

H. 580 Testimony
House Natural Resources & Energy Committee
Tuesday, March 8, 2016

The Nature Conservancy
Jon Binhammer
Protection Director

The Nature Conservancy

The Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy was chartered in 1960. We have helped conserved over 300,000 acres in Vermont, and hold 49, 316 acres in 144 conservation easements in Vermont.

The **mission** of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our **vision** is a world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.

H. 580

H.580 addresses two important limitations of current law regarding conservation easements.

Section 1 resolves the matter of the impact of town tax liens on existing conservation easements. In order to maintain the perpetuity of conservation easements, the bill would clarify that tax liens filed after the filing of conservation easements would not affect the provisions of the easement.

Section 2 resolves the matter of re-recording easements every 40 years to maintain their force and effect. The presence of a conservation easement is required by statute to be stated in any subsequent conveyance of real property, which eliminates the need to re-record the easement every 40 years.

Experience of The Nature Conservancy and Support for H. 580

The Nature Conservancy re-recorded its first conservation easement in the fall of 2015. The administrative burden was minor for this one easement; the recording fees were \$160.00, but multiplied by the number of conservation easements held by TNC and partners provides support for solving the current limitations through H.580.

We have not experienced a tax lien issue with one of our conservation easements, but we work very closely with town clerks and officials in a number of respects, and we appreciate the clarity that H. 580 would bring to the issue of tax liens and tax sales in Vermont towns.

The Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy enthusiastically supports this bill.