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NEW REPORT CHARTS ROADMAP FOR RURAL CLIMATE ENGAGEMENT

Rural Climate Dialogues in Minnesota offer lessons for creating community-driven climate plans

MINNEAPOLIS—The [Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy](https://www.iatp.org) (IATP) released a new report on the outcomes and lessons learned from its Rural Climate Dialogue (RCD) program in partnership with the [Jefferson Center](https://www.jeffersoncenter.org). Over the past six years, the RCDs engaged rural communities across Minnesota to think critically and plan strategically to address local challenges related to weather and climate. The report, [*The Rural Climate Dialogues: A Community-Driven Roadmap for Climate Action in Rural Minnesota*](#), proposes a roadmap for rural climate engagement.

Longstanding cultural and political obstacles have hindered climate action in rural communities. The RCDs address community tensions by focusing on solutions rather than assigning blame. The events provide a venue for community members to share their experiences, connect over community values and priorities and develop locally-driven climate action plans outside of the polarized political process.

The RCDs worked in five counties throughout Minnesota: Stevens, Itasca, Winona, Redwood and Murray. The events were tailored to each community, leading to unique recommendations in each county. Stevens County recommended ways to strengthen the local agricultural economy, Itasca County included recommendations to manage forests, and Winona County prioritized local development of clean energy. In Murray County and Redwood County, the RCDs focused on local wind energy development. Both counties recommended supporting future wind development.

Each community has taken action based on RCD recommendations. In Stevens County, the Morris Model formed and has since led projects around energy, water and waste management. Itasca County pursued installing a community solar garden. Winona County created an Energy Action Plan for the City of Winona that included the bold goal of carbon neutrality by 2050.

Despite perceived differences, participants voiced appreciation for the events uniting the community. An Itasca County participant noted, “I came away impressed with how diverse of a group we were, that we could come away with a common goal. That gives me hope for the community at large.”

Tara Ritter, senior program associate for climate and rural communities at IATP, said, “Productive conversation about climate change can only happen when everyone feels heard, understood and respected. The RCDs are unique in their ability to bring people together around shared values and create solutions that not only address climate change but also boost community resilience.”

To read, please visit: www.iatp.org/documents/rural-climate-dialogues.

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Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. To learn more, visit: www.iatp.org.