



## Farmer's Watershed Alliance

*Working for Environmentally Positive Solutions for Farmers*

February 19, 2015

To: John Campbell, Speaker of the House and President Tempore; Robert Starr, Chair of Senate Committee on Agriculture; Carolyn Partridge, Chair of House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products; Christopher Bray, Chair of Senate Committee on Natural Resources; Tony Klein, Chair of House Committee on Natural Resources and Energy; Tim Ashe, Chair of Senate Committee on Finance; Mitzi Johnson, Chair of House Committee on Appropriations; David Deen, Chair of House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources; Janet Ancel, Chair of House Committee on Ways and Means;

From: Members of the Farmers Watershed Alliance  
Re: H.35 An act relating to Improving Water Quality of State Waters

Dear Committee Chairs and Committee Members,

The Farmer's Watershed Alliance (FWA) is a non-profit, dairy farmer-based organization in northern Vermont's Franklin and Grand Isle counties. The FWA provides a peer-to-peer network that facilitates the incorporation of agricultural practices that improve the quality of water, land, and air. The FWA has been instrumental in distributing over a half million dollars to support farmers incorporation of a wide variety of practices including implementation of reduced till, no-till, cover crops, livestock exclusion, stream bank restoration, and containment of silage leachate, barnyard waste, and manure.

We recognize the importance of and are willing participants in the "all in" approach to improving water quality in Vermont. Governor Shumlin, Secretary of Agriculture Ross, and other members of the House and Senate have stated their willingness to consider alternative sources of funding proposed in H.35 for clean water practices.

This letter was written to propose a strategy to fund water quality improvement initiatives. The plan is simple and requires that all current-use contracts be charged a \$100 processing or maintenance fee with the potential to increase the fee for out-of-state residents. This would generate more than 1.7 million dollars from over 17,000 current use contracts. Land in current use contracts cover approximately 1/3 of Vermont landscape.

As Vermonters who highly value this benefit, we feel that this proposed fee would distribute the cost of water quality improvements more equitably than those proposed in H.35. It is the FWA's desire that funds generated in this manner be used to reinvest in the land by completing more site-specific projects.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

If you have any questions please contact Darlene Reynolds at (802) 752-5156 or email [farmerswatershedalliance@gmail.com](mailto:farmerswatershedalliance@gmail.com)

Kind regards,

Darlene Reynolds,  
President, Farmer's Watershed Alliance