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COALITION RELEASES 5-YEAR PLAN TO BOLSTER LOCAL, RENEWABLE WOOD HEATING

Waterbury Center, VT - On Thursday, November 2nd, a coalition of nonprofits, local businesses, and state agencies facilitated by Renewable Energy Vermont unveiled a plan of policy, workforce development, and outreach recommendations to help lower energy costs, boost Vermont's economy, sustain forestlands, and reduce net carbon emissions.

The plan was prepared as part of the Vermont Statewide Wood Energy Team partnership which provides outreach and technical support to schools and providers of affordable housing, for the successful conversion to advanced wood heating systems. The regulatory and legislative recommendations outlined in the plan are aimed at achieving 35% of Vermont's heating needs by 2030 through the increased use of advanced wood heating, which would result in the displacement of 40 million gallons of fossil fuels and saving the state \$120 million in fuel costs each year.

"Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) is grateful to have been able to bring together such a diverse set of partners to assess and begin to address the opportunities and challenges before us," said Olivia Campbell Andersen, Executive Director of Renewable Energy Vermont. "We look forward to engaging with legislators and regulators to share the coalition's findings and begin lowering the costs of heating for more homes and businesses with local modern wood solutions."

Joining the coalition for the release of the plan was Representative Robert Helm (R) of Fair Haven who along with Representative Curt McCormack (D) of Burlington sponsored legislation aimed at incentivizing the use of advanced wood heating consistent with one of the action steps outlined in the report.

“Every dollar spent on wood pellets is a dollar we're not sending out of state,” said Representative Helm. “It's a no-brainer, it just makes sense, especially for rural communities.”

Many Vermonters have long turned to local wood as a fuel source of choice to heat their homes and businesses, and now improved and modern automated wood heating systems are available. Advanced wood heating solutions incorporate four characteristics: 1) highly efficient combustion technology, 2) negligible emissions, 3) support of healthy forest ecosystems and sustainable forest management, and 4) utilizing local wood. Vermont Artisan Coffee and Tea, a Waterbury based coffee roaster and coffee roaster is among those Vermonters who have decided to heat local.

“When planning the heating system for our new 15,000 square foot coffee facility, it was important for me to consider the environmental footprint, cost efficiencies, as well as utilizing local resources as much as possible,” said Mané Alves, founder of Vermont Artisan Coffee & Tea, Co., and Coffee Lab International. “I looked at systems using traditional fossil fuels, solar and geothermal power, and I decided to install a clean burning wood pellet system from Sunwood Biomass out of Waitsfield. While the initial setup was somewhat pricey, choosing this renewable, sustainable and efficient option definitely makes the most sense over time.”

78 cents of every dollar spent on imported fossil fuels leaves Vermont, so by investing in an advanced wood heating systems, Vermont Artisan Coffee is also able to invest in other local businesses. The company purchases their wood pellets from Bourne’s Energy in Morrisville which sources from Vermont Wood Pellets, a North Clarendon based pellet mill, which are then used to heat their facility using highly efficient wood pellet boiler installed by REV member SunWood Biomass as part of a tight, local-based, and resilient supply chain.

“In Vermont, we’re proud of our self-reliance, resilience, and a localvore culture,” said Dave Frank of SunWood Biomass, a REV board member. “Just as we support our local farmers when we ‘eat local,’ we support our local foresters, mill operators, and boiler installers when we ‘heat local.’”

Support of advanced wood heating is likely to be a point of interest in the upcoming legislative session, attracting bipartisan support and providing potential economic development for rural Vermont communities.

“Support of the rural economy is a priority to the Scott administration due to its environmental, cultural, and economic contributions to our identity to us as Vermonters.” said Sam Lincoln, deputy Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and

Recreation. “Because Vermont is 78% percent forested, sustainable forest management and wood energy are part of that priority. The department continues to support the use of wood energy “

Actions put forward by the plan provide a clear path forward for legislators and regulators ahead of the 2018 legislative session. Opportunities include:

- Codifying a commitment to meet 35% of Vermont’s thermal energy needs by 2030 with advanced wood heating.
- Aligning Efficiency Vermont’s thermal energy performance metrics to account for both fossil fuel displacement and energy savings.
- Reducing costs through a state sales tax exemption on the purchase of qualifying advanced wood heating equipment and fuel.
- Creating a coordinated marketing team focused on aligned communications and outreach.
- Workforce training to increase the number of HVAC tradesmen and women that can install and maintain advanced wood heating systems.
- Streamlining financing and incentives
- Maintaining funding for the Working Lands and Clean Energy Development Funds.

Early endorsements of the 5-Year Action Plan include; Biomass Energy Resource Center, Bourne’s Energy, Calfee Woodland Management LLC, Cutting Edge Energy Systems, Forward Thinking Consultants LLC, Gagnon Lumber, Green Mountain Club, Hardwood Forestry Services, Inc., Housing Vermont, Innovative Natural Resource Solutions LLC, LandVest Timberland, Long Meadow Resource Management LLC, Lyme Green Heat Inc., New England Wood Pellet LLC, North Woods Forestry, Northern Forest Center, Maine Energy Systems, Meadowsend Timberlands, LTD, Pellergy, Renewable Energy Vermont, Sunwood Biomass, Tarm Biomass, USDA Forest Service, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Conservation Voters, Vermont Department of Buildings & General Services, Vermont Department of Forests Parks & Recreation, Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Vermont Renewable Fuels, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Vermont Woodlands Association, Watson Research.

[Photos of the release can be found here](#)

A full copy of the 5 Year Action Plan can be found at: www.revermont.org/wp-content/uploads/5-Year-Action-Plan.pdf

A list of Vermont advanced wood solution providers can be found on the Vermont Renewable Energy Business Listing at www.revermont.org/vrebl

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About Renewable Energy Vermont

Renewable Energy Vermont represents businesses, non-profits, utilities, and individuals committed to reducing our reliance on dirty fossil fuels by increasing clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency in Vermont. Vermont's clean energy economy directly enables at least 19,080 jobs at 3,751 businesses, representing approximately 6% of Vermont's workforce. Together, we will achieve 90% total renewable energy (electric, thermal, transportation) before 2050. Learn more at www.revermont.org.