movement. Town energy committees, as many noted on the day, are at the center of this movement in Vermont, and that kind of local leadership and action is key to progress on combating climate change

“The glue that is keeping our country together is local leadership,” said Vermont Congressman Peter Welch, “and there is nobody that is doing it better in Vermont than our town energy committees.”

This year’s focus offered a unique opportunity to engage with key constituencies working on climate change solutions. Faith leaders, food and agriculture, business, youth, limited income, political, media, and climate action groups were on hand to inform attendees of the challenges their constituencies face, but also promote powerful opportunities to expand and strengthen local energy and climate action efforts.

Rich Phillips of the Marshfield Energy Committee has attended the conference for years and he said it always renews his motivation to work in climate change in his town.

“I feel more informed, energized and empowered by the inspiring efforts of my fellow Vermonters who are doing important work in their communities, and the useful overview of projects that energy committees like mine can undertake,” he said.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders noted the important work of energy committees, and the need to continue strengthening our grassroots partnerships if we are to transition to clean energy sources.

“If we are going to transform our energy system it’s not going to come from Washington or Paris or London, it’s going to come from the grassroots.”

Thankfully, that is exactly what Vermonters are doing at the local level, but far more needs to be done, and broad public support for action is essential.

About the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network

The Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network is a network of organizations whose mission is to start, support and strengthen town energy committees and their work to help their communities reduce energy costs and climate impacts through conservation, increased energy efficiency and conversion to renewable generation. The Vermont Natural Resources Council serves as the coordinator of VECAN.

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