

No. R-418. House concurrent resolution commending the agriculture community's contributions in support of the objectives of Earth Day.

(H.C.R.344)

Offered by: Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

Whereas, in their daily lives, the State's farmers make every effort to protect the environment whether they are working the soil, harvesting crops, tending to farm animals, or engaged in dairy operations, and

Whereas, 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 64 (Act 64) was adopted to "manage and regulate the waters of the State so that water quality is improved and not degraded," and

Whereas, from an agricultural perspective, a key element of Act 64 was Sec. 4 that added 6 V.S.A. § 4810a, revising the required agricultural practices (RAP) that Vermont farmers must follow, and

Whereas, these practices include strict requirements setting forth the method for stacking or piling manure; storing fertilizer or other nutrients; and requiring the construction and management of barnyards, animal holding areas, and waste management systems in a manner to prevent runoff, all intended to improve water quality, and

Whereas, in 2017, in part in response to Act 64, the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets' Water Quality Division stepped up its activities, performing 392 inspection visits, conducting 93 educational events related to the revised RAPs, increasing its enforcement by 145 percent, and hiring five new staff members, and

Whereas, the University of Vermont Extension's Agronomy and Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) has also assisted the State's farmers, and

Whereas, in 2015–2016, 195 farms in the Lake Champlain Watershed worked with ACAP, and as a result 46,235 acres of farmland were placed into nutrient management planning; 5,297 acres were cultivated with conservation tillage or no-till planting; and 4,036 acres were subject to cover cropping, and

Whereas, important practices that decrease agriculture's impact on water quality include: keeping the soil covered, minimizing soil disturbance, introducing plant diversity, using living roots as often as possible, and improving livestock integration, and

Whereas, these steps on the part of the agricultural community result in carbon sequestration, meaning a reduction in the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly commends the agriculture community's contributions in support of the objectives of Earth Day, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets.