

**William Keeton, University of Vermont**

**November 15, 2017**

- *Who you represent*

I was appointed to the advisory board to represent the University of Vermont as a whole. At UVM, I am a tenured (full) professor of forest ecology and forestry in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources. I also serve as a Fellow in the Gund Institute for Environment and direct the UVM Carbon Dynamics Laboratory. I recently completed a 7 year term as Director of the Forestry Program.

- *Your experience with Act 250*

My experience with Act 250 is two-fold. First, as a forestry and environmental science educator, I have delivered curriculum around land-use planning and forest management for almost 20 years. Content on land conservation and planning, including subject matter on Act 250 specifically, is integrated into at least two of my courses (Sustainable Forest Management; and Restoration Ecology). Secondly, in a professional context, I serve on the Board of Trustees for Vermont Land Trust (VLT). Clearly Act 250 is of fundamental importance to VLTs work. As a Trustee I am expected to have a basic understanding of various land-use planning and conservation mechanisms within the state.

- *Information you have or know of, regarding outcomes of Act 250 from 1970 to 2017. Studies and reports that go beyond the anecdotal will be most helpful. We do not expect that the review of the report or study will happen at this meeting, but simply that we can become aware of the information.*

Several key studies and consensus reports have been produced by the Vermont Roundtable on Forest Parcelization and Sprawl, in which I have participated since its conception. The Roundtable, led by VNRC, has made these reports available online. Most relevant, perhaps, are the studies VNRC has done showing increasing parcelization rates, the very low level of Act 250 review (i.e. review is triggered in a very small minority of cases), and the clear connection between the 10/6 lot trigger (or subdivision threshold), It is thus not surprising that the vast majority of subdivisions which are 9/5 lots or fewer and have not triggered Act 250 review, which has greatly limited the ability of Act 250 to reduce incremental rural sprawl and forest fragmentation. These trends, exploiting the Act 250 threshold, tend to spread rural sprawl and scattered housing development across the landscape, fragmenting larger forest blocks and rendering forest management increasingly difficult (or excluded entirely) as mean parcel sizes decrease.

Two other important reports speak to the importance of conserving large, unfragmented forest blocks in particular. These are the Wildlands and Woodlands reports, on which I am a co-author. The first, published in 2010, laid out a clear vision for conserving at least 70% of New England's forests, primarily as working forests. The second, released just this year, updates the analysis with more recent datasets and more directly links forest conservation to agriculture,

food security, and community well-being. These reports are available for download here: <http://www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/>

- *Finally, Phase 3 includes specific deliverables that must be in the report. They are copied below. Please let us know which, if any, of these items you will be able to assist us with in the future.*

It is too early in the process for me to know. I will follow this process and may be able to volunteer assistance in the future as I learn more about the deliverables. Specifically, I will look for opportunities to integrate research findings from investigations conducted at UVM.

- *Other information that you find relevant within the limits of allocated time.*

I would like to provide information on a project I am leading, called the Vermont Forest Carbon Feasibility Study. The study has highlighted the potential to generate significant revenue for conserved and working forests in Vermont through enrollment in forest carbon markets, both compliance and voluntary. But for this potential to be realized, and because forest carbon projects are only financially viable on larger parcels or through aggregation of multiple parcels, conservation of unfragmented forest blocks is essential. Thus, the emphasis on forest blocks in the Act 250 revisions under consideration dovetails the context needed to generate revenue (and incentivize open space conservation) for working forests through forest carbon projects.