



To: House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife

March 22, 2018

Vermont REALTORS® represents approximately 1700 real estate agents who work directly for the citizens and property owners of Vermont. We have a genuine interest in preserving the quality of our real estate inventory and we understand that our environment has a direct impact on value. We are supportive of most of the clean water efforts that are in the legislative processes.

“Citizens Right to Action”

We are generally supportive of S.260 but we oppose the inclusion of the “Citizens Right to Action” also known as “Citizen Suits” in the bill. This would be an expensive duplication of efforts as there is already a mechanism that requires the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to respond to complaints and the federal Clean Water Act already includes citizen suits. We also believe “citizen suits” at the state level are ripe for abuse. See the US Chamber of Commerce report on “citizen suits” via the link at the bottom of this page.

Clean Water Board vs Authority

We support the continued use of the existing Clean Water Board or as outlined in S.260 v5.1 to administer funds and organize clean water projects. We oppose creation of a third party Clean Water authority. We believe using existing infrastructure will allow more capacity for improving our water ways rather than funding a third-party entity to do what our agencies are already charged with.

Long Term Funding

We understand from testimony that our clean water budget is met through the year 2021. We urge the legislature to avoid broad parcel fees and pursue a polluter pays system. Once the parcel and Lidar mapping of impervious surface have been completed we believe the state will have the tools to come up with a fair long-term system based on facts. The fair funding model could be completed by the either Clean Water Board or a Legislative Committee.

Thank you,
Matthew Musgrave
Government Affairs Director

https://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/u.s._chamber_sue_and_settle_2017_updated_report.pdf