The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves, and works with an on behalf of those municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. This mission is accomplished through direct planning and community development assistance to town and village governments, through preparation and implementation of regional plans and studies, and through synergistic working relationships with local and regional organizations. The BCRC works cooperatively with local governments to establish and advance regional cohesiveness, actively advocates for adherence to adopted regional policies, and facilitates effective communication between local, state, and federal levels of government.

The BCRC maintains an office in an historic building in the center of Bennington’s downtown. The Commission is overseen by municipally appointed commissioners representing each of the member towns and villages as well as eight commissioners representing specific interests such as economic development, housing, transportation, and public health. The BCRC employs eight full-time and one part-time staff and supervises a full-time Americorps VISTA. Principal program areas with assigned staff responsibilities include: municipal and regional planning, transportation, environmental/water quality planning, community and economic development, emergency management planning, energy planning, public health, and solid waste planning and management.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION
Regional Planning Commissions act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont’s municipalities. Work in recent years been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and regular consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, assisting with implementation of local development review boards, support for development in downtowns and village centers, and meeting new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Municipal plans and regulations that are clear and up-to-date are essential in smooth state and local permitting. The BCRC’s work in municipal planning is supported through municipal and regional planning funds, payments from member towns and villages, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map (attached); highlights include:

- The BCRC worked with the Village of North Bennington and the towns of Dorset, Arlington, and Shaftsbury to develop updates to their municipal plans. The plans for Stamford, Sunderland, Manchester, Pownal, and Peru were amended to be consistent with “Act 174” energy planning standards. All plans are reviewed for conformance with statutory requirements, and implementation projects are clearly delineated.
- BCRC staff worked closely with Woodford and Arlington to develop comprehensive updates to local land use regulations and supported the Stamford Planning Commission as it reviewed and revised specific sections of its zoning bylaw. The BCRC worked with the Town of Pownal on a comprehensive rewrite of its land use regulations, including provisions to encourage mixed uses in designated areas and to promote economic development (work continues). The BCRC was hired by the Town of Bennington to revise its land use regulations (districts within the designated growth center) to rely more heavily on form-based standards and to encourage a
development patterns more in keeping with Town Plan goals. The Bennington project also is intended to provide all of the information needed for a Neighborhood Development Area designation.

• The BCRC assisted with applications for successful village center designations in Pownal, North Pownal, Pownal Center, and Manchester Village. Staff also supported the Town of Bennington in generating necessary documents for review/continuation of their Growth Center designation. The BCRC participated in meetings focusing on Vermont’s designation programs attended by local officials and residents of participating and interested communities.

• The BCRC is actively participating in the community-led “Arlington Area Renewal Project,” involving the towns of Arlington, Sandgate, and Sunderland. The BCRC has participated in a housing forum, planning for redevelopment of the East Arlington Village area, reuse of the former Catholic Church land and buildings, and discussions about village wastewater options.

• Following completion of a planning study that examined a key block of underutilized and vacant properties in the center of downtown Bennington, the BCRC has continued to work with the town and with a private redevelopment group to complete plans for redevelopment. Construction of the first phase of that project, involving site work and renovations of historic buildings, began during the year and is continuing. The BCRC has supported planning for several new commercial and residential buildings on the site.

• BCRC staff responded to requests for assistance with various planning and zoning issues in all 17 of its member municipalities and conducted training for municipal officials on a variety of topics including: procedures for land use administrators, boards, and commissions, planning for housing and introduction to housing programs and organizations, emergency management programs and funding, Green Mountain National Forest initiatives and opportunities for municipal involvement, planning for healthy communities, form-based standards for municipal land use planning and regulation, emerald ash borer preparedness and management, planning for connected and autonomous vehicles, setting regional plan implementation priorities, energy planning and implementation at the local level, wildlife impacts of renewable energy projects, stormwater management, residential energy efficiency programs, and economic implications of land use patterns and urban design. Representatives from each municipality attended at least one of the training sessions.

• BCRC has updated its website format and content to better serve its municipalities. An interactive events calendar, up-to-date meeting agendas and minutes, and centralized source for municipal and regional documents has helped keep commissioners engaged in the BCRC’s work.

REGIONAL PLANNING

RPC’s coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

The Bennington County Regional Plan, most recently updated in 2017, is a significant resource document for local officials, organizations, and residents of the region. The Regional Plan includes extensive information about the region and its communities, specific policies to guide growth and development, and direct links to numerous sources of information on a wide variety of topics.
An important aspect of this plan update was inclusion of closer ties between the plan and various topic-specific plans developed by the BCRC. The plan also includes implementation guidance supported by specific recommendations for projects and improvements that will benefit the region. Implementation tasks are identified in each of several key areas: comprehensive municipal planning (specific schedules for assistance with plan and bylaw updates and training), regulatory review (guidelines for participation in Act 250 and Section 248 reviews – BCRC participated actively in two Act 250 and twelve Section 248 hearings during the year), transportation (a list of priority projects and initiatives and links to action-oriented plans), environmental planning (identification of water quality improvement projects, partner organizations and key areas of focus), community and economic development (including links to strategy-based economic development plans for the northern and southern parts of the region), emergency management (grant funding obtained to support specific municipal hazard mitigation planning work), energy planning (a comprehensive regional energy plan with policies and targeted actions for conservation and efficiency as well as renewable energy resource maps and data for each town in the region), and solid waste (a variety of education, outreach, and regulatory actions designed to help meet waste reduction and recycling targets).

Improved regional planning for community and economic development has been a key component of the BCRC’s work over the past several years. Implementation of these plans has been greatly facilitated through a contract with the Bennington County Industrial Corporation (the regional development corporation) that establishes a direct link between planning and business development activities, and facilitates engagement with other economic development interests across Southern Vermont. The BCRC worked with municipalities and economic development organizations in the Northshire and Southshire, as well as with the RPC and RDC in Windham County, to move toward a consistent regional approach to planning for economic development.

**BROWNFIELDS**

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or redeveloped in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, and increase housing opportunities.

The BCRC applied for and was awarded a new US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for the 2018 through 2020 fiscal years. The Commission has identified sites that would benefit from assessments, provided information on brownfield redevelopment, and monitored redevelopment of sites that have been assessed in the past. BCRC staff advises owners of several potential brownfield sites in anticipation of future Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments. The BCRC coordinates a Brownfields committee that prioritizes sites for assessment and clean-up planning.

Brownfield sites participating in Phase I or II assessments, corrective action plans, or other follow-up work include during the past year:

- Tuttle and adjacent Bennington Brush properties in Downtown Bennington: completed Phase I and II – properties sold; Corrective Action Plan developed and approved. Redevelopment potential for retail, residential uses.
• Putnam Block (Bennington Downtown) – Corrective Action Plan being implemented to pursue mixed use redevelopment of historic downtown block. A project-specific $500,000 Brownfield redevelopment grant was awarded for Phase II of this project.

• Pownal Transfer Station/Landfill: Phase 1 E.S.A. was performed on behalf of a potential solar developer. The BCRC also paid for the development of the proposal to perform a Phase 2 E.S.A., and assisted the town in applying for a grant to pay for the Phase 2 E.S.A.

• Barlow Gravel Pit - This site contains an old landfill associated with a former tannery. Phase 1 and Phase 2 E.S.A. and CAPs were completed earlier; after the CAP was implemented the property was sold and the gravel operation was started up again. Last year, the BCRC was asked by Vermont DEC to perform a supplemental Phase 2 E.S.A. to specifically look for PFOAs. Currently the property is being mined and a 500 KW solar array was built in the reclaimed gravel pit area.

• Ideal Fuels, the Benmont Mill lot, Bradford Commons, and the Johnson Controls lot - all in Bennington’s Growth Center - have been identified as potential future assessment sites.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with effective planning functions. RPCs work with towns and Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

The BCRC has maintained a staffed program in community and economic development for several years. Successful economic development planning in both the Southshire (Bennington area) and Northshire (Manchester area) led to increasing levels of collaboration with the Bennington County Industrial Corporation (BCIC, the RDC for the area), and the BCIC now contracts with the BCRC to implement its annual work plan. This partnership, together with BCRC’s active role in redevelopment projects, has allowed for the hiring of additional staff, supporting economic development initiatives throughout the region and in cooperation with the Windham Region through the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone initiative. Highlights from the past year include:

• Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone: The BCRC built capacity for regional economic development work by establishing relationships with key businesses, institutions, and individuals. The BCRC facilitates a Regional Economic Development (RED) group that integrates regional needs and opportunities into the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), recently completed in cooperation with the Windham Region. As part of this effort, the BCRC helped organize the third annual Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit attended by over 300 people. The Summit has been recognized by the International Economic Development Council for Excellence in Economic Development.

• The BCRC has continued to work with the Bennington Redevelopment Group, the Town of Bennington, and BCIC to undertake a major development project involving historic buildings and vacant land in the center of Bennington’s downtown. An innovative funding strategy has leveraged private investment, Tax Credits, a Community Development Block Grant, and a Tax Increment Financing District to underpin the project. Construction of Phase I (restoration and redevelopment of the historic buildings) began in the past year as planning continued for new mixed use and residential structures (Phases II and III).
• The BCRC is continuing its efforts to support workforce development through regular consultation with businesses and educational institutions, conducting regular outreach and educational programs in cooperation with the BCIC’s Workforce & Education Committee. Many of these programs are being operated from Bennington’s downtown co-working space, the Lightning Jar, including a business-based internship program coordinated with partners in the Windham Region.

• The strong emphasis on state designation programs described above has been used to support economic development planning and initiatives in several communities, including Arlington where a key focus has been the need for additional housing for the community’s growing workforce. The need for new/improved infrastructure, especially wastewater, has been the focus of attention in Arlington and several other village centers.

• BCRC staff have met with existing businesses to understand and support job retention and growth, and have facilitated communication between prospective new businesses (relocation and new start-ups) and local and state officials.

• BCRC staff provided direct assistance to businesses resulting in $50,000 in grants supporting over $300,000 in private business investment. The BCRC also obtained over $140,000 in grants and donations to support the SoVermont Sustainable Marketing and Recruitment Project. Additional economic development grant support included significant funding to local communities for development of affordable housing and downtown redevelopment work.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
Through a contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

The past year’s accomplishments as they relate to the BCRC’s TPI work program include:

Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities
• The BCRC’s Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met regularly during the past year. TAC meeting attendance has consistently been at about seven members; the full TAC consists of 12 members. Over the course of the year, all TAC members have attended at least one meeting. Principal functions of the TAC are to provide input on specific projects and to prioritize projects in several program areas. A new Bike-Ped TAC was created this year to focus specifically on bicycle and pedestrian issues and to oversee projects.

• Provided direct outreach to each town and village regarding codes and standards, hazard mitigation planning, erosion control and stormwater management, and related funding and financial considerations.
• Organized and participated in road foreman/commissioner meetings, focusing on the municipal roads general permit and culvert sizing/installation, options for use of compost and surfacing materials, emerald ash borer response and roadside vegetation management.

• Participated in projects involving bicycle and pedestrian system connectivity and streetscape improvements in Bennington, Arlington, Pownal, Manchester, and Dorset. Led an effort to identify impediments to timely development of bike-ped projects and to identify solutions (ongoing).

• BCRC staff has participated in planning for intersection safety improvements, with a special focus on VT 67A corridor in the area of Silk Road and Bennington College Road.

• The BCRC conducted outreach to encourage participation in the annual Way to Go commuter challenge.

• The BCRC is participating in implementation of the Transportation Resilience Planning Tool by applying those techniques to the Batten Kill watershed.

Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

• The BCRC worked with VTrans, local officials, regional economic development organizations, and local businesses to support the new “Shires Connector” bus link to Amtrak from Manchester and Bennington.

• The BCRC participated in the review of two major Act 250 projects. Transportation issues included pedestrian connections to North Bennington Village and roadway improvements (Shires Housing project in Shaftsbury) and coordinating shopping center redevelopment with Route 11/30 redesign and a Riverwalk connection.

• The BCRC has worked to integrate energy plans with TPI program objectives and is coordinating a statewide effort to support implementation of local and regional energy plans. In addition, the BCRC has organized events focusing on electric vehicles (cars and bikes) and automated vehicle technology.

• The BCRC has participated in discussions of the Transportation Climate Initiative and is coordinating outreach efforts with the other RPCs and VTrans.

Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

• Provided support for Municipal Road stormwater management and flood resilience planning and implementation in 15 municipalities.

• North Bennington: Project management for a new village center sidewalk and repairs to the historic rail depot building.

• Bennington: Ongoing planning and project management for the Willowbrook-Applegate Path in Bennington, the Ninja Trail scoping and design-build project, the Benmont Streetscape improvements project in Bennington and the Kocher Drive-US 7 crossing and multi-use pathway project.

• Manchester: Participation as a steering team member and technical resource for the Manchester bikepath project.

• Dorset: Participated in completion of a scoping study to develop proposals for pedestrian improvements in Dorset and East Dorset villages. Worked with the Town to extend the Manchester bikepath to the Dorset School and then to identify appropriate improvements to extend the link further along Route 30 to Dorset Village.
- Arlington: Working with a consultant to design a safe walking route to link the Arlington Recreation Park to the Arlington Public Schools.
- Conducted site visits and coordinated planning work related to roads, bridge, and parking area improvements in the town of Glastenbury.
- BCRC staff has been conducting a study of a potential a multi-use path along historic trolley line from Bennington, VT to Williamstown, MA. Historic alignments, ownership, and environmental issues have been documented.

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<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Objective 1</th>
<th>BCRC</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td># of TAC meetings held</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td># of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td># of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td># of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans</td>
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<th>Objective 2</th>
<th>Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning</th>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td># of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td># of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td># of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td># of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td># of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td># of regions participating in Project Prioritization</td>
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<th>Objective 3</th>
<th>Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td># of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td># of municipalities assisted with transportation related grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td># of municipal transportation inventories conducted</td>
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<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td># of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td># of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td># of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources</td>
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<th>Objective 4</th>
<th>Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td># of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans</td>
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<th>Objective 5</th>
<th>Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>See Performance Measure/Objective descriptions</td>
<td>Established a TAC sub-committee for bike-ped</td>
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• The BCRC continued to support municipalities in developing and updating Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs). All municipalities in the region are aware of the change from LEOP to LEMP and have been offered assistance. BCRC staff have worked one-on-one with municipalities that have requested extra assistance and held two LEMP training sessions. Approximately half of the municipalities have completed the transition to the new LEMP model.

• The BCRC provides support for development and updates to municipal hazard mitigation plans. The BCRC assisted with the completion of a new HMP for Pownal and assistance has been provided to several other towns that have started the HMP update process. As part of the planning process, flood resiliency and stormwater actions, assessments of threats from forest insect pests, and economic development planning relevant to hazard mitigation were considered.

• The BCRC provided assistance with revisions and updates to flood hazard area planning documents and regulations through plan and bylaw updates; municipalities supported included Shaftsbury, North Bennington, Pownal, Woodford, Stamford, and Arlington.

• Ongoing support for the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is provided by BCRC staff; focus areas during the past year included: coordinating regular meetings, facilitating presentations on emergency planning and response, scheduling emergency management trainings, preparing one-page evacuation plans for assisted living facilities, collecting damage reports following hazardous weather events, and hosting an ICS 402 course. Meeting topics included: VTHSU – strategies and funding opportunities, emergencies involving several response agencies, long-term planning for emergency services, local emergency management plan preparation, and the CARE program.

• BCRC staff is on the local MRC Committee and participated in their medication distribution exercise.

• The BCRC was activated to serve its local liaison function several times during the year and helped four towns with severe damage with the process of applying for FEMA funding.

• The BCRC worked on a vulnerability study and GIS layer of critical facilities. Information from local emergency plans was consolidated into a single document that will be available to use in all future town plans and emergency management documents.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES
The BCRC uses its geographic information systems capability to produce maps and conduct analyses in support of virtually all of its programs. RPCs also provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

Particularly valuable GIS projects completed during the past year have included:

• Renewable energy resource maps showing locations with high potential for renewable energy development as well as areas with significant constraints to development for the towns of Dorset, Sunderland, Stamford, Pownal, Manchester, Arlington, and Peru.

• River corridor mapping to support resiliency planning including depiction of new flood hazard areas, and maps to support watershed planning and development of river corridor regulations.
• New maps to support municipal plan updates in Pownal, North Bennington, and Shaftsbury; mapping of proposed adjustments to zoning bylaw revisions were completed for Arlington and initiated as part of the revision of the Bennington land use regulations.
• Various maps and geographic analyses completed in support of the Bennington downtown redevelopment project.
• Maps to support recreation park improvements in Bennington, and development and improvement of bike-ped facilities/systems in Bennington, Dorset, Arlington, and Manchester.
• Mapping of municipal bridges, culverts, and road segments related to stormwater management and municipal road general permits.
• Village center, downtown, and growth center maps to support designations and renewals.
• Assessments of demographic and business trends to support Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone programs.

ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT
A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

• In the past year, the BCRC has worked with several towns to develop new enhanced municipal energy plans that are consistent with Act 174 standards. This work has involved providing energy use and future energy demand projections to towns, identifying local strategies to reduce total energy use and improve energy efficiency, and mapping possible sites for renewable energy development in each municipality. Adopted and approved plans will be used to represent municipalities’ positions on applications for new generation projects before the Public Service Board. Plans for Bennington, Dorset, Sunderland, Stamford, Arlington, and Pownal have been completed, with five others in the local hearing/approval process or being drafted. The BCRC issues affirmative Determinations of Energy Compliance to a municipality when it is determined that the plan is consistent with Act 174 planning standards.
• The BCRC presented on the progress of Act 174 regional and municipal energy planning at various meetings and conferences throughout the state and region.
• The BCRC worked with Efficiency Vermont and the other RPCs to develop a program to support implementation of energy plans at the local and regional level. The BCRC actively participated in the development of regional work plans and reporting systems and will be undertaking its own projects in addition to coordinating work around the state over the coming 18 months.
• The BCRC worked with the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network (VECAN) to support creation of five new local energy committees in the region.
• The BCRC organized and hosted a well-attended meeting focusing on climate change and the importance of local action. That meeting was supplemented by BCRC-organized workshops on home weatherization programs and alternative fuels/heating systems.
• The BCRC worked with a hydroelectric developer to try to resolve issues with a new generating facility located on the Walloomsac River.
• The BCRC reviews and comments on proposals for new renewable energy development in the region and participates in most Section 248 proceedings. The regional energy committee
reviewed eleven solar and one wind project with a combined capacity of nearly 7 MW. The BCRC’s energy and development review committees meet with developers and invites local officials to participate in discussions of possible new projects.

**WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Assisted VT ANR with outreach on the Basin 1 Tactical Plan and integrated recommendations into local hazard mitigation plans and projects.
- Identified actions related to river protection outlined in adopted Hazard Mitigation Plans and integrated that information into ANR’s projects database for future funding allocation.
- Prepared tables characterizing flood and fluvial erosion hazard mitigation projects and draft language for use of the tables in resiliency elements of municipal plans.
- Created town river corridor maps by incorporating updates and administrative revisions to the Statewide River Corridor Base Map consistent with the VT DEC Procedure for Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Protection Procedure.
- BCRC staff attended monthly meetings of the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance and assisted with their education and water quality improvement projects.
- The BCRC worked with the Batten Kill Watershed Cooperative Invasive Species Management Association (CISMA) to identify and treat invasive species in selected areas of the watershed and to identify areas in need of revegetation. Plantings of native trees were completed along a key river segment in Manchester and additional sites identified and approved for plantings in Arlington.
- The BCRC worked directly with most towns and villages in the region to identify, implement, and verify completion of “Grants-in-Aid” water quality improvements to hydrologically connected segments of local highways.
- The BCRC coordinated stormwater master planning projects in Arlington and Shaftsbury.

**SPECIAL PROJECTS**

The BCRC has developed programs in solid waste management and planning and healthy community design that have led to numerous special projects and ongoing actions.

The BCRC has helped organize, developed a plan for, and provides staff support for a thirteen-town solid waste alliance. Some of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance’s ongoing activities include:

- Two household hazardous waste collection events in the Alliance service area.
- Education and outreach to schools, municipalities, solid waste service providers, and the general public to increase recycling and organics management/composting and reduce levels of trash sent to landfills. BCRC organized residential composting workshops and sold over eighty-five compost bins and receptacles.
- Outreach to forty businesses, housing management companies, and two schools to assess current solid waste management and provide recommendations for improving recycling and organics management.
• Study and document current sludge disposal operations and future options.
• Expand available information and services related to construction and demolition debris, focusing especially on clean wood and asphalt shingles.
• Production and distribution of a regular newsletter on solid waste issues and maintenance of a web page and Facebook page dedicated to solid waste information.

Other special projects pursued in cooperation with local community coalitions, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, and local governments in the past year have included:

• Provided VISTA/staff support to the regional nonprofit housing agency in the development of a new neighborhood of affordable homes adjacent to Bennington’s downtown and in the planning for a new affordable housing development adjacent to North Bennington Village. Worked on a variety of tenant assistance and support programs.
• Cooperated with a local developer and the Town of Bennington to procure grant funds to rehabilitate a large multifamily housing building in a distressed neighborhood and continued to support the regional medical center’s Healthy Homes initiative, where vacant/abandoned homes are renovated and returned to support the community’s need for in-town affordable single family homes.
• Worked to improve regional food systems. Specific activities have included work with a regional nonprofit organization to complete a USDA-funded project assessing the regional food system, meeting with local partners and actively participating in the start-up of Bennington College’s food security initiative, and support for a Harvest for Kids campaign and other events in partnership with local food pantries.
• Worked with municipal and nonprofit leaders to implement projects under a Promise Community grant. Specific projects included planning and development of a new downtown park, improvements to a neighborhood park, and assistance with development of new community center facilities.
• Supported the towns of Bennington and Manchester as well as regional business groups and arts organizations in Bennington in development of a “Cultural Plan” for the entire region.
• BCRC staff provided assistance to Pownal in developing a community pathway along the Hoosic River and making necessary improvements to provide access to a trail system on municipally owned land in the Taconic Mountains.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING
Each program manager at the BCRC is responsible for work plan and budget development. The executive director/planning coordinator, financial director, and assistant director/economic development coordinator cooperate to ensure that all required tasks and reporting are completed and advance the Commission’s mission. The BCRC reported total revenues of approximately $1.607 million in FY 2018 and total expenditures of approximately $1.612 million (the operating deficit covered by a surplus from the previous year(s)). The majority of revenues are derived from grants that support specific work programs. Municipal appropriations and a portion of funds allocated to the BCRC from the municipal and regional planning fund provide critical support and matching funds to all of the diverse program areas operated through the Commission.
An annual financial audit is completed during August of each year. The FY 2019 audit has confirmed the accuracy of the BCRC’s financial records and reports no significant findings.

Regular meetings of the BCRC are held bimonthly with special meetings held during the intervening months. Most meetings include presentations and information on specific topics that support commissioners’ understanding and involvement in regional planning projects. The BCRC also is responsible for organizing regular meetings of the Bennington County Industrial Corporation, the Regional Economic Development Committee, the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, the Local Emergency Planning Committee, and a consortium of local energy committees. Several board members attend special trainings each year (e.g., financial management, regional economic development, housing, land use practices, energy planning, natural resource planning and environmental protection) to assist in the carrying out of their responsibilities to the organization. Staff regularly attend trainings and participate in online webinars on a variety of topics specific to their program areas.

‘AT WORK’ MAP
The map depicting the range of services provided by the BCRC to member municipalities is included on the next page.
BCRC Projects
FY 2019

Assistance
- Bridge and Culvert Inventory
- Brownfield Assistance
- Clean Water Activities
- Enhanced Energy Planning
- Emergency Planning
- Grant Writing
- Economic Development
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning Assistance
- Road Erosion Inventory
- Traffic Count
- Growth Center
- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village

Adopted Zoning
Current Town Plan
Expired Town Plan