

1 South Street
Holley Hall
Bristol, VT 05443

26 February 2014

David Deen, Chair
House Fish & Wildlife Committee

Carolyn Partridge, Chair
House Agriculture Committee

Robert Starr, Chair
Senate Agriculture Committee

The Bristol Conservation Commission would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) Land Conservation Program for two key projects in our town which together have enabled the protection of more than 740 acres of riparian lands serving multiple community and ecosystem functions. These conservation projects are part of a town initiative to reduce river erosion hazards, as expressed in the Town Plan. The Bristol community has been adversely impacted by floods of the 1970s, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2010 and Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. These recently conserved parcels effectively serve as part of the town's stormwater infrastructure, offering greater flood resiliency for the community.

- VHCB funding was a critical element in the conservation of two neighboring farms comprising of 687 acres of working forest and farmland along 7,000 feet of the Baldwin Creek tributary to the New Haven River – the northern Gateway to Bristol village. Mr. Fuller will continue to lease his fields to local farmers. The Farr Farm will be purchased by a young, experienced farming couple – Trent and Abby Roleau - who plan to raise and sell local meats and produce maple syrup. With additional support from the Agency of Natural Resources, a component of this conservation project is a river corridor buffer that will offer water quality protection along the Baldwin Creek, as well as improved flood resiliency for the downtown village. A total of 193 donors contributed to this project, including \$11,000 from a recently established Bristol Conservation Reserve Fund.
- A second project area on the Bristol Flats south of the village has involved protection of 54 acres of intact and prior-converted floodplain forest with 3,800 feet of frontage along the New Haven River. The so-called Saunders and Fuller project sites are contiguous parcels located along a highly dynamic and depositional reach of the river, characterized by braided flows and channel migration. A diverse array of technical programs and funding sources enabled successful project implementation at this location. Funding from the VHCB was a keystone element in the overall project that enabled acquisition of lands and easements. Additional public/private partnerships helped to compensate landowners for loss of agriculturally productive lands and transfer of development and channel-management rights through funding from the ANR, Vermont Agency

of Agriculture, USDA Farm Service Agency, Bristol Conservation Reserve Fund, and New Haven River Anglers.

Permanent conservation of the riparian corridor on these lands has ensured that the river is unconstrained by infrastructure and has room to move, deposit sediment, and attenuate flows. This project supports a return to naturalized channel and floodplain functions, following a long history of intensive and unsustainable channel management. The river is regaining access to its floodplain. Stormwater flows will be attenuated and sediment production to downstream reaches will be reduced over the long term, leading to reduced flood hazards, and improved water quality and aquatic habitats in this well-known trout fishery. Investment by VHCB has enabled protection of these community and ecosystem services in ways that could not have been afforded by individuals. These are public goods, worthy of public investment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Johnson', written in a cursive style.

Ken Johnson, Chair
Bristol Conservation Commission

cc: Bill Bryant, Town Administrator, wbryant@madriver.com
Senator Claire Ayer, cayer@leg.state.vt.us
Senator Christopher Bray, cbray@leg.state.vt.us
Representative Michael Fisher, mfisher@leg.state.vt.us
Representative Dave Sharpe, dsharpe@leg.state.vt.us