

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 (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.

12 **(37) “Recreational trail” means a corridor that has not been**
13 **improved with pavement, stone, gravel, or other surface material that**
14 **does not decompose, and that is used for hiking, walking, bicycling,**
15 **cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback**
16 **riding, and other similar recreational activity.**

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

18 § 4348a. ELEMENTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN

19 (a) A regional plan shall be consistent with the goals established in section
20 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~~ **indicate** 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** 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~~ **indicate** 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~~ **indicate** 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 set~~ 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 indicate~~ 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) indicate those areas that are important as forest blocks and**
12 **habitat connectors and plan for land development in those areas to**
13 **minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and**
14 **ecological function of forests. A plan may include specific policies to**
15 **encourage the active management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water**
16 **quality, timber production, recreation, or other values or functions**
17 **identified by the regional 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 indicate~~ 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 set~~ 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; ~~and~~

7 (C) ~~identifying identify~~ 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; and

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

1 recommendation is affirmative, the revisions that the Committee suggests
2 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 **January 15, 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 **August 1, 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.

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

