

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources to which was  
3 referred House Bill No. 789 entitled “An act relating to forest integrity and  
4 municipal and regional planning” respectfully reports that it has considered the  
5 same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the  
6 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. 24 V.S.A. § 4302 is amended to read:

8 § 4302. PURPOSE; GOALS

9 \* \* \*

10 (c) In addition, this chapter shall be used to further the following specific  
11 goals:

12 (1) To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern  
13 of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

14 (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged  
15 primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along  
16 highways should be discouraged.

17 (B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated  
18 growth areas, employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or  
19 both, and should be encouraged in growth centers designated under chapter  
20 76A of this title.

1           (C) Public investments, including the construction or expansion of  
2 infrastructure, should reinforce the general character and planned growth  
3 patterns of the area.

4           (D) Development should be undertaken in accordance with smart  
5 growth principles as defined in subdivision 2791(13) of this title.

6           (2) To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying  
7 and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental  
8 standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high  
9 unemployment or low per capita incomes.

10          (3) To broaden access to educational and vocational training  
11 opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all  
12 Vermonters.

13          (4) To provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient  
14 transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment,  
15 including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

16          ~~(A)~~ Highways, air, rail, and other means of transportation should be  
17 mutually supportive, balanced, and integrated.

18          (5) To identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic  
19 features of the Vermont landscape, including:

20           (A) significant natural and fragile areas;

1 (B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers,  
2 shorelands, and wetlands;

3 (C) significant scenic roads, waterways, and views;

4 (D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological  
5 sites, and archaeologically sensitive areas.

6 (6) To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests,  
7 and other land resources.

8 (A) Vermont's air, water, wildlife, mineral, and land resources  
9 should be planned for use and development according to the principles set  
10 forth in 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a).

11 (B) Vermont's water quality should be maintained and improved  
12 according to the policies and actions developed in the basin plans established  
13 by the Secretary of Natural Resources under 10 V.S.A. § 1253.

14 (C) Vermont's forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and  
15 improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.

16 \* \* \*

17 (9) To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

18 (A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and ~~forest~~  
19 ~~lands~~ forestlands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low  
20 overall density.

1 (B) The manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and  
2 forest products should be encouraged.

3 (C) The use of locally-grown food and forest products should be  
4 encouraged.

5 (D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be  
6 encouraged.

7 (E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize  
8 development pressure on agricultural and forest land.

9 \* \* \*

10 Sec. 2. 24 V.S.A. § 4303 is amended to read:

11 § 4303. DEFINITIONS

12 The following definitions shall apply throughout this chapter unless the  
13 context otherwise requires:

14 \* \* \*

15 (10) “Land development” means the division of a parcel into two or  
16 more parcels, the construction, reconstruction, conversion, structural alteration,  
17 relocation, or enlargement of any building or other structure, or of any mining,  
18 excavation, or landfill, and any change in the use of any building or other  
19 structure, or land, or extension of use of land.

20 \* \* \*

1           (34) “Forest block” means a contiguous area of forest in any stage of  
2           succession and not currently developed for nonforest use. A forest block may  
3           include recreational trails, wetlands or other natural features that do not  
4           themselves possess tree cover, and uses exempt from regulation under  
5           subsection 4413(d) of this title.

6           (35) “Forest fragmentation” means the division or conversion of a forest  
7           block by land development other than by a recreational trail or a use exempt  
8           from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.

9           (36) “Habitat connector” means land or water, or both, that links patches  
10          of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and  
11          dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A  
12          habitat connector may include recreational trails.

13          (37) “Recreational trail” means a corridor that is not paved and that is  
14          used for hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-  
15          terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, and other similar recreational activity.

16          Sec. 3. 24 V.S.A. § 4348a is amended to read:

17          § 4348a. ELEMENTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN

18          (a) A regional plan shall be consistent with the goals established in section  
19          4302 of this title and shall include the following:

1           (1) A statement of basic policies of the region to guide the future growth  
2 and development of land and of public services and facilities, and to protect the  
3 environment.

4           (2) A land use element, which shall consist of a map and statement of  
5 present and prospective land uses, that:

6           (A) ~~indicating~~ Indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation,  
7 agriculture (using the agricultural lands identification process established in  
8 6 V.S.A. § 8), residence, commerce, industry, public, and semi-public uses,  
9 open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, and areas identified by the State,  
10 regional planning commissions, or municipalities, ~~which that~~ that require special  
11 consideration for aquifer protection; for wetland protection; for the  
12 maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors; or for  
13 other conservation purposes;.

14           (B) ~~indicating~~ Indicates those areas within the region that are likely  
15 candidates for designation under sections 2793 (downtown development  
16 districts), 2793a (village centers), 2793b (new town centers), and 2793c  
17 (growth centers) of this title;.

18           (C) ~~indicating~~ Indicates locations proposed for developments with a  
19 potential for regional impact, as determined by the regional planning  
20 commission, including flood control projects, surface water supply projects,  
21 industrial parks, office parks, shopping centers and shopping malls, airports,

1 tourist attractions, recreational facilities, private schools, public or private  
2 colleges, and residential developments or subdivisions;

3 (D) ~~setting~~ Sets forth the present and prospective location, amount,  
4 intensity, and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or  
5 sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of  
6 necessary community facilities and services;

7 (E) ~~indicating~~ Indicates those areas that have the potential to sustain  
8 agriculture and recommendations for maintaining them which may include  
9 transfer of development rights, acquisition of development rights, or farmer  
10 assistance programs.

11 (F) Indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and  
12 habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize  
13 forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function  
14 of forests. A plan may include specific policies to encourage the active  
15 management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water quality, timber  
16 production, recreation, or other values or functions identified by the regional  
17 planning commission.

18 \* \* \*

19 (b) The various elements and statements shall be correlated with the land  
20 use element and with each other. The maps called for by this section may be

1 incorporated on one or more maps, and may be referred to in each separate  
2 statement called for by this section.

3 Sec. 4. 24 V.S.A. § 4382 is amended to read:

4 § 4382. THE PLAN FOR A MUNICIPALITY

5 (a) A plan for a municipality may be consistent with the goals established  
6 in section 4302 of this title and compatible with approved plans of other  
7 municipalities in the region and with the regional plan and shall include the  
8 following:

9 (1) A statement of objectives, policies, and programs of the municipality  
10 to guide the future growth and development of land, public services, and  
11 facilities, and to protect the environment.

12 (2) A land use plan:

13 ~~(A) consisting of, which shall consist of~~ a map and statement of  
14 present and prospective land uses, that:

15 ~~(A) indicating~~ Indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation,  
16 agriculture (using the agricultural lands identification process established in  
17 6 V.S.A. § 8), residence, commerce, industry, public, and semi-public uses,  
18 and open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, and areas identified by the  
19 State, the regional planning commission or the municipality that require special  
20 consideration for aquifer protection; for wetland protection; for the



1 maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors; or for  
2 other conservation purposes;

3 (B) ~~setting~~ Sets forth the present and prospective location, amount,  
4 intensity, and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or  
5 sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of  
6 necessary community facilities and service;

7 (C) ~~identifying~~ Identifies those areas, if any, proposed for designation  
8 under chapter 76A of this title, together with, for each area proposed for  
9 designation, an explanation of how the designation would further the plan's  
10 goals and the goals of section 4302 of this title, and how the area meets the  
11 requirements for the type of designation to be sought.

12 (D) Indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and  
13 habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize  
14 forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function  
15 of forests. A plan may include specific policies to encourage the active  
16 management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water quality, timber  
17 production, recreation, or other values or functions identified by the  
18 municipality.

19 \* \* \*

1       Sec. 5. STUDY AND REPORT; LAND USE REGULATION; FOREST  
2                   INTEGRITY

3           (a) Creation. There is created a Study Committee on Land Use Regulation  
4           and Forest Integrity to study potential revisions to 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 (Act  
5           250) and to 24 V.S.A. chapter 117, subchapter 7 (bylaws) to protect contiguous  
6           areas of forestland from fragmentation and promote habitat connectivity  
7           between forestlands.

8           (b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following nine  
9           members:

10           (1) a current member of the House of Representatives appointed by the  
11           Speaker of the House;

12           (2) a current member of the Senate appointed by the Committee on  
13           Committees;

14           (3) a current officer of a municipality, appointed by the Vermont League  
15           of Cities and Town;

16           (4) a representative of the Vermont Association of Planning and  
17           Development Agencies, appointed by the Association;

18           (5) the Commissioner of Housing and Community Development or  
19           designee;

20           (6) the Chair of the Natural Resources Board or designee;

21           (7) the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or designee;

1           (8) a representative of the Vermont Forest Roundtable through the  
2 Vermont Natural Resources Council; and

3           (9) a representative of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board  
4 established under 6 V.S.A. § 4606, appointed by that Board.

5           (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study potential revisions to  
6 Act 250 and 24 V.S.A. chapter 117, subchapter 7 (bylaws) to protect  
7 contiguous areas of forestland from fragmentation and promote habitat  
8 connectivity between forestlands. This study shall include the following:

9           (1) review of the relevant provisions of Act 250 and 24 V.S.A.  
10 chapter 117 as they exist on passage of this act;

11           (2) development and review of options to revise Act 250 and the bylaw  
12 provisions of chapter 117 to protect forestland from fragmentation and promote  
13 habitat connectivity;

14           (3) evaluation of the impact of those options on land use;

15           (4) a recommendation on whether to make such revisions and the reason  
16 for the recommendation and, if the recommendation is affirmative, the  
17 revisions that the Committee suggests be made; and

18           (5) review of the definitions added by Sec. 2 of this act to 24 V.S.A.  
19 § 4303 and the amendments made by Secs. 3 and 4 of this act to 24 V.S.A.  
20  §§ 4348a and 4382, a recommendation on whether to make revisions to these

1 provisions and the reasons for the recommendation and, if the recommendation  
2 is affirmative, the revisions that the Committee suggests be made.

3 (d) Assistance. For purposes of scheduling meetings, preparing its  
4 recommendation on whether to make statutory revisions, and preparing any  
5 recommended legislation, the Committee shall have the assistance of the Office  
6 of Legislative Council. The Committee also shall be entitled to the technical  
7 and professional assistance of the Departments of Housing and Community  
8 Development and of Forests, Parks and Recreation and of the Natural  
9 Resources Board.

10 (e) Report. On or before July 1, 2017, the Committee shall submit its  
11 written recommendation and any proposed legislation to the House Committee  
12 on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources and the House and Senate Committees  
13 on Natural Resources and Energy.

14 (f) Meetings.

15 (1) The Office of Legislative Council shall call the first meeting of the  
16 Committee to occur on or before July 15, 2016.

17 (2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its legislative  
18 members at the first meeting.

19 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

1           (g) Reimbursement.

2           (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General  
3           Assembly, legislative members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem  
4           compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 406 for  
5           no more than four meetings.

6           (2) Other members of the Committee who are not employees of the State  
7           of Vermont and who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their  
8           attendance shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of  
9           expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for no more than four meetings.

10       Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

11           (a) This section and Sec. 5 (study and report) shall take effect on passage.

12           (b) Secs. 1 (purpose; goals) and 2 (definitions) shall take effect on July 1,  
13           2016.

14           (c) Secs. 3 (elements of a regional plan) and 4 (plan for municipality) shall  
15           take effect on January 1, 2018.

16

17           (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

18

\_\_\_\_\_

19

Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE