

Energy alternatives crop up locally

Though the state's air quality is degraded by neighboring sources of pollution, Vermont is the country's second lowest producer of air pollution emissions.¹²⁵ Vermonters are also demonstrating a growing affinity for cleaner, more renewable home-grown alternatives to fossil fuels.

the FACTS

- Nearly half of Vermont's energy is derived from renewable resources including hydroelectric, wood and nuclear power.
- Vermonters use less electricity per household than residents in 42 other states. For total energy consumption per capita, Vermont ranks 40th in the nation despite the state's long, cold winters.¹²⁶
- The country's greatest concentration of homes warmed by wood heat is found in Vermont. Wood is considered a renewable heat source, but older wood stoves produce significant emissions. Replacing these stoves would drastically cut pollution from this source.¹²⁷
- Biofuels reduce emissions, extend the petroleum supply and help provide rural areas with sustainable jobs and energy self-sufficiency. In-state demand for biofuels, recently in the hundreds of thousands of gallons, was expected to have reached one million gallons in 2006.¹²⁸
- In Vermont, biodiesel is used for commercial transportation fleets and has been employed as a heat source for some state buildings, colleges and businesses.¹²⁹ Additionally, programs such as Central Vermont Public Service's Cow Power utilize methane gas generated by farms. Biomass, currently the largest source of renewable energy in the United States, is being used successfully by some Vermont businesses. Energy from biomass is derived from burning organic matter such as wood pellets or chips, grass pellets, crop waste and manure.¹³⁰

PROMISING APPROACH

Partner with grantees

The High Meadows Fund, a supporting foundation of the Vermont Community Foundation, supports programs for a better environment in Vermont and the health and well-being of Vermont's children. While most organizations of its size make grants through a formalized application process, High Meadows prefers a more engaged and interactive approach.

Reluctant to use the word "grantee," High Meadows instead engages a handful of "portfolio partners." Three to four times a year, High Meadows board members visit partner sites, engaging in dialogue with the nonprofit agencies about their work, the trends that have an impact on it, and major issues and opportunities. High Meadows is also developing an annual retreat to bring portfolio partners together to share ideas and make plans in areas of mutual interest.

This uncommon partnership gives High Meadows trustees a rich, first-hand perspective that is difficult to achieve in the boardroom. Through the process, they build respectful relationships with portfolio partners—and confidence that, together, they can translate dollars into impact.