

## Vermont

Housing • Single Family Home Repair Grant

### Eco-Conscious Couple Find the Sunnier Side Through RD

Kate and Ken Fredette grew up on farms and worked them as young people, so they share deep affection for Mother Nature and engage the outdoors with open arms: Kate was a Youth Conservation Corp. member and raised to appreciate and cultivate good soil, clear water and clean air; and Ken is a retired commercial (hardhat) diver who still spends most of his time outside. They lived in a tent from Spring to Fall with their kids for many years before building their off-grid dream home.

Last year, with help from USDA, the Fredettes upgraded their original solar array with new batteries, making the system much more efficient and helping them store more power for when they need it most. [USDA RD's 504 Single Family Housing Repair Loan & Grant program](#) provides loans and grants for homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes, and remove health and safety hazards.



Kate and Ken Fredette minimized costs and their carbon footprint with an off-grid solar array upgrade through the USDA 504 Single Family Housing Repair program.

“Two of the new batteries did the same job as the eight from our original system,” explains Ken. “We were so impressed with how they performed, we decided to add one more. Now we can go for days—often weeks—without firing up the generator. The difference to that aspect of our lifestyle, as well as our budget, is substantial, and we’re helping push back against global warming now more than ever.”

Crucial to the upgrade was USDA Housing Specialist Alex Gauthier, who spearheaded the Fredette’s project. “Alex and his team were quick to respond to our questions, and they were all knowledgeable and pleasant to deal with,” says Ken. “When supply-chain bottlenecks occurred, Alex spelled out the rules and options to me very clearly, which allowed me, in turn, to come to agreements with suppliers and move forward. Our biggest issue was storage capacity. Before, if we didn’t have good sun for an entire day, we’d have to run the generator a bit to charge the batteries enough to get through the night. If it was an overcast day, Kate would say we should start up the generator to make the sun come out. It’s surprising how many times that worked, but obviously not the ideal procedure conservation-wise.”

The Fredette’s ambitions for responsible living are in constant play. “The Natural Resources Conservation Service is helping us with our land stewardship goals,” says Ken. “It’s been a pleasure working with them, too!”

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**Date of Obligation:** 5/12/22

**Congressional** Rep. Balint, Vermont; Sen. Welch and Sen. Sanders

**Impact:** Kate and Ken Fredette are committed to a responsible lifestyle, reflected by their off-grid home in Rutland County, VT. With help from RD Rural Housing Specialist Alex Gauthier, they upgraded their solar array with new batteries to reduce costs and minimize environmental impacts.