

DRAFT

H 586 Preservation of Vermont Waters bullet point

H586 is in part a response to the looming EPA cleanup plan for Lake Champlain. The bill does not only address Lake Champlain water quality though but water quality issues across Vermont.

Since the point of this briefing paper is to inform members about what is in H 586, it is probably not useful at this stage to make an extended argument that clean water has economic, quality of life and just plain enjoyment values over and above a healthy aquatic habitat. Suffice it to say that without clean water you, your business and your quality of life are toast!

The F, W &WR Committee is still working on the bill so this is not a definitive listing of the final provisions but we are close to the finish.

The bill breaks into distinct pieces: Agriculture, ANR, forestry, roadways and funding.

Agriculture

- The bill creates a small farm certification program to assist farmers in meeting the Accepted Agricultural Practices that are already in place and reiterates some of those practices required on all farms that protect the waters of Vermont from nutrient loading and pollution
- Directs the Secretary of AAFM to visit small farms and help identify practices that are out of compliance with the AAPs
- Holds agriculture to the same stream alteration standards as all others under the new stream alteration rules
- Directs the Secretary of AAFM to set up a priority scheme to identify those situations that create the highest risk to the waters of the state and give them a priority ranking when deciding where financial assistance is being awarded
- Fencing out livestock from the waters of Vermont is no longer mandatory on all farms but on a case by case basis the Secretary of AAFM may require fencing when there is a situation that puts the waters of VT at risk
- Allows the Secretary of AAFM more flexibility for the spreading of manure during the ban period of Dec 15-April 1 on a case by case basis
- Requires the Secretary of AAFM to establish a small farm training program similar to the training now required for large and medium farms
- Requires custom manure applicators to be certified through attending training classes on protecting water quality
- Offers farmers a 25%tax credit for investments made to implement best management practices

Agency of Natural Resources

- Requires the Secretary of ANR to do education and outreach to towns on water quality protection urging towns to adopt model stormwater by laws
- Requires a once every 5 year independent compliance audit of operating stormwater permits
- Requires the Secretary of ANR to coordinate the existing water quality data in a uniform manner so towns and others can do a stress assessment within a watershed
- Requires a training and certification for shoreland contractors for practices that control erosion and overland run off from construction sites

Forestry

- Establishes a modest skidder bridge program in FPR

Roadways

- No longer requires towns to adopt and implement Best Road Management Practices but instead reduces the level of town match for roads and bridges grants to 5% if the town adopts and implements the Best management Road Practices adopted by VTRANS

Funding

- Establishes a per parcel fee of \$10 for residential property and \$20 per parcel for non-residential property. The fee would be deposited into the Ecosystem Restoration Fund and match the appropriation from the capital bill
- Increases the rooms and meals tax by ½ of 1% with the funds going to increase the Technical Assistance and compliance staff at AAFM for small farm certification and the increased level of state funding for roads and bridges in towns adopting BMPs.