

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 connectivity areas.

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 forestland. As used in
2 this subdivision (34), “forestland” means land that is at least 10 percent
3 stocked by forest trees of any size or land that formerly had such tree cover and
4 is not currently developed for nonforest use. A forest block may include
5 wetlands or other natural features that do not themselves possess such tree
6 cover.

7 (35) “Forest fragmentation” means the division or conversion of a forest
8 block by subdivision or other land development into smaller areas of forestland
9 that vary in size and isolation from other forestlands. In this subdivision (35),
10 “forestland” has the same meaning as in subdivision (34) of this section.

11 (36) “Habitat connectivity area” means an area of land or water, or
12 both, that facilitates the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and
13 plants between areas of habitat within a landscape.

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

15 § 4348a. ELEMENTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN

16 (a) A regional plan shall be consistent with the goals established in section
17 4302 of this title and shall include the following:

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

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

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

10 (B) indicating those areas within the region that are likely candidates
11 for designation under sections 2793 (downtown development districts), 2793a
12 (village centers), 2793b (new town centers), and 2793c (growth centers) of this
13 title;

14 (C) indicating locations proposed for developments with a potential
15 for regional impact, as determined by the regional planning commission,
16 including flood control projects, surface water supply projects, industrial parks,
17 office parks, shopping centers and shopping malls, airports, tourist attractions,
18 recreational facilities, private schools, public or private colleges, and
19 residential developments or subdivisions;

20 (D) setting forth the present and prospective location, amount,
21 intensity, and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or

1 sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of
2 necessary community facilities and services;

3 (E) indicating those areas that have the potential to sustain agriculture
4 and recommendations for maintaining them which may include transfer of
5 development rights, acquisition of development rights, or farmer assistance
6 programs;

7 (F) indicating those areas that are forest blocks and habitat
8 connectivity areas and recommending specific policies to encourage the active
9 management of those areas for wildlife habitat and timber production and to
10 control development in those areas to prevent forest fragmentation and
11 promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests.

12 * * *

13 (b) The various elements and statements shall be correlated with the land
14 use element and with each other. The maps called for by this section may be
15 incorporated on one or more maps, and may be referred to in each separate
16 statement called for by this section.

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

18 § 4382. THE PLAN FOR A MUNICIPALITY

19 (a) A plan for a municipality may be consistent with the goals established
20 in section 4302 of this title and compatible with approved plans of other

1 municipalities in the region and with the regional plan and shall include the
2 following:

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

6 (2) A land use plan:

7 (A) consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective
8 land uses, indicating those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture
9 (using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8),
10 residence, commerce, industry, public, and semi-public uses, and open spaces
11 and other areas reserved for flood plain, wetland protection, the maintenance of
12 forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectivity areas, or other
13 conservation purposes;

14 (B) setting forth the present and prospective location, amount,
15 intensity, and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or
16 sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of
17 necessary community facilities and service; and

18 (C) identifying those areas, if any, proposed for designation under
19 chapter 76A of this title, together with, for each area proposed for designation,
20 an explanation of how the designation would further the plan's goals and the

1 goals of section 4302 of this title, and how the area meets the requirements for
2 the type of designation to be sought.

3 * * *

4 (5) A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable
5 natural areas; of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectivity areas;
6 and of scenic and historic features and resources.

7 * * *

8 Sec. 5. STUDY AND REPORT; LAND USE REGULATION; FOREST
9 INTEGRITY

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

15 (b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following seven
16 members:

17 (1) A current member of the House of Representatives appointed by the
18 Speaker of the House;

19 (2) A current member of the Senate appointed by the Committee on
20 Committees;

1 **(3) A current officer of a municipality, appointed by the Vermont**
2 **League of Cities and Towns (VLCT);**

3 (4) A representative of the Vermont Association of Planning and
4 Development Agencies, appointed by the Association;

5 (5) The Commissioner of Housing and Community Development or
6 designee;

7 (6) The Chair of the Natural Resources Board or designee; and

8 **(7) A representative of the Vermont Natural Resources Council**
9 **(VNRC), who shall transmit the views of VNRC and shall regularly**
10 **consult with and transmit to the Committee the views of the Vermont**
11 **Forest Roundtable.**

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

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

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

21 **(3) evaluation of the impact of those options on land use; and**

1 (4) a recommendation on whether to make such revisions and the reason
2 for the recommendation and, if the recommendation is affirmative, the
3 revisions that the Committee suggests be made.

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

11 (e) Report. On or before February 15, 2017, the Committee shall submit its
12 written recommendation and any proposed legislation to the House Committee
13 on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources and the House and Senate Committees
14 on Natural Resources and Energy.

15 (f) Meetings.

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

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

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

21 (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on March 15, 2017.

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 DATE

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

12

13

14 (Committee vote: _____)

15

16

17

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE