



MEMORANDUM

TO: VT House Committee on Environment and Energy

FROM: David Snedeker, Executive Director
Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)

DATE: February 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act (CRBPA)

Chair Sheldon & House Committee Members:

The Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA), a regional planning and development organization serving the Northeast Kingdom region of Vermont, commends the House Committee on Environment and Energy for initiating a statewide conversation on conservation and development; land use; biodiversity; and community resilience.

As your committee moves forward in considering this bill (as introduced), I believe that by now the legislature and most Vermonters understand that the world's rapidly changing climate will have impacts on our state, bringing about both expected and unexpected changes. This would include a reduction in biodiversity that will impact plant and animal species alike. It is likely that many Vermonters also understand that land fragmentation and parcelization also have impacts on biodiversity, including forest health and loss of habitats.

With the understanding that purpose of H.126 being to conserve 30% of Vermont's land by 2030 and 50% by 2050, I would like to offer the following comments for the Committee's consideration if land conservation is the way we choose to move forward:

- Developing a plan, such as the one outlined in Section 2803 of the proposed bill seems appropriate. NVDA, and the regional planning commissions would like to have a role in the development of this statewide conservation plan as we all have adopted regional plans that

address land use and natural resources, as well as other related topics such as transportation, community development, energy, etc.

- NVDA also sees a role for the regional planning commissions in the review of the three conservation categories outlined in Section 2801 of the proposed bill. NVDA, a region serving 3 of the most rural counties in Vermont, has a long history of serving our many communities and business that continue to rely on the working landscape for both community and economic development and we would have an interest in seeing this continue.
- NVDA and the regional planning commissions have significant experience in collecting data, conducting inventories, and developing comprehensive land use plans and could certainly help with a statewide conservation planning effort such as the one being proposed. We are also experienced at gathering public input from the local level and it is very important that any statewide conservation plan be informed with local input.

In doing some early analysis with the help of NVDA GIS staff support, we've noted the following:

Federally owned lands in VT: 8% (2% in the NEK)

State owned lands in VT: 9% (16% in the NEK)

Municipally owned lands in VT: 1% (1% in the NEK)

Land Trust and other conserved lands in VT: 10% (15% in the NEK)

Land enrolled in Current Use in VT: 36% (NEK data not available)

Total of the above lands in VT: 64% (NEK 34% w/out Current Use lands)

** I have also included excerpts from the NVDA regional plan so that you have some idea of what the RPCs can bring to the conversation. NVDA is currently in the process of updating our 2018 regional plan. **

The RPCs appreciate the efforts of your Committee and the Legislature going forward. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing the discussion. Please contact me if you have any questions: dsnedeker@nvda.net or (802)748-8303.

Sincerely,

David Snedeker
Executive Director, NVDA