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1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources to which was
3 referred House Bill No. 552 entitled “An act relating to threatened and
4 endangered species” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 5401 is amended to read:

8 § 5401. DEFINITIONS

9 As used in this chapter:

10 (1) “Agency” means the Agency of Natural Resources.

11 (2) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Natural Resources.

12 (3) “Species” ~~includes all subspecies of~~ means wildlife or wild plants
13 and any subspecies or other group of wildlife or wild plants of the same
14 species, the members of which may interbreed when mature.

15 (4) “Wildlife” means any member of a nondomesticated species of the
16 animal kingdom, whether reared in captivity or not, including, without
17 limitation, any mammal, fish, bird, amphibian, reptile, mollusk, crustacean,
18 arthropod or other invertebrate, and also including any part, product, egg,
19 offspring, dead body, or part of the dead body of any such wildlife.

1 (5) “Plant” means any member of the plant kingdom, including seeds,
2 roots, and other parts thereof. As used in this chapter, plants shall include
3 fungi.

4 (6) “Endangered species” means a species listed ~~on the state endangered~~
5 ~~species list as endangered~~ under this chapter or ~~determined to be an~~
6 ~~“endangered species”~~ under the federal Endangered Species Act.

7 (7) “Threatened species” means a species listed ~~on the State as a~~
8 ~~threatened species list~~ under this chapter or determined to be a “threatened
9 species” under the federal Endangered Species Act.

10 (8) “Endangered Species Act” and “federal Endangered Species Act”
11 means the Endangered Species Act of 1973, Public Law 93-205, as amended.

12 (9) “Habitat” means the physical and biological environment in which a
13 particular species of plant or animal lives.

14 (10) “Conserve,” “conserving,” and “conservation” mean to use and the
15 use of all methods and procedures ~~both~~ for maintaining or increasing:

16 (A) the number of individuals within a population of a species;

17 (B) the number of populations of a species; and

18 (C) populations of wildlife or wild plants to the optimum carrying
19 capacity of the habitat, ~~and for maintaining those numbers.~~

20 (11) “Optimum carrying capacity” for a species means a population
21 level of that species which, in that habitat, can ~~indefinitely~~ sustainably coexist

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1 with healthy populations of all wildlife and wild plant species normally
2 present.

3 (12) “Methods” and “procedures” means all activities associated with
4 ~~scientific~~ natural resources management, including, ~~without limitation,~~
5 scientific research, census, law enforcement, habitat acquisition and
6 maintenance, propagation, live trapping, and transplanting. The terms also
7 include the periodic or continuous protection of species or populations, where
8 appropriate, and the regulated taking of individuals of the species or population
9 in extraordinary cases where population pressures within a habitat cannot be
10 otherwise relieved.

11 (13) “Possession” ~~of a member of a species means the state of~~
12 ~~possessing~~ means holding, controlling, exporting, importing, processing,
13 selling, offering to sell, delivering, carrying, transporting, or shipping by any
14 means a member of ~~that~~ a species.

15 (14) ~~“Taking,”~~ “Take” or “taking”:

16 (A) ~~with~~ With respect to wildlife ~~means “taking” as defined in~~
17 ~~section 4001 of this title, and~~ designated a threatened or endangered species,
18 means:

19 (i) pursuing, shooting, hunting, killing, capturing, trapping,
20 harming, snaring, and netting wildlife;

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1 (ii) an act that creates a risk of injury to wildlife, whether or not
2 the injury occurs, including harassing, wounding, or placing, setting, drawing,
3 or using any net or other device used to take animals; or

4 (iii) attempting to engage in or assisting another to engage in an
5 act set forth under subdivision (A)(i) or (ii) of this subdivision (14).

6 (B) ~~with~~ With respect to wild plants designated a threatened or
7 endangered species, means uprooting, transplanting, gathering seeds or fruit,
8 cutting, injuring, harming, or killing or any attempt to do the same or assisting
9 another who is doing or is attempting to do the same.

10 (15) “Accepted silvicultural practices” means the accepted silvicultural
11 practices defined by the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation,
12 including the Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water
13 Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont adopted by the Commissioner of Forests,
14 Parks and Recreation.

15 (16) “Critical habitat” for a threatened species or endangered species
16 means:

17 (A) a delineated location within the geographical area occupied by
18 the species that:

19 (i) has the physical or biological features that are identifiable,
20 concentrated, and decisive to the survival of a population of the species; and

1 (ii) is necessary for the conservation or recovery of the
2 species; and

3 (iii) may require special management considerations or
4 protection; or

5 (B) a delineated location outside the geographical area occupied by a
6 species at the time it is listed under section 5402 of this title that:

7 (i)(I) was historically occupied by a species; or

8 (II) contains habitat that is hydrologically connected or directly
9 adjacent to occupied habitat; and

10 (ii) contains habitat that is identifiable, concentrated, and decisive
11 to the continued survival of a population of the species; and

12 (iii) is necessary for the conservation or recovery of the species.

13 (17) “Destroy or adversely impact” means, with respect to critical
14 habitat, a direct or indirect activity that negatively affects the value of critical
15 habitat for the survival, conservation, or recovery of a listed **threatened or**
16 **endangered** species.

17 (18) “Farming” shall have the same meaning as used in subdivision
18 6001(22) of this title.

19 (19) “Forestry operations” means activities related to the management of
20 forests, including a timber harvest; pruning; planting; reforestation; pest,
21 disease, and invasive species control; wildlife habitat management; and

1 fertilization. “Forestry operation” includes the primary processing of forest
2 products of commercial value on a parcel where the timber harvest occurs.

3 (20) “Harming,” as used in the definition of “take” or “taking” under
4 subdivision (14) of this subsection, means:

5 (A) an act that kills or injures a threatened or endangered species; or

6 (B) the destruction or imperilment of habitat that kills or injures a
7 threatened or endangered species by significantly impairing continued survival
8 or essential behavioral patterns, including reproduction, feeding, and
9 sheltering.

10 Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. § 5402 is amended to read:

11 § 5402. ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES LISTS

12 (a) The Secretary shall adopt by rule a ~~State-endangered~~ State endangered
13 species list and a ~~State-threatened~~ State threatened species list. The listing for
14 any species may apply to the whole State or to any part of the State and shall
15 identify the species by its most recently accepted genus and species names and,
16 if available, the common name.

17 (b) The Secretary shall determine a species to be endangered if it normally
18 occurs in the State and its continued existence as ~~wildlife or a wild plant in the~~
19 State a sustainable component of the State’s wildlife or wild plants is in
20 jeopardy.

1 (c) The Secretary shall determine a species to be threatened if:

2 (1) it is a sustainable component of the State's wildlife or wild plants;

3 (2) it is reasonable to conclude based on available information that its

4 numbers are ~~significantly declining because of loss of habitat or human~~
5 ~~disturbance;~~ and

6 (3) unless protected, it will become an endangered species.

7 (d) In determining whether a species is ~~endangered or threatened or~~
8 endangered, the Secretary shall consider:

9 (1) the present or threatened destruction, degradation, fragmentation,
10 modification, or curtailment of the range or habitat of the species;

11 (2) any killing, harming, or over-utilization of the species for
12 commercial, sporting, scientific, educational, or other purposes;

13 (3) disease or predation affecting the species;

14 (4) the adequacy of existing regulation;

15 (5) actions relating to the species carried out or about to be carried out
16 by any governmental agency or any other person who may affect the
17 species; ~~and~~

18 (6) competition with other species, including nonnative invasive species;

19 (7) the decline in the population;

20 (8) cumulative impacts; and

1 (9) other natural or ~~man-made~~ human-made factors affecting the
2 continued existence of the species.

3 (e) In determining whether a species is ~~endangered or threatened or~~
4 endangered or whether to delist a species, the Secretary shall:

5 (1) use the best scientific, commercial, and other data available;

6 (2) notify and consult with interested state or appropriate officials in
7 Canada, appropriate State and federal agencies, other states having a common
8 interest in the species, affected landowners, and any interested persons at least
9 30 days prior to commencement of rulemaking; and

10 (3) notify the ~~governor~~ appropriate officials and agencies of Quebec or
11 any state contiguous to Vermont in which the species affected is known to
12 occur.

13 Sec. 3. 10 V.S.A. § 5402a is added to read:

14 § 5402a. CRITICAL HABITAT; LISTING

15 (a) The Secretary may, after the consultation required under subsection
16 5408(e) of this section, adopt or amend by rule a critical habitat designation list
17 for threatened or endangered species. Critical habitat may be designated in any
18 part of the State. The Secretary shall not be required to designate critical
19 habitat for every State-listed threatened or endangered species. When the
20 Secretary designates critical habitat, the Secretary shall identify the species for

1 which the designation is made, including its most recently accepted genus and
2 species names, and, if available, its common name.

3 (b) The Secretary shall designate only critical habitat that meets the
4 definition of “critical habitat” under this chapter. In determining whether and
5 where to designate critical habitat for a **State-listed threatened or endangered**
6 **species**, the Secretary shall, after consultation with and consideration of
7 recommendations of the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, the
8 Secretary of Transportation, and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and
9 Recreation, consider the following:

10 (1) the current or historic use of the habitat by **the listed species**;

11 (2) the extent to which the habitat is decisive to the survival and
12 recovery of the **listed species**, at any stage of its life cycle;

13 (3) the space necessary for individual and population growth of the
14 **listed species**;

15 (4) food, water, air, light, minerals, or other nutritional or physiological
16 requirements of the listed species;

17 (5) cover or shelter for the listed species;

18 (6) sites for breeding, reproduction, rearing of offspring, germination, or
19 seed dispersal; migration corridors; and overwintering;

20 (7) the present or threatened destruction, degradation, fragmentation,
21 modification, or curtailment of the range or habitat of the listed species;

1 (8) the adequacy of existing regulation;

2 (9) actions relating to the **listed species** carried out or about to be carried
3 out by any governmental agency or any other person who may affect the **listed**
4 **species**;

5 (10) cumulative impacts; and

6 (11) natural or human-made factors affecting the continued existence of
7 the listed species.

8 (c) In determining whether to designate critical habitat for a State-listed
9 threatened or endangered species, the Secretary shall:

10 (1) use the best scientific, commercial, and other data available;

11 (2) notify and consult with appropriate officials in Canada, appropriate
12 State and federal agencies, other states having a common interest in the
13 species, affected landowners, and any interested persons at least 30 days prior
14 to commencement of rulemaking; and

15 (3) notify the appropriate **officials and agencies of Quebec or any state**
16 **contiguous** to Vermont in which the species affected is known to occur.

17 **(d) Prior to initiating rulemaking under this section to designate critical**
18 **habitat, the Secretary shall notify the owner of record of any land on which**
19 **critical habitat is proposed for designation.**

1 Sec. 4. 10 V.S.A. § 5403 is amended to read:

2 § 5403. PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

3 (a) Except as authorized under this chapter, a person shall not:

4 (1) take, possess, or transport wildlife or wild plants that are members of
5 ~~an endangered or a threatened~~ or endangered species; or

6 (2) destroy or adversely impact critical habitat.

7 (b) Any person who takes a threatened or endangered species shall report
8 the taking to the Secretary.

9 (c) The Secretary may, with advice of the Endangered Species Committee
10 and after the consultation required under subsection 5408(e) of this section,
11 adopt rules for the protection ~~and~~ conservation, or recovery of endangered and
12 threatened species. The rules may establish:

13 (1) application requirements for an individual permit or general permits
14 issued under this section, including requirements that differ from the
15 requirements of subsection 5408(h) of this title; and

16 (2) best management practices for general permits.

17 (e)(d) The Secretary may bring ~~a civil~~ an environmental enforcement action
18 against any person who violates subsection (a) or (b) of this section or rules
19 adopted under this chapter in accordance with chapters 201 and 211 of this
20 title.

1 ~~(d)~~(e) Instead of bringing a ~~civil~~ an environmental enforcement action for a
2 violation of this chapter or rules adopted under this chapter, the Secretary may
3 refer violations of this chapter to the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife for
4 criminal enforcement.

5 ~~(e)~~(f) A In a criminal enforcement action, a person who knowingly violates
6 a requirement of this chapter or a rule of the Secretary adopted under
7 subsection ~~(b)~~(c) of this section related to taking, possessing, transporting,
8 buying, or selling a threatened or endangered species shall be fined not more
9 than \$500.00 in accordance with section 4518 of this title, and the person shall
10 pay restitution under section 4514 of this title.

11 ~~(f)~~(g) Any person who violates subsection (a) or (b) of this section by
12 knowingly injuring a member of a threatened or endangered species or
13 knowingly destroying or adversely impacting critical habitat and who is
14 subject to criminal prosecution may be required by the court to pay
15 restitution for:

16 (1) actual costs and related expenses incurred in treating and caring for
17 the injured plant or animal to the person incurring these expenses, including
18 the costs of veterinarian services and Agency of Natural Resources staff
19 time; or

1 (2) reasonable mitigation and restoration costs such as: species
2 restoration plans; habitat protection; and enhancement, transplanting,
3 cultivation, and propagation ~~for plants~~.

4 Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 5404 is amended to read:

5 § 5404. ENDANGERED SPECIES COMMITTEE

6 (a) A ~~Committee~~ committee on endangered species is created to be known
7 as the “Endangered Species Committee,” and shall consist of nine members,
8 including the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, the Commissioner
9 of Fish and Wildlife, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and
10 six members appointed by the Governor from the public at large. Of the six
11 public members, two shall be actively engaged in agricultural or silvicultural
12 activities, two shall be knowledgeable concerning flora, and two shall be
13 knowledgeable concerning fauna. Members appointed by the Governor shall
14 be entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in the attendance of
15 meetings, as approved by the Chair. The Chair of the Committee shall be
16 elected from among and by the members each year. Members who are not
17 employees of the State shall serve terms of three years, except that the
18 Governor may make appointments for a lesser term in order to prevent more
19 than two terms from expiring in any year.

20 (b) The Endangered Species Committee shall advise the Secretary on all
21 matters relating to endangered and threatened species, including whether to

1 alter the lists of endangered and threatened species ~~and~~, how to protect those
2 species, and whether and where to designate critical habitat.

3 (c) The Agency of Natural Resources shall provide the Endangered Species
4 Committee with necessary staff services.

5 Sec. 6. 10 V.S.A. § 5405 is amended to read:

6 § 5405. CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

7 The Secretary, with the advice of the Endangered Species Committee, may
8 establish conservation programs and establish recovery plans for the
9 conservation or recovery of threatened or endangered species of wildlife or
10 plants or for the conservation or recovery of critical habitat. The programs
11 may include the purchase of land or aquatic habitat and the formation of
12 contracts for the purpose of management of wildlife or wild plant refuge areas
13 or for other purposes.

14 Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 5406 is amended to read:

15 § 5406. COOPERATION BY OTHER AGENCIES

16 All agencies of this State shall review programs administered by them
17 which may relate to this chapter and shall, in consultation with the Secretary,
18 utilize their authorities only in a manner which does not jeopardize the
19 threatened or endangered species, critical habitat, or the outcomes of
20 conservation or recovery programs established by this chapter or by the
21 Secretary under ~~its~~ his or her authority.

1 Sec. 8. 10 V.S.A. § 5407 is amended to read:

2 § 5407. ~~ENFORCEMENT~~ AUTHORITY TO SEIZE THREATENED OR
3 ENDANGERED SPECIES

4 In addition to other methods of enforcement authorized by law, the
5 Secretary may direct under this section that wildlife or wild plants ~~which~~ that
6 were seized because of violation of this chapter be rehabilitated, released,
7 replanted, or transferred to a zoological, botanical, educational or scientific
8 institution, and that the costs of the transfer and staff time related to a violation
9 may be charged to the violator. The Secretary, with the advice of the
10 Endangered Species Committee, may adopt rules for the implementation of
11 this section.

12 Sec. 9. 10 V.S.A. § 5408 is amended to read:

13 § 5408. ~~LIMITATIONS~~ AUTHORIZED TAKINGS; INCIDENTAL
14 TAKINGS; DESTRUCTION OF CRITICAL HABITAT

15 (a) Authorized taking. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, after
16 obtaining the advice of the Endangered Species Committee, the Secretary may
17 permit, under such terms and conditions as the Secretary may, ~~prescribe by~~
18 ~~rule,~~ require as necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the taking of
19 a threatened or endangered species, the destruction or adverse impact of
20 critical habitat, or any act otherwise prohibited by this chapter if done for any
21 of the following purposes:

- 1 (1) scientific purposes;
- 2 (2) to enhance the propagation or survival of a threatened or endangered
- 3 species; ~~economic hardship~~;
- 4 (3) zoological exhibition;
- 5 (4) educational purposes;
- 6 (5) noncommercial cultural or ceremonial purposes; or
- 7 (6) special purposes consistent with the purposes of the federal
- 8 Endangered Species Act.

9 (b) Incidental taking. After obtaining the advice of the Endangered Species

10 Committee, the Secretary may permit, under such terms and conditions as the

11 Secretary require as necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the

12 incidental taking of a threatened or endangered species or the destruction or

13 adverse impact of critical habitat if:

- 14 (1) the taking is necessary to conduct an otherwise lawful activity;
- 15 (2) the taking is attendant or secondary to, and not the purposes of, the
- 16 lawful activity;
- 17 (3) the impact of the permitted incidental take is minimized; and
- 18 (4) the incidental taking will not impair the conservation or recovery of
- 19 any endangered species or threatened species.

20 (c) Transport through State. Nothing in this chapter shall prevent a person

21 who holds a proper permit from the federal government or any other state from

1 transporting a member of an endangered or a threatened or endangered species
2 from a point outside this State ~~to another point within or without this~~ through
3 the State.

4 ~~(e)~~(d) Possession. Nothing in this chapter shall prevent a person from
5 possessing in this State wildlife or wild plants which are not determined to be
6 “endangered” or “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act where
7 the possessor is able to produce substantial evidence that the wildlife or wild
8 plant was first taken or obtained in a place without violating the law of that
9 place, provided that an importation permit may be required under section 4714
10 of this title or the rules of the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

11 ~~(d)~~(e) Interference with agricultural or silvicultural practices. No rule
12 adopted under this chapter shall cause undue interference with ~~normal~~
13 ~~agricultural or farming,~~ forestry operations, or accepted silvicultural practices.
14 This section shall not be construed to exempt any person from the provisions
15 of the ~~federal Endangered Species Act~~ requirements of this chapter. The
16 Secretary shall not adopt rules that affect farming, forestry operations, or
17 accepted silvicultural practices without first consulting the Secretary of
18 Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and
19 Recreation.

1 (f) Consistency with State law. Nothing in this chapter shall be interpreted
2 to limit or amend the definitions and applications of necessary habitat in
3 chapter 151 of this title or in 30 V.S.A. chapter 5.

4 ~~(e)~~(g) Effect on federal law. Nothing in this section permits a person to
5 violate any provision of federal law concerning federally protected threatened
6 or endangered species.

7 (h) Permit application. An applicant for a permit under this section shall
8 submit an application to the Secretary that includes the following information:

9 (1) a description of the activities that could lead to a taking of a listed
10 threatened or endangered species or the destruction or adverse impact of
11 critical habitat;

12 (2) the steps that the applicant has or will take to avoid, minimize, and
13 mitigate the impact to the relevant threatened or endangered species or critical
14 habitat;

15 (3) a plan for ensuring that funding is available to conduct any required
16 monitoring and mitigation, if applicable;

17 (4) a summary of the alternative actions to the taking or destruction of
18 critical habitat that the applicant considered and the reasons that these
19 alternatives were not selected, if applicable;

1 (5) the name or names and obligations and responsibilities of the person
2 or persons that will be involved in the proposed taking or destruction of critical
3 habitat; and

4 (6) any additional information that the Secretary may require.

5 ~~(i)~~ Permit fees.

6 (1) Fees to be charged to a person applying to take a threatened or
7 endangered ~~species under~~ this section shall be:

8 (A) ~~To~~ to take for scientific purposes, to enhance the propagation or
9 survival of the species, noncommercial cultural or ceremonial purposes, or for
10 educational purposes or special purposes consistent with the federal
11 Endangered Species Act, \$50.00;

12 (B) ~~To~~ to take for a zoological or botanical exhibition ~~or to lessen an~~
13 ~~economic hardship,~~ \$250.00 for each listed ~~animal or plant~~ wildlife or wild
14 plant taken up to a maximum of \$25,000.00 ~~or, if the Secretary determines that~~
15 ~~it is in the best interest of the species, the parties may agree to mitigation in~~
16 ~~lieu of a monetary fee; and~~

17 (C) for an incidental taking, \$250.00 for each listed wildlife or wild
18 plant taken up to a maximum of \$25,000.00.

19 (2) The Secretary may require the implementation of mitigation
20 strategies, and may collect mitigation funds, in addition to the permit fees, in

1 order to mitigate the impacts of a taking or the destruction or adverse impact
2 on **critical** habitat. Mitigation may include:

3 (A) a requirement to rectify the taking or adverse impact or to reduce
4 the adverse impact over time;

5 (B) a requirement to manage or restore land within the area of the
6 proposed activity or in **an** area outside the proposed area as habitat for the
7 **threatened or endangered** species; or

8 (C) compensation, including payment of a fee into the Threatened
9 and Endangered Species Fund for the uses of that Fund, provided that any
10 payment is commensurate to the taking or adverse impact proposed.

11 (3) Fees ~~or~~ and mitigation payments collected under this subsection and
12 interest on fees and mitigation payments shall be deposited in the Threatened
13 and Endangered Species Fund ~~within the Fish and Wildlife Fund, which Fund~~
14 ~~is hereby created~~ and shall be used solely for expenditures of the Department
15 of Fish and Wildlife related to threatened and endangered species.

16 Expenditures may be made for monitoring, restoration, conservation, recovery,
17 and the acquisition of property interests and other purposes consistent with this
18 chapter. Where practical, the fees collected for takings shall be devoted to the
19 conservation or recovery of the taken species or its habitat. Interest accrued on
20 the Fund shall be credited to the Fund.

1 ~~(g)~~(j) Permit term. A permit issued under this section shall be valid for the
2 period of time specified in the permit, not to exceed five years. A permit
3 issued under this section may be renewed upon application to the Secretary.

4 (k) Public notice. Prior to issuing a permit for an authorized or incidental
5 taking and prior to the issuance or amendment of a general permit under this
6 section, the Secretary shall provide for: public notice of no fewer than
7 30 days; opportunity for written comment; and opportunity to request a public
8 informational hearing. The Secretary shall post permit applications, permit
9 decisions, and the initial or amended general permits on the website of the
10 Agency of Natural Resources. The Secretary also shall provide notice to
11 interested persons who request notice of permit applications, permit decisions,
12 and proposed general permits or proposed amendments to general permits.

13 (l) General permits.

14 (1) The Secretary may issue general permits for activities that will not
15 affect the continued survival or recovery of a threatened or endangered species.

16 (2) A general permit issued under this chapter shall contain those terms
17 and conditions necessary to ensure compliance with the provisions of this
18 statute.

19 (3) These terms and conditions may include the implementation of best
20 management practices and the adoption of specific mitigation measures and
21 required surveying, monitoring, and reporting.

1 (4) The Secretary may issue a general permit to take a threatened or
2 endangered species or destroy or adversely impact critical habitat only if an
3 activity or class of activities satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

4 (A) the taking of a threatened or endangered species or the
5 destruction or adverse impact of critical habitat is necessary to address an
6 imminent risk to human health;

7 (B) a proposed taking of a threatened or endangered species or the
8 destruction or adverse impact of critical habitat would enhance the overall
9 long-term survival of the species; or

10 (C) the Secretary has adopted best management practices that are
11 designed, when applied, to minimize to the greatest extent possible the taking
12 of a threatened or endangered species or the destruction or adverse impact of
13 critical habitat.

14 (5) On or before September 1, 2017, the Secretary shall issue a general
15 permit for vegetation management and operational and maintenance activities
16 conducted by a utility. Until the general permit has been issued, no critical
17 habitat designation for wild plants shall be made in utility right of way. As
18 used in this subdivision (5), “utility” means an electric company,
19 telecommunication company, pipeline operator, or railroad company.

20 (6) Prior to issuing a general permit under this subsection, the Secretary
21 shall:

1 (A) post a draft of the general permit on the Agency website;

2 (B) provide public notice of at least 30 days; and

3 (C) provide for written comments or a public hearing, or both.

4 (7) For applications for coverage under the terms of an issued general
5 permit, the applicant shall provide notice on a form provided by the Secretary.

6 The Secretary shall post notice of the application on the Agency website and
7 shall provide an opportunity for written comment, regarding whether the
8 application complies with the terms and conditions of the general permit, for
9 ten days following receipt of the application.

10 (8) The Secretary may require any applicant for coverage under a
11 general permit to submit additional information that the Secretary considers
12 necessary and may refuse to approve coverage under the terms of a general
13 permit until the information is furnished and evaluated.

14 (9) The Secretary may require any applicant for coverage under a
15 general permit to seek an individual permit under this section if the applicant
16 does not qualify for coverage.

17 (10) The Secretary may require a person operating under a general
18 permit issued under this section to obtain an individual permit under this
19 section if the person proposes to destroy or adversely impact critical habitat
20 that was designated under section 5402a of this title after issuance of the
21 general permit.

1 Sec. 10. 10 V.S.A. § 5410 is amended to read:

2 § 5410. LOCATION CONFIDENTIAL

3 (a) ~~All information~~ The Secretary shall not disclose information regarding
4 the specific location of threatened or endangered species sites ~~shall be kept~~
5 ~~confidential in perpetuity~~ except that the Secretary shall disclose ~~this~~
6 information regarding the location of the threatened or endangered species to:

7 (1) the owner of land upon which the species ~~has been~~ is located, ~~or to:~~

8 (2) a potential buyer of land upon which the species is located who has a
9 bona fide contract to buy the land and applies to the Secretary for disclosure of
10 threatened or endangered species information, ~~and to; or~~

11 (3) qualified individuals or organizations, public agencies and nonprofit
12 organizations for scientific research or for preservation and planning purposes
13 when the Secretary determines that the preservation of the species is not
14 further endangered by the disclosure.

15 (b) When the Secretary issues a permit under this chapter to take a
16 threatened or endangered species or destroy or adversely impact critical habitat
17 and when the Secretary designates critical habitat by rule under section 5402a
18 of this title, the Secretary shall disclose only the municipality and general
19 location in which the threatened or endangered species or designated critical
20 habitat is located. When the Secretary designates critical habitat under section
21 5402a of this title, the Secretary shall notify the municipality in which the

1 critical habitat is located and shall disclose the general location of the
2 designated critical habitat.

3 Sec. 11. STATUTORY REVISION

4 The Office of Legislative Council, in its statutory revision capacity, is
5 directed to renumber the subdivisions of 10 V.S.A. § 5401 in numerical order
6 and to correct any cross references in statute to 10 V.S.A. § 5410 to reflect the
7 renumbered subdivisions.

8 Sec. 12. FEE RECOMMENDATION; PERMIT TO DESTROY OR

9 **ADVERSELY IMPACT CRITICAL HABITAT**

10 The consolidated Executive Branch fee report and request to be submitted
11 on or before the third Tuesday of January 2018 pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 605
12 shall include a recommendation from the Agency of Natural Resources of a fee
13 for a permit under 10 V.S.A. § 5408 to destroy or adversely impact critical
14 habitat of a State-listed threatened or endangered species. The
15 recommendation shall include whether the owner of property on which critical
16 habitat is designated under 10 V.S.A. § 5402a should be required to pay a fee
17 for a permit to destroy or adversely impact critical habitat on his or her
18 property.

19 Sec. 13. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2016.

21

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Gray highlighting = Change from Dr. 3.2

Yellow highlighting = Changes from Draft 2.1

1

2 (Committee vote: _____)

3

4

Representative _____

5

FOR THE COMMITTEE