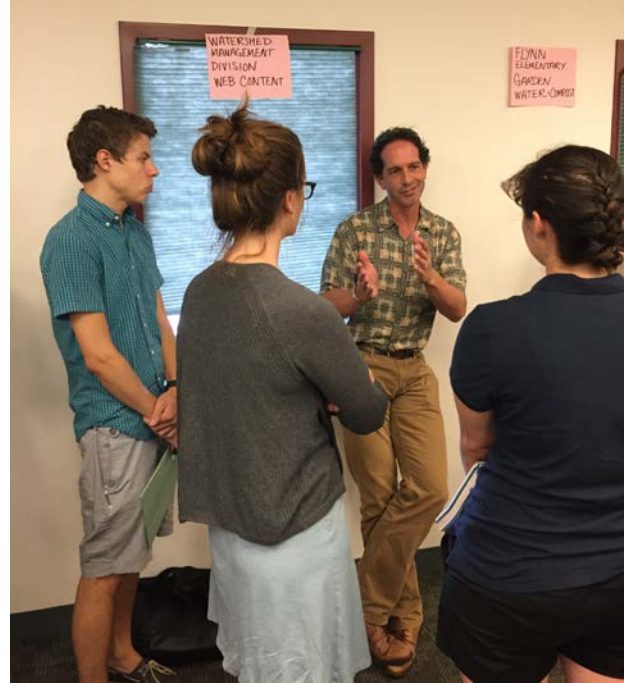# ANR Taps into Service Learning Courses at UVM

By Margaret Burke, Community-Based Learning Coordinator
University of Vermont

Since the fall of 2014, the Agency of Natural Resources has been harvesting an almost inexhaustible source of energy – student energy. In partnership with the University of Vermont's Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources (RSENR), ANR is building hands-on opportunities for students wanting to work closely with its staff on urgent conservation, land management, and water quality projects. In turn, ANR reaps the benefits of the research, project development, outreach and enthusiasm that the students bring to the state's environmental initiatives.

Neil Kamman from the Watershed Management Division discusses his project idea with a group of UVM seniors.

Since the program began in the fall of 2014, the collaborative projects have jumped into action on already hot topics within the agency. They include rapid wildlife inventories on state land, development of communications materials for a new visitor center, design of an environmental education curriculum for State Parks programming, and research on agricultural best management practices. With their partners in ANR, students engage in every facet of the project narrative including legislative processes, valuable field work, map making and report writing.

These cooperative efforts take two forms: service-learning programs and internships, both of which are gaining traction. During the 2015 spring semester alone, 56 RSENR students teamed with ANR on 11 different service-learning ventures. Ten additional students worked for the entire academic year as interns.

In order to strengthen the infrastructure that supports student learning experiences, ANR has developed a Service Learning Work Group that began meeting monthly in May. The group works to further develop the design of the service-learning opportunities to better serve both the students and the agency. Additionally, the group is getting the word out to ANR, letting project leaders know that motivated UVM students are ready to partner with ANR staff. Already, ANR staff are connecting to service-learning courses as project partners, field trip hosts, and guest lecturers.

This August, ANR launched another semester of collaboration with RSENR. Students in Ecological Problem Solving and Impact Assessment, the senior capstone service-learning course for all students in the school, are working on five different projects including waste management and food rescue issues, citizen reporting of water quality issues, wildlife research, and outreach.

Community-based Learning Coordinator, Margaret Burke, is working closely with ANR staff to support these outreach efforts. If you are interested in connecting students and faculty to your work, please contact her at Margaret.L.Burke@partner.vermont.gov.