

**WAYNE MICHAUD PRESENTATION FOR NO IDLING WORKSHOP  
CONFERENCE ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
VERMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE, RANDOLPH CENTER, VT, DECEMBER 6, 2008**

I'm Wayne Michaud, of Bristol, director of Idle-Free VT, a grassroots, statewide campaign begun in 2006 to raise awareness of unnecessary vehicle idling—that's idling when parked. And secondarily to get more comprehensive idle-reduction legislation for Vermont.

I, along with **Steve Bower**, chair of the Richmond Climate Action Committee, and **Paul Cameron** of Brattleboro Climate Protection and town of Brattleboro Energy Coordinator, are the panelists of this workshop titled: **Implementing a No Idling Campaign**.

The main part of my talk will be about the “selling” points of the unnecessary idling issue, and about what the Idle-Free VT campaign has done. I will also give a brief overview of town-based efforts before yielding to our two other panelists who will give you details of their respective efforts.

In approx. the last half hour of this workshop, we will open it up to discussion and your questions.

\*I am passing around a sign-up sheet if you wish to be added to the list of occasional Idle-Free VT campaign email updates that I do.\*

If you wish to refer to my talk today, it has been posted on the Media and News page of the Idle-Free VT website.

OK, so we really can't do much about idling in traffic—that is until hybrids and then electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles eventually become the standard modes of transportation.

But we **CAN** educate people about the benefits of shutting off engines when parked.

Unnecessary idling is a persuasive, multifaceted, low hanging fruit issue. It fits right in with the concerns addressed in this conference—our energy constrained future and the threat to our planet that climate change is. Perhaps even more seriously, it is an air quality health issue. Idling, which gets 0 MPG, also takes needless funds from our pocketbooks. And, when considering Vermont's unattended motor vehicles law and Burlington's idling ordinance, it is also a legal issue.

The average person might think that letting a vehicle idle for five to 10 minutes while in a convenience store or post office is a harmless practice. But this becomes a significant issue by the sheer number of motorists who do so around the state.

While Vermont is a low carbon emissions state, the **Governor's Commission on Climate Change** finds that, on a per capita basis, Vermont's transportation greenhouse gas emissions are nearly double the national average. Also, **Canada's federal Natural Resources Idle-Free Zone** has found that Canadian motorists idle their vehicles unnecessarily for an average of five minutes daily. If Vermonters cut their idling by this much, we could eliminate more than 50,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

As to idling's health impacts, even modern light-duty vehicles designed with advanced emissions controls can cause harmful emissions during extended idling when real life factors come into play, such as vehicle age, how the vehicle is maintained, the warmed up state of the vehicle and how cold the weather. And of course, emissions controls are comparatively less stringent on heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses. Studies done by the **American Lung Assoc.** and other health organizations

implicate vehicle emissions for a multitude of health problems. And according to a report by the **Asthma Regional Council of New England**, Vermont and other New England states have elevated levels of asthma.

As to what the Idle-Free VT campaign has done, here's a list of successes and challenges.

### **SUCCESSSES:**

- **SCHOOL BUS IDLING:** We got no-idle petitions signed, and worked with health and environmental lobbyists as part of the effort to get the 2007 Legislature and Governor to enact **Act 48: the idling of motor vehicle engines on school property**. As a result, Vermont's 1,800 school buses are saving the state money, reducing carbon emissions, using less energy and improving the health of students, school officials and bus drivers alike.

- **ENDORSEMENTS:** We have been endorsed by the American Lung Assoc. of New England, the Vermont chapter of the Sierra Club, VPIRG, Vermonters for a Clean Environment, and People for Less Pollution. Also, Idle-Free VT is a supported project of ACoRN, the Addison County Relocalization Network.

- **MEDIA EXPOSURE:** We have had published more than a dozen op-eds and letters to the editor about vehicle idling in all major (and not so major) Vermont newspapers as well as several feature articles about the campaign.

\*You can help yourself to some copies on the table of this Times Argus and Rutland Herald front page feature of the Idle-Free VT campaign from two months ago.\*

Press releases have been sent announcing significant campaign events. And there have been Idle-Free VT public service announcements on several radio stations including WDEV.

- **ADVISORS:** We have eight official advisors to the campaign.

- **THE WEBSITE:** I Maintain the [idlefreevt.org](http://idlefreevt.org) website that has grown to a current average of 2,000 visits a month; in addition, a recipient list currently numbering 110 receives occasional campaign email updates.

- **THE DMV:** As of September we are working with the state Dept. of Motor Vehicles. They are offering Idle-Free VT flyers (of which printing was donated by the Vermont chapter of the Sierra Club) and displaying small posters—like the one shown here—at the six DMV locations throughout the state to help educate Vermont motorists about idling.

\*100 of the flyers are available here on the table.\*

The DMV is also planning to link to the Idle-Free VT website, and considering having a message about idling in its telephone information waiting queue.

- **BUSINESS IDLE-FREE:** In 2007 I and two campaign advisors ran Business Idle-Free, an initiative to raise awareness of idling by contacting and following up with more than 200 members of the Vermont business community. A few successes include **Merchants Bank** posting notices at all branch drive up windows with information on idling and a referral to [idlefreevt.org](http://idlefreevt.org), a recent **Sugarbush** ski resort newsletter mentioning idling, also with a referral to [idlefreevt.org](http://idlefreevt.org), and **Brattleboro Memorial Hospital**

posting no-idle signs as a result of the Business Idle-Free effort. However, Business Idle-Free did not have the financial resources, staff or time to be a far reaching success.

**ON A SHOE-STRING BUDGET:** In the two and a half years of the campaign, Idle-Free VT expenses have amounted to about \$1,900 of which \$1,200 was donated. This includes brochures and flyers, a mailing, an ad in Vermont Business Magazine and maintaining the website.

### **NOW HERE'S A COUPLE OF CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED:**

- **FUNDING & GRANTING:** Earlier, the campaign was not able to secure a grant from the **New England Grassroots Environment Fund** as they want campaigns to be engaged directly in community involvement. The Idle-Free VT campaign, however, has spread itself out in a farther reaching role resulting in less community interaction. **However**, a town-based no idling campaign would potentially be a prime candidate for a grant from funding organizations such as the NEGEF and Vermont Community Foundation.

- **FUNDED STATEWIDE NO IDLING CAMPAIGN:** This past spring Karen Glitman, Project Manager of the UVM Transportation Research Center. called a meeting to brainstorm ways to move the Vermont idle-free movement forward. Participants included myself, Dick Valentinetti, Director of the Air Pollution Control Division of the VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation, and Edward F. Miller and Rebecca Ryan of the American Lung Assoc. The discussion centered around forming a coalition among the organizations named above (and possibly others) to run a **funded Vermont no idling education campaign**. It was agreed that such a campaign would include public service announcements, some print media—an ad agency would be retained for this purpose—and no-idle signage. Funding potentially would come from the state, UVM and perhaps the American Lung Assoc. In June, Karen submitted a detailed first draft that really looked promising. But the promise of funds disappeared, in part due to the economic crisis. The latest hope is to have a regional campaign, targeted for Rutland which has the highest incidence of asthma in Vermont. Funds are still being sought.

- **THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF ALL:** is not only **REACHING** people to raise awareness, but **CONVINCING** them not to idle, which will sometimes require a small sacrifice in the comforts that many of us are accustomed to—meaning to consider avoiding extended idling in hot and cold weather, avoiding use of remote vehicle starters for usually unnecessary long winter warm ups, and avoiding drive-thrus. And also convincing folks that extended idling isn't good for engines except in 0 degree weather.

### **AS TO THE FUTURE OF THE CAMPAIGN:**

Due to time constraints and priorities, I regret that I don't plan to spend a significant effort lobbying for a more comprehensive idling bill in the 2009 legislative session. I do hope that organizations like the American Lung Assoc of Vermont take up this effort. But one thing I am considering is an invitation by the Sierra Club to become an Executive Committee member. This would certainly lead to some support for the campaign for limited time I have to put into it.

### **CURRENT INITIATIVE:**

Leading into town-based idling efforts, Bob Walker of SERG suggested an idea earlier this year for which the Idle-Free VT campaign is currently implementing: notifying Town Energy Coordinators of town meeting **article petitions** that can be circulated and then placed on the 2009 Town Meeting warnings.

\*I have a few sample petitions here—I'll pass one around\*

but they are intended to be downloaded at the website and easily adapted to any town. The petitions will call on the town to pass a voluntary no idling resolution or policy. This effort has gotten under way as more than 60 town energy coordinators have recently been contacted. A few so far have already responded positively.

There have been some model local idling campaigns that have led to no-idle or idle reduction resolutions or part of a town energy conservation policy, usually voluntary or non-binding. So far I am aware of resolutions or ordinances being adopted in the city of Burlington and towns of Brattleboro, Putney, Richmond, Middlebury, Newfane and Plainfield. The village of Stowe, while not passing a resolution, has had an ongoing no idling education effort thanks to the Stowe Energy and Climate Action Network. These policies have come about through committed efforts of either one individual, an energy or climate change group, or community-wide project. They vary in level from the posting in strategic locations of chip board no-idle signs or installation of permanent metal signs

\*like the one seen here for Middlebury\*

to inclusion of an educational component for town vehicle operators. But successful adoption of these policies does not necessarily mean that idling is significantly reduced. It remains an ongoing challenge to reach and convince people.

Before I yield to our other panelists, I want to give a summarization of the successful campaign to bring about Middlebury's no idling resolution. In 2002, the **Middlebury Area Global Warming Action Committee—MAGWAC**, completed a research report estimating annual carbon dioxide emissions in the town. The Middlebury Climate Action Plan, recommended a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 10%, by 2012.

**Laura Asermily**, who is participating in another workshop here today, is coordinator of MAGWAC as well as town of Middlebury Energy Coordinator. To meet the Middlebury Climate Action Plan goal, the campaign encourages residents to get home energy audits, and for individuals to drive fewer miles, and consider more fuel efficient cars. It has collaborated with businesses and institutions to promote alternative fuels for heating and transportation, and worked with the town to improve public transit and park-and-ride options, and to adopt a no idling policy.

MAGWAC has been able to secure an impressive amount of funds to implement their goals: the Town of Middlebury contributes \$4000 annually to the campaign and last year the Vermont Community Foundation contributed a one time grant of \$10,000.

Last November, in an effort spearheaded by Laura, the town of Middlebury selectboard unanimously **approved a no idling resolution**. A Transportation Brainstorming Session for stakeholders and the public identified a no idling policy as a simple, concrete measure to take immediately. The town worked closely with Middlebury town officials, health professionals, the Idle-Free VT campaign, and Burlington 10 Percent Challenge campaign in developing its policy, promotional materials, and sign design. Finally, the New England Grassroots Environment Fund contributed \$1,000 to the no idling campaign. This money was used to pay for 50 no idling signs that are currently being posted around the town.

Laura brought some of these signs—like the one here—today and they are available for purchase by writing a check for \$20 to the Town of Middlebury.

Thank you.