

S.276

An act relating to rural economic development.

The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Rural Economic Development Initiative * * *

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 325m is amended to read:

§ 325m. RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

(a) Definitions. As used in this subchapter:

(1) ~~“Industrial park” means an area of land permitted as an industrial park under chapter 151 of this title or under 24 V.S.A. chapter 117, or under both.~~

~~(2)~~ “Rural area” means a county of the State designated as “rural” or “mostly rural” by the U.S. Census Bureau in its most recent decennial census.

~~(3)~~(2) “Small town” means a town in the State with a population of less than 5,000 at the date of the most recent U.S. Census Bureau decennial census.

(b) Establishment. There is created ~~within the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board~~ a the Rural Economic Development Initiative ~~to promote and facilitate~~ to be administered by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for the purpose of promoting and facilitating community economic development in the small towns and rural areas of the State. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall collaborate with municipalities, businesses, ~~industrial parks~~, regional development corporations, regional

planning commissions, and other appropriate entities to access funding and other assistance available to small towns and businesses in rural areas of the State when existing State resources or staffing assistance is not available.

(c) Services; access to funding.

(4) The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall provide the following services to small towns and businesses in rural areas:

~~(A)(1)~~ identification of grant or other funding opportunities ~~available to small towns, businesses in rural areas, and industrial parks in small towns and rural areas~~ that facilitate business development, ~~siting of businesses,~~ workforce development, ~~broadband deployment,~~ infrastructure development, or other economic development opportunities;

~~(B)(2)~~ technical assistance ~~to small towns, businesses in rural areas, and industrial parks in small towns and rural areas~~ in writing grants, accessing ~~and completing the application process for identified grants or~~ other funding opportunities, ~~including writing applications for grants or other funding,~~ coordination with providers of grants or other funding, strategic planning for the implementation or timing of activities funded by grants or other funding, and compliance with the requirements of grant awards or awards of other funding.

~~(2)(d)~~ Priority. In providing services under this ~~subsection~~ section, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall give first priority to projects that

have received necessary State or municipal approval and that are ready for construction or implementation.

~~(d)(e) Services; business development~~ Priority projects. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall ~~provide small towns and rural areas with services to facilitate business development in these areas. These services shall include:~~

~~(1) Identifying businesses or business types suitable for a small town, rural areas, industrial parks in a small town or rural area, or coworker spaces or generator spaces in rural areas. In identifying businesses or business types, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall seek to~~ assist the following priority types of projects:

~~(A) identify businesses or business types in the following priority areas:~~

~~(i)(1)~~ (1) milk plants, milk handlers, or dairy products, as those terms are defined in 6 V.S.A. § 2672;

~~(ii)(2) the outdoor recreation and equipment or recreation industry enterprises;~~

~~(iii)(3) the value-added food and forest products industry enterprises;~~

~~(iv)(4) the value-added food industry farm operations, including phosphorus removal technology for farm operations;~~

~~(v)~~(5) phosphorus removal technology coworking or business generator and accelerator spaces; and

~~(vi)~~(6) commercial composting facilities; and

(7) restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings in community centers.

~~(B) explore with a small town or rural area whether underused or closed school buildings are appropriate sites for coworker or generator spaces.~~

~~(2) Recommending available grants, tax credits, or other incentives that a small town or rural area can use to attract businesses.~~

~~(3)~~(f) Coordination. In providing services under this subsection section, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall coordinate with the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development ~~in order to avoid duplication by the Rural Economic Development Initiative of business recruitment and workforce development services provided by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development,~~ regional development corporations, and regional planning commissions.

~~(e)~~(g) Report. Beginning on January ~~15, 2018~~ 31, 2019, and annually thereafter, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall submit to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on Commerce and Economic Development a report regarding the activities

and progress of the Initiative as part of the report of the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program. The report shall ~~include:~~

- ~~(1) a summary of the Initiative's activities in the preceding calendar year;~~
- ~~(2) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the services provided by the Initiative to small towns, rural areas, and industrial parks;~~
- ~~(3) a summary of the Initiative's progress in attracting priority businesses to small towns and rural areas;~~
- ~~(4) an accounting of the grants or other funding that the Initiative facilitated or provided assistance with;~~
- ~~(5) an accounting of the funds acquired by the Rural Economic Development Initiative for administration of grants or other funding mechanisms and whether these funds are sufficient to offset the cost of the Rural Economic Development Initiative; and~~
- ~~(6) recommended changes to the program, including proposed legislative amendments to further economic development in small towns and rural areas in the State~~ summarize the Initiative's activities in the preceding year; evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided by the Initiative; provide an accounting of the grants or other funding that the Initiative facilitated or helped secure; and recommend any changes to the program to further economic development in small towns and rural areas of the State.

* * * Outdoor Recreation-Friendly Community Program * * *

Sec. 2. OUTDOOR RECREATION-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PROGRAM

(a) Establishment. Upon receipt of funding, the Outdoor Recreation-Friendly Community Program (Program) is created to provide incentives for communities to leverage outdoor recreation assets to foster economic growth within a town, village, city, or region of the State.

(b) Administration. The Program shall be administered by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in association with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

(c) Selection. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation in consultation with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative steering committee shall select communities for the Program using, at minimum, the following factors:

(1) community economic need;

(2) identification of outdoor recreation as a priority in a town plan or other pertinent planning document;

(3) community commitment to an outdoor recreation vision; demonstrated support from community officials, the public, local business, and local and statewide outdoor recreation nonprofit organizations; and commitment to adhere to accepted standards and recreation ethos;

(4) a community with a good foundation of outdoor recreation assets already in place with strong potential for growth on both private and public lands;

(5) a community with good opportunities for connecting assets within the community with assets of other nearby communities;

(6) a community with an existing solid network of local supporting businesses; and

(7) community commitment to track and measure outcomes to demonstrate economic and social success.

(d) Incentives. Communities accepted into the Program shall be offered, at minimum, the following incentives:

(1) preferential consideration to become part of the Vermont Trail System;

(2) preferential consideration when applying for grant assistance through the Recreational Trails Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program;

(3) access to other economic development assistance if available and appropriate; and

(4) recognition as part of a network of Outdoor Recreation-Friendly Communities connected through a common branding and adherence to high standards of quality and service.

(e) Pilot project and appropriation. Upon receipt of funding to create the Outdoor Recreation Friendly Community Program, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, in association with the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, shall approve pilot communities to serve as prototypes for the Program. The funding may be used for the following purposes:

(1) communitywide outdoor recreation planning, including assessment, mapping, and identifying possibilities and priorities;

(2) services of consultants and other technical assistance providers;

(3) public facing mapping and other informational materials;

(4) securing access;

(5) implementation of public access improvements;

(6) stewardship;

(7) marketing; and

(8) program administration.

(f) Reports. On or before January 15, 2019, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall submit a report to the General Assembly detailing the progress made with the pilot project authorized under subsection (e) of this section. On or before January 15, 2020, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall submit a report to the General Assembly detailing any measurable results of economic activity growth.

* * * Evaluation; Act 250; Recreational Trails * * *

Sec. 3. ACT 250 JURISDICTION; RECREATIONAL TRAILS;

EVALUATION

(a) In addition to the currently assigned tasks under 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 47 (Act 47), the Commission on Act 250: the Next 50 Years (the Commission) established under that act shall evaluate the strengths and challenges associated with regulation of recreational trails under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 (Act 250) and alternative structures for the planning, review, and construction of future trail networks and the extension of existing trail networks. The Commission shall include recommendations on this issue in its report to the General Assembly due on or before December 15, 2018 under Act 47.

(b) To provide information and recommendations to the Commission on the issue identified in subsection (a) of this section, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or designee and the Chair of the Natural Resources Board or designee shall form a recreational trails working group that shall include officers and employees of the Agency of Natural Resources designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources. The working group shall offer an opportunity for submission of information and recommendations from affected parties, including recreational trail and environmental organizations. The working group shall submit a report to the Commission on or before October 1, 2018.

(1) With respect to recreational trails, the working group's report shall examine multiple potential planning and regulatory structures, including possible revisions to Act 250; the creation of a trail oversight program within the Agency of Natural Resources that includes best development practices and an agency permitting process, including consideration of a general permit; and other options that the working group may identify.

(2) In considering alternative structures, the working group shall evaluate how best to foster the development of an interconnected recreational trail network in Vermont while safeguarding the State's natural resources, including water quality, wildlife habitat and populations, and sensitive natural communities and areas, and minimizing potential impacts on neighboring properties and host municipalities.

(3) The Commission shall consider the report of the working group during its deliberation and report preparation phase set forth in Act 47, Sec. 2(d)(3), and shall attach a copy of the working group's report to its own report to the General Assembly.

Sec. 4. [Deleted.]

* * * Farm and Forest Viability * * *

Sec. 5. 6 V.S.A. § 4710 is amended to read:

§ 4710. VERMONT FARM AND FOREST VIABILITY ~~ENHANCEMENT~~
PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Farm and Forest Viability ~~Enhancement~~ Program is a voluntary program established in the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide assistance to Vermont ~~farmers~~ farm, food, and forest-sector businesses to enhance the financial success and long-term viability of Vermont ~~agriculture~~ agricultural and forest sectors. In administering the Program, the Secretary shall:

(1) Collaborate with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board; to administer the program with other State and federal agencies, private entities, and service groups to develop, coordinate, and provide technical and financial assistance to Vermont ~~farmers~~ farm, food, and forest-sector businesses.

(2) ~~Include teams of~~ Secure and coordinate experts to assist ~~farmers~~ farm, food, and forest-sector business owners in areas such as ~~assessing farm resources and potential~~ business and financial planning, succession planning, diversifying, adopting new technologies, improving product quality, developing value-added products, and lowering costs of production ~~for~~ Vermont's agricultural sector. ~~The teams.~~ Providers may include ~~farm~~ business management specialists, University of Vermont Extension

professionals, ~~veterinarians~~, and other experts to deliver the ~~informational and technological~~ educational and consulting services.

(3) Encourage agricultural or forest-sector economic development through investing in improvements to essential infrastructure and the promotion of ~~farm~~ businesses in ~~Vermont~~ these sectors.

(4) Enter into agreements with private organizations or individuals or with any agency or instrumentality of the United States or of this State and employ technical experts to carry out the purposes of this section.

(b) The ~~farm viability enhancement program~~ Farm and Forest Viability Program shall be assisted by an advisory board consisting of ~~ten~~ 12 members who shall include:

(1) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets. The Secretary shall serve as Chair of the Board.

(2) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or designee.

(3) The Commissioner of Economic Development or designee.

~~(3)~~(4) The Manager of the Vermont Economic Development Authority or designee.

~~(4)~~(5) The Director of University of Vermont Extension or designee.

~~(5)~~(6) The Executive Director of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board or designee.

~~(6)~~(7) Four Vermont ~~farmers~~ agricultural or forest-sector business owners appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets in

consultation with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation. ~~The four farmers shall serve two-year terms, except for the first year, two farmers chosen by the Chair shall serve one-year terms~~ At least two of the four business owners shall be agricultural-sector business owners.

~~(7)(8) A person who has~~ Two people who have expertise in agricultural or forest-sector economics, financing, or business ~~planning~~ development appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets in consultation with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

(c) Members of the Advisory Board established in subsection (b) of this section other than ex officio members shall serve up to three two-year terms and shall be entitled to per diem expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for each day spent in the performance of their duties, and each such member shall be reimbursed ~~from the fund created by this section~~ for his or her reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out his or her duties under this section.

(d) In consultation with the Advisory Board, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board shall establish ~~grant criteria~~, performance goals, performance measures that demonstrate Program results, and other criteria to implement the Program. The ~~grant~~ criteria shall include at least the following requirements:

~~(1) the application is developed in consultation with the producers who use or would use the Program and will address their needs;~~

~~(2) the use of the funds available to the Program is likely to succeed in improving the economic viability of the farm and the farm's producers business;~~

~~(3)(2) the producers are committed enrollees demonstrate commitment to participating in the Program; and~~

~~(4)(3) an evaluation shall be completed by enrolled farmers in conjunction with the teams the enrollees.~~

~~(e)(1) The Farm Viability Enhancement Program Special Fund is established in the State Treasury and shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets in accordance with the provisions of 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, except that interest earned on the fund shall be retained in the Fund. The Fund shall be used only for the purpose of implementing and effectuating the Farm Viability Enhancement Program established by this section. There shall be deposited in such Fund any monies appropriated by the General Assembly to, or received by, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets from any other source, public or private. The Fund shall be used only for the purposes of:~~

~~(A) providing funds for the Farm Viability Enhancement Program as established in this section;~~

~~(B) providing funds to enrolled farmers;~~

~~(C) providing funds to service providers for administrative expenses of the program; and~~

~~(D) leveraging other competitive public and private funds, grants, and contributions for the Farm Viability Enhancement Program.~~

(2) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, separately or cooperatively, may solicit federal funds, grants, and private contributions for the Farm and Forest Viability ~~Enhancement~~ Program, but any Vermont Housing and Conservation Board funds used for the Farm and Forest Viability ~~Enhancement~~ Program shall be administered in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 312.

~~(f)(4)~~ In collaboration with ~~the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board~~, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board shall report in writing to the Senate ~~Committee~~ Committees on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House ~~Committee~~ Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on Commerce and Economic Development on or before January 31 of each year with a report on the activities and performance of the Farm and Forest Viability ~~Enhancement~~ Program. At a minimum, the report shall include an evaluation of the Program utilizing the performance goals and performance measures established in consultation with the Advisory Board under subsection (d) of this section. ~~The~~

~~report should assess potential demand for the Program over the succeeding three years.~~

~~(2) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board shall describe in their annual budget submissions plans to develop adequate State, federal, and private funds to carry out this initiative.~~

~~(g)(1) The Agricultural Economic Development Special Account is established as a dedicated sub-account of the Vermont Farm Viability Enhancement Program Special Fund. There shall be deposited in such account any monies:~~

~~(A) appropriated by the General Assembly to the account; and~~

~~(B) received by the State or the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets from any source, public or private, for use for any of the purposes for which the account was established.~~

~~(2) The Fund shall only be used for the purposes of:~~

~~(A) encouraging private investment in the economic initiative; and~~

~~(B) providing incentives for technology businesses, determined by the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide critical technological solutions for the growth of Vermont's agricultural economy.~~

~~(3) Assistance from the Agricultural Economic Development Special Account shall be available in order to produce agricultural energy, harvest biomass, convert biomass into energy, or enable installation and usage of wind,~~

~~solar, or other technology that relies on a resource that is being consumed at a harvest rate at or below its natural regeneration rate pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 8002(2), including:~~

~~(A) business and technical assistance for research and planning to aid a farmer or a group of farmers in developing business enterprises;~~

~~(B) cost effective implementation assistance to leverage other sources of capital to assist a farmer or group of farmers in purchasing equipment, technology, or other assistance; and~~

~~(C) business, technical, and implementation assistance to persons that are not farmers for the development and implementation of technology or development of facilities designed to produce agricultural energy, harvest biomass, or convert biomass into energy, provided that the person is working in consultation with a Vermont farm, is creating an enterprise that utilizes Vermont resources, and provides Vermont a significant return on investment and meets any financial and technical criteria established by the Secretary by procedure. [Repealed.]~~

* * * Nutrient Management Plans; Technical Service Providers * * *

Sec. 5a. 6 V.S.A. § 4989 is added to read:

§ 4989. CERTIFICATION OF NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

(a) On or before July 1, 2019, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall adopt by rule a process by which a nutrient management

technical service provider shall be certified to operate within the State. The certification process shall require a nutrient management technical service provider to complete eight hours of training over each five-year period regarding:

- (1) calculating manure and agricultural waste generation;
- (2) taking soil and manure samples;
- (3) identifying and creating maps of all natural resource features;
- (4) use of erosion calculation tools;
- (5) reconciling plans using records;
- (6) use of nutrient index tools; and
- (7) requirements within the Required Agricultural Practices, Medium

Farm Operation rules and general permit, and Large Farm Operation rules.

(b) Beginning on July 1, 2019, a nutrient management technical service provider shall not create a nutrient management plan for a farm unless certified by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

* * * Forest Products Industry; Act 250 * * *

Sec. 6. 10 V.S.A. § 6084 is amended to read:

§ 6084. NOTICE OF APPLICATION; HEARINGS; COMMENCEMENT OF
REVIEW

* * *

(g) When an application concerns the construction of improvements for one of the following, the application shall be processed as a minor application in accordance with subsections (b) through (e) of this section:

(1) a sawmill that produces three and one-half million board feet or less annually; or

(2) an operation that involves the primary processing of forest products of commercial value and that annually produces:

(A) 3,500 cords or less of firewood or cordwood; or

(B) 10,000 tons or less of bole wood, whole tree chips, or wood pellets.

Sec. 7. COMMISSION ON ACT 250; REVIEW OF FOREST PRODUCTS
PROCESSING

The Commission on Act 250: the Next 50 Years (Commission) established under 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 47 (Act 47) shall review whether permit conditions in permits issued under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 (Act 250) to forest processing operations negatively impact the ability of a forest processing operation to operate in an economically sustainable manner, including whether Act 250 permit conditions limit the ability of a forest processing operation to alter production or processing in order to respond to market conditions. If the Commission determines that Act 250 permit conditions have a significant negative economic impact on forestry processing operations, the Commission shall recommend alternatives for mitigating those negative economic impacts.

The Commission shall include its findings and recommendation on this issue, if any, in the report due to the General Assembly on December 15, 2018 under Act 47.

* * * Environmental Permitting Fees * * *

Sec. 8. 3 V.S.A. § 2822(j) is amended to read:

(j) In accordance with subsection (i) of this section, the following fees are established for permits, licenses, certifications, approvals, registrations, orders, and other actions taken by the Agency of Natural Resources.

* * *

(26) For individual conditional use determinations, for individual wetland permits, for general conditional use determinations issued under 10 V.S.A. § 1272, or for wetland authorizations issued under a general permit, an administrative processing fee assessed under subdivision (2) of this subsection ~~(j)~~ and an application fee of:

(A) \$0.75 per square foot of proposed impact to Class I or II wetlands.

(B) \$0.25 per square foot of proposed impact to Class I or II wetland buffers.

(C) Maximum fee, for the conversion of Class II wetlands or wetland buffers to cropland use or for installation of a pipeline in a wetland for the transport of manure for the purpose of farming, as that term is defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(22), when the pipeline will serve or implement a water

quality or conservation practice, \$200.00 per application. As used in this subdivision, “cropland” means land that is used for the production of agricultural crops, including row crops, fibrous plants, pasture, fruit-bearing bushes, trees, or vines, and the production of Christmas trees.

Sec. 8a. 3 V.S.A. § 2822(j) is amended to read:

(j) In accordance with subsection (i) of this section, the following fees are established for permits, licenses, certifications, approvals, registrations, orders, and other actions taken by the Agency of Natural Resources.

* * *

(26) For individual conditional use determinations, for individual wetland permits, for general conditional use determinations issued under 10 V.S.A. § 1272, or for wetland authorizations issued under a general permit, an administrative processing fee assessed under subdivision (2) of this subsection ~~(j)~~ and an application fee of:

(A) \$0.75 per square foot of proposed impact to Class I or II wetlands.

(B) \$0.25 per square foot of proposed impact to Class I or II wetland buffers.

(C) Maximum fee, for the conversion of Class II wetlands or wetland buffers to cropland use ~~or for installation of a pipeline in a wetland for the transport of manure for the purpose of farming, as that term is defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(22), when the pipeline will serve or implement a water~~

~~quality or conservation practice~~, \$200.00 per application. As used in this subdivision, “cropland” means land that is used for the production of agricultural crops, including row crops, fibrous plants, pasture, fruit-bearing bushes, trees, or vines, and the production of Christmas trees.

* * *

Sec. 8b. ANR REPPORT ON WETLANDS PERMIT FEES

On or before January 15, 2019, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall submit to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Ways and Means, and on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Finance, and on Natural Resources and Energy a report on whether and how the State should provide lower fees for activity or disturbance in a wetland or wetland buffer when the activity or disturbance provides a water quality benefit or implements a conservation practice.

* * *

* * * Electric Utility Demand Charges; Rural Towns * * *

Sec. 9. DEMAND CHARGES; REPORT

(a) On or before January 31, 2019, the Commissioner of Public Service (Commissioner), in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, shall submit a written report on electric utility demand charges in Vermont and their effect on the ability of industrial enterprises to locate in rural towns of the State.

(b) The Commissioner shall submit the report to the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry, on Commerce and Community Development, and on Energy and Technology and the Senate Committees on Agriculture, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and on Finance.

(c) The report under this section shall include:

(1) a narrative summary of the terms, conditions, and rates for each demand charge tariff of each Vermont electric utility;

(2) a table that shows the rates and applicability of each such tariff, with such other information as the Commissioner may consider relevant, organized by electric utility;

(3) an analysis of the alternatives to these tariffs that will improve the ability of industrial enterprises to locate in rural towns of the State, including the use of energy efficiency, self-generation, and other measures to reduce the demand of such enterprises on the interconnecting electric utility;

(4) the Commissioner's recommendations on changes to demand charge tariffs and other methods to reduce demand that would encourage locating industrial enterprises in rural towns of the State or that would reduce or remove disincentives posed by demand charge tariffs to such locations.

(d) In this section, "rural town" shall have the same meaning as in 24 V.S.A. § 4303.

* * * Purchase and Use Tax; Forestry Equipment * * *

Sec. 10. 32 V.S.A. § 8911 is amended to read:

§ 8911. EXCEPTIONS

The tax imposed by this chapter shall not apply to:

(1) Motor vehicles owned or registered, or motor vehicles rented, by any state or province or any political subdivision thereof.

* * *

(23) The following motor vehicles used for timber cutting, timber removal, and processing of timber or other solid wood forest products intended to be sold ultimately at retail: skidders with grapple and cable, feller bunchers, cut-to-length processors, forwarders, delimiters, loader slashers, log loaders, whole-tree chippers, stationary screening systems, and firewood processors, elevators, and screens.

Sec. 11. [Deleted.]

Sec. 12. [Deleted.]

Sec. 13. [Deleted.]

Sec. 14. [Deleted.]

Sec. 15. [Deleted.]

Sec. 16. [Deleted.]

* * *

* * * Produce Inspection * * *

Sec. 17. 6 V.S.A. § 21(b) is amended to read:

(b) The Secretary shall have the authority to:

(1) respond to and remediate incidences of mass animal death, agricultural structure fires, or other emergencies on a farm in order to prevent a public health hazard;

(2) condemn, confiscate, or establish restrictions on the use, sale, or distribution of adulterated raw agricultural commodities or animal feed; and

(3) cooperate with the Department of Health and other State and federal agencies regarding:

(A) the prevention or remediation of the adulteration of raw agricultural commodities, food, or animal feed on farms; and

(B) application of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, ~~21 U.S.C. §§ 2201-2252~~ Pub. L. No. 111-353, to farms, farm products, or value-added products produced in the State.

Sec. 18. 6 V.S.A. § 852 is amended to read:

§ 852. ~~AUTHORITY; ENFORCEMENT~~

(a) The Secretary may enforce in the State the requirements of:

(1) the rules adopted under the ~~federal~~ U.S. Food and Drug Administration Food Safety Modernization Act, ~~Public Law No. 111-353~~, for standards for growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce for human

~~consumption~~ Standards for Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption, 21 C.F.R. part 112; and

(2) the rules adopted under this chapter.

(b) The Agency may collaborate with the ~~Vermont~~ Department of Health regarding application of the ~~federal Food Safety Modernization Act and the rules adopted thereunder~~ U.S. Food and Drug Administration Food Safety Modernization Act, Standards for Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption, 21 C.F.R. part 112, and application of the rules adopted under this chapter.

(c) The Secretary shall carry out the provisions of this chapter using:

(1) monies appropriated to the Agency by the federal government for the purpose of administering the federal Food Safety Modernization Act and the rules adopted thereunder;

(2) monies appropriated to the Agency by the State for the purpose of administering this chapter; and

(3) other gifts, bequests, and donations by private entities for the purposes of administering this chapter.

Sec. 19. 6 V.S.A. § 853 is amended to read:

§ 853. FARM INSPECTIONS

(a)(1) The Secretary may inspect a produce farm during reasonable hours for the purposes of ensuring compliance with:

(A) the federal standards for growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce for human consumption, as adopted under 21 C.F.R. part 112; or

(B) the rules adopted under this chapter.

(2) This section shall not limit the Secretary's authority to respond to an emergency in order to prevent a public health hazard under section 21 of this title.

~~(b) After inspection, the Secretary may issue an inspection certificate that shall include the date and place of inspection along with any other pertinent facts that the Secretary may require.~~

~~(c)~~ The Secretary may coordinate with other State agencies and organizations to carry out inspections at or near the same time on a given produce farm.

Sec. 20. 6 V.S.A. §§ 856 and 857 are added to read:

§ 856. ENFORCEMENT; CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

When the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets determines that a person is violating the rules listed in section 852 of this title, the Secretary may issue a written warning that shall be served in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested. A warning issued under this section shall include:

(1) a description of the alleged violation;

(2) identification of this section;

(3) identification of the applicable rule violated; and

(4) the required corrective action that the person shall take to correct the violation.

§ 857. ENFORCEMENT; ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

(a) Notwithstanding the requirements of section 856 of this title, the Secretary at any time may pursue one or more of the following:

(1) issue a cease and desist order in accordance to a person the Secretary believes to be in violation of the rules listed in section 852 of this title;

(2) issue a verbal order or written administrative order to protect public health, including orders for the stop sale, recall, embargo, destruction, quarantine, and release of produce, when:

(A) the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires immediate State action; or

(B) an alleged violation, activity, or farm practice presents an immediate threat to the public health or welfare;

(3) order mandatory corrective actions;

(4) take any action authorized under chapter 1 of this title;

(5) seek administrative or civil penalties in accordance with the requirements of section 15, 16, or 17 of this title.

(b) When the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets issues a cease and desist order, written administrative order, or required corrective action under subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary shall provide the person subject to the order or corrective action with a statement that the order or

corrective action is effective upon receipt and the person has 15 days from the date the order or corrective action was issued to request a hearing.

(c) If the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets issues a verbal order under this section, the Secretary shall issue written notice to the person subject to the order within five days of the issuance of the verbal order. The written notice shall include a statement that the person has 15 days from the date the written notice was received to request a hearing.

(d) If a person who receives a cease and desist order, a verbal order, an administrative order, or a mandatory corrective action under this section does not request in writing a hearing within 15 days of receipt of the order or within 15 days of written notice for a verbal order, the person's right to a hearing is waived. Upon receipt of a written request for a hearing, the Secretary promptly shall set a date and time for a hearing. A request for a hearing on a cease and desist order, verbal order, or administrative order issued under this section shall not stay the order.

(e) A person aggrieved by a final action or decision of the Secretary under this section may appeal de novo to the Civil Division of the Superior Court within 30 days of the final decision of the Secretary.

* * * Livestock and Poultry Transport for Slaughter * * *

Sec. 21. 6 V.S.A. § 1461a(c) is amended to read:

(c) Livestock and poultry that are transported to a commercial slaughter facility within the State shall not be removed from the facility without the

facility's ~~owner~~ owner's first obtaining written permission from the State Veterinarian. For purposes of this section, arrival of the conveyance onto facility property and the offloading of livestock or poultry constitutes transport to a slaughter facility, regardless of whether the animals have been ~~offloaded~~ ~~or~~ presented for antemortem inspection. The State Veterinarian may require inspection and testing prior to issuing consent for removal.

* * * Industrial Park Designation * * *

Sec. 22. AGENCY OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY

DEVELOPMENT; INDUSTRIAL PARK DESIGNATION

(a) On or before December 15, 2018, the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, after consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Chair of the Natural Resources Board, Regional Development Corporations, Regional Planning Commissions, the Vermont Natural Resources Council, and the Commission on Act 250, shall submit to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on Agriculture and Forestry, and on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife recommendations for establishing an economic development program under which defined parcels in rural areas of the State are designated as industrial parks for the purposes of providing regulatory and permitting incentives to businesses sited within the industrial park. The report shall include:

(1) recommended criteria for establishing an industrial park in a rural area;

(2) eligibility criteria, if any, for a business to site within a designated industrial park in a rural area;

(3) recommended incentives for businesses sited within a designated industrial park in a rural area, including permitting incentives, permit fee reductions, reduced electric rates, net metering incentives, and other regulatory incentives;

(4) recommended technical or financial assistance that a business would be eligible to receive for locating within a designated industrial park in a rural area; and

(5) draft legislation necessary to implement any recommendation.

(b) The recommendations in the report shall be designed in a manner so that any recommended process or criteria maintains consistency with the land use goals of Vermont in 24 V.S.A. § 4302 and the relevant regional plan adopted under 24 V.S.A. § 4348.

(c) As used in this section, “rural area” means a county of the State designated as “rural” or “mostly rural” by the U.S. Census Bureau in its most recent decennial census.

Sec. 23. [Deleted.]

* * *

* * * Use Value Appraisal * * *

Sec. 24. 32 V.S.A. § 3755 is amended to read:

§ 3755. ELIGIBILITY FOR USE VALUE APPRAISALS

* * *

(b) Managed forestland shall be eligible for use value appraisal under this subchapter only if:

(1) The land is subject to a forest management plan, or subject to a conservation management plan in the case of lands certified under 10 V.S.A.

§ 6306(b), ~~which~~ that is filed in the manner and form required by the

Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and that:

(A) ~~is~~ Is signed by the owner of the parcel; ~~;~~

(B) ~~complies~~ Complies with subdivision 3752(9) of this title; ~~;~~

(C) ~~is filed with and~~ Is approved by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation; ~~and.~~

(D) ~~provides~~ Provides for continued conservation management or forest crop production on the parcel for 10 years. An initial forest management plan or conservation management plan must be filed with the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation ~~no later than~~ on or before October 1 and shall be effective for a 10-year period beginning the following April 1. Prior to expiration of a 10-year plan and ~~no later than~~ on or before April 1 of the year in which the plan expires, the owner shall file a new conservation or forest management plan for the next succeeding 10 years to remain in the program.

(E) The Department may approve a forest management plan that provides for the maintenance and enhancement of the tract's wildlife habitat where clearly consistent with timber production and with minimum acceptable standards for forest management as established by the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

(F) The Department, upon giving due consideration to resource inventories submitted by applicants, may approve a conservation management plan, consistent with conservation management standards, so as to include appropriate provisions designed to preserve: areas with special ecological values; fragile areas; rare or endangered species; significant habitat for wildlife; significant wetlands; outstanding resource waters; rare and irreplaceable natural areas; areas with significant historical value; public water supply protection areas; areas that provide public access to public waters; and open or natural areas located near population centers or historically frequented by the public. In approving a plan, the Department shall give due consideration to: the need for restricted public access where required to protect the fragile nature of the resource; public accessibility where restricted access is not required; facilitation of appropriate, traditional public usage; and opportunities for traditional or expanded use for educational purposes and for research.

(2) A management report of whatever activity has occurred, signed by the owner, has been filed with the Department of ~~Forests, Parks and Recreation~~

by Taxes, Director of Property Valuation and Review on or before February 1 of the year following the year when the management activity occurred.

(3) There has not been filed with the Director an adverse inspection report by the Department stating that the management of the tract is contrary to the forest or conservation management plan, or contrary to the minimum acceptable standards for forest or conservation management. The management activity report shall be on a form prescribed by the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation in consultation with the Commissioner of Taxes and shall ~~include a detachable section~~ be signed by all the owners that and shall contain the federal tax identification numbers of all the owners. ~~The section containing federal tax identification numbers shall not be made available to the general public, but shall be forwarded to the Commissioner of Taxes within 30 days after receipt and used for tax administration purposes.~~ All information contained within the management activity report shall be forwarded to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, except for any tax identification number included in the report. If any owner ~~shall satisfy~~ satisfies the Department that he or she was prevented by accident, mistake, or misfortune from filing an initial or revised management plan ~~which that~~ that is required to be filed on or before October 1, or a management plan update ~~which that~~ that is required to be filed on or before April 1 of the year in which the plan expires, or a management activity report ~~which that~~ that is required to be filed on or before February 1 of the year following the year when the management activity

occurred, the ~~Department~~ owner may ~~receive~~ submit that management plan or management activity report at a later date; provided, however, no initial or revised management plan shall be received later than December 31, and no management plan update shall be received later than one year after April 1 of the year the plan expires, and no management activity report shall be received later than March 1.

(c) The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall periodically review the management plans and each year review the management activity reports that have been filed.

(1) At intervals not to exceed 10 years, that Department shall inspect each parcel of managed forestland qualified for use value appraisal to verify that the terms of the management plan have been carried out in a timely fashion.

(2) The Department shall have the ability to enter parcels of managed forestland for the purpose of inspections. The Department may bring any other staff from the Agency of Natural Resources that have the expertise to evaluate compliance with this chapter or staff that may be required to ensure the safety of the Department while conducting the inspections.

(3) If that Department finds that the management of the tract is contrary to the conservation or forest management plan, or contrary to the minimum acceptable standards for conservation or forest management, it shall file with

the owner, the assessing officials, and the Director an adverse inspection report within 30 days ~~of~~ after the conclusion of the inspection process.

(d) After managed forestland has been removed from use value appraisal due to an adverse inspection report under ~~subdivision 3756(i)(1)~~ subsection 3756(k) of this title, a new application for use value appraisal shall not be considered for a period of five years, and then the forest management plan shall be approved by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation only if a compliance report has been filed with the new ~~application~~ forest management plan, certifying that appropriate measures have been taken to bring the parcel into compliance with minimum acceptable standards for forest or conservation management.

* * *

* * * Sales and Use Tax; Advanced Wood Boilers * * *

Sec. 25. 32 V.S.A. § 9701 is amended to read:

§ 9701. DEFINITIONS

Unless the context in which they occur requires otherwise, the following terms when used in this chapter mean:

* * *

(54) “Noncollecting vendor” means a vendor that sells tangible personal property or services to purchasers who are not exempt from the sales tax under this chapter, but that does not collect the Vermont sales tax.

(55) “Advanced wood boiler” means a boiler or furnace:

(A) installed as a primary central heating system;

(B) rated as high-efficiency, meaning a higher heating value or gross calorific value of 85 percent or more;

(C) containing at least one week fuel-storage, automated startup and shutdown, and fuel feed; and

(D) meeting other efficiency and air emissions standards established by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Sec. 26. 32 V.S.A. § 9741 is amended to read:

§ 9741. SALES NOT COVERED

Retail sales and use of the following shall be exempt from the tax on retail sales imposed under section 9771 of this title and the use tax imposed under section 9773 of this title.

* * *

(52) Advanced wood boilers, as defined in section 9701 of this title.

Sec. 26a. TRANSFER FROM CEDF TO GENERAL FUND; TAX

EXPENDITURE; ADVANCED WOOD BOILERS

(a) Beginning on July 1, 2018, the Clean Energy Development Fund quarterly shall calculate the foregone sales tax on advanced wood fired boilers resulting from the sales tax exemption under 32 V.S.A. § 9741(52) for advanced wood boilers. Beginning on October 1, 2018, the Clean Energy Development Fund shall notify the Department of Taxes of the amount of sales

tax foregone in the preceding calendar quarter resulting from the sales tax exemption under 32 V.S.A. § 9741(52) for advanced wood boilers.

(b) In fiscal years 2019 and 2020, the Clean Energy Development Fund shall transfer from the Clean Energy Development Fund to the General Fund the amount of the tax expenditure resulting from the sales tax exemption under 32 V.S.A. § 9741(52) on advanced wood boilers up to a maximum of \$200,000.00 for both fiscal years combined. The Department of Taxes shall deposit 64 percent of the monies transferred from the Clean Energy Development Fund into the General Fund under 32 V.S.A. § 435 and 36 percent of the monies in the Education Fund under 16 V.S.A. § 4025.

Sec. 26b. REPEALS

(a) 32 V.S.A. § 9741(52) (sales tax exemption for advanced wood boilers) shall be repealed on July 1, 2021.

(b) Sec. 26a of this act (transfer from CEDF) shall be repealed on July 1, 2021.

Sec. 27. 32 V.S.A. § 9706(II) is added to read:

(II) The statutory purpose of the exemption for advanced wood boilers in subdivision 9741(52) of this title is to promote the forest products industry in Vermont by encouraging the purchase of modern wood heating systems.

Sec. 28. [Deleted.]

Sec. 29. [Deleted.]

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 30. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Secs. 3 (Act 250; trails), 5a (technical service providers), 6 (Act 250 primary processing of forest products), 7 (Act 250; review of forest products processing), 8 (wetland permit fee), 8b (ANR report on wetland permit fees), 17–20 (produce inspection), and 21 (livestock transport) shall take effect on passage.

(b) Sec. 8a (repeal of wetland permit fee for manure pipelines) shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

(c) All other sections shall take effect on July 1, 2018.