

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry to which was
3 referred House Bill No. 624 entitled “An act relating to providing financial
4 assistance to the forest economy” respectfully reports that it has considered the
5 same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the
6 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. **WATER QUALITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; WATER QUALITY**
8 **AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE GRANT PILOT**

9 (a) As used in this section:

10 (1) “Forest product” means logs, pulpwood, veneer, bolt wood, wood
11 chips, stud wood, poles, pilings, biomass, fuel wood, maple sap, or bark.

12 (2) “Forestry operation” means activities related to the management of
13 forests, including a timber harvest; pruning; planting; reforestation; pest,
14 disease, and invasive species control; wildlife habitat management; and
15 fertilization. “Forestry operation” includes the primary processing of forest
16 products of commercial value on a parcel where the timber harvest occurs.

17 (3) “Logging contractor” means a business that is primarily engaged in
18 timber harvesting, is responsible for harvesting operations from stump to
19 roadside, and maintains direct contractual relationships with landowners.

20 (4) “Timber” means trees, saplings, seedlings, bushes, shrubs, and
21 sprouts from which trees may grow of every size, nature, kind, and description.

1 (5) “Timber harvest” or “harvest timber” means a forestry operation
2 involving the harvest of timber.

3 (b) The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall as a pilot expand
4 the Water Quality Assistance Program established by 10 V.S.A. § 2622a, to
5 enable the Program to provide financial assistance to logging contractors to
6 ensure implementation of proactive and preventative water quality protection
7 and climate adaptation practices on harvest sites. The Program shall provide
8 financial assistance to logging contractors for the following:

9 (1) implementation of accepted management practices (AMPs) and
10 other best practices defined by the Department on harvest sites to enhance
11 water quality protection and climate adaptation measures before forest
12 operations take place;

13 (2) purchase by logging contractors of materials or practices that can be
14 used for forest access road construction, landing preparation, bridge
15 construction or installation, culvert protection or installation, and sediment
16 control in advance of harvest implementation in order to comply with the
17 AMPs and other potentially applicable water quality requirements; and

18 (3) financial assistance or cost share for a logging contractor to be
19 Master Logger Certified by third-party entities, such as the Northeast Master
20 Logger Certification Program of the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands.

1 (c) The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation may establish criteria
2 for eligibility under the Water Quality Assistance Program, including priority
3 of assistance and application requirements.

4 (d) The Water Quality Assistance Program shall operate as a pilot program
5 in fiscal year 2025 utilizing funds from the Clean Water Fund.

6 (e) On or before January 15, 2025, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and
7 Recreation shall report to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food
8 Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and
9 Energy the results of the pilot Water Quality Assistance Program.

10 Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. § 2622c is amended to read:

11 § 2622c. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE; LOGGER SAFETY; MASTER
12 LOGGER CERTIFICATION; COST-SHARE

13 (a) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation annually shall
14 award grants to the following entities in order to provide financial assistance to
15 loggers for the purposes of improving logger safety and professionalism:

16 (1) to the Vermont Logger Education to Advance Professionalism
17 (LEAP) program to provide financial assistance to logging contractors for the
18 costs of logger safety training or continuing education in logger safety; and

19 (2) to the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands for the purpose of
20 annually paying for up to 50 percent, ~~but not more than \$1,500.00,~~ of the costs

1 of the initial certification of up to ~~40~~ 30 logging contractors enrolled in the
2 Master Logger Certification Program.

3 (b) The following costs to a logging contractor shall be eligible for
4 assistance under the grants awarded under subsection (a) of this section:

5 (1) the costs of safety training, continuing education, or a loss
6 prevention consultation;

7 (2) the costs of certification under the Master Logger Program
8 administered by the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands; or

9 (3) the costs of completion of a logging career technical education
10 program.

11 (c) A grant awarded under this section shall pay up to 50 percent of the cost
12 of an eligible activity.

13 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATIONS; LOGGER SAFETY; MASTER

14 LOGGER CERTIFICATION

15 In addition to other funds appropriated to the Department of Forests, Parks
16 and Recreation in fiscal year 2025, \$45,000.00 from the General Fund is
17 appropriated to the Department to provide the financial assistance for logger
18 safety and master logger certification pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 2622c.

19 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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(Committee vote: _____)

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE