



**House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Committee
S. 260, Funding Cleanup of State Waters**

April 12, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and thank you for the new draft of S.260.

We believe that the new draft bill, along with H.576 (which addresses concerns that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) raised regarding general permits for parcels of land with more than three acres of impervious surface), provides a path forward to ensure a long-term revenue source to support water quality improvements required by the Lake Champlain Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). We also are gratified that EPA acknowledged the substantial time, effort, and money that has been invested in clean water by state and municipal government as well as the private sector in the past three years.

The new draft clearly establishes the framework for a new Clean Water Funding Group to develop recommendations for a long-term funding source, administration and management coordination, implementation of projects designed to clean up the waters of the state, and accountability for those clean-up efforts while maintaining Vermont's water quality standards.

We believe that the working group mandated by this legislation will be better able to fashion a strong recommendation for a governance and funding structure than would a legislative committee. We believe the expertise provided by the two municipal members will prove especially valuable. As initially proposed, those two municipal members would be appointed by VLCT's Board of Directors. We are frequently asked to provide appointments to study committees and commissions and we solicit interest from our members with experience in the various subject areas.

VLCT understands that the proposal for a water quality occupancy surcharge is a fallback in case the Clean Water Funding Group does not recommend a long-term funding source and the estimate is that such a charge would raise approximately \$10 million per year. Language that requires those funds to be deposited in the Clean Water Fund will help make it more difficult to divert those dollars to other purposes. Based upon discussions regarding vacation rentals you and other legislators have had this session, we recommend that the committee specify that the occupancy charge apply to both farm stays and short-term rentals, such as Airbnb and VRBO.

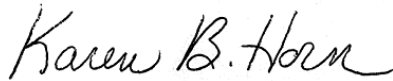


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Section 7 of the bill would define “local partner” for the purpose of receiving and administering a water quality block grant. We are surprised that “local partner” does not include a municipality or group of municipalities working together through an inter-local agreement or similar mechanism, and we urge you to include municipalities as local partners.

We support the removal of the citizen action section from this bill, as it is not consistent with or helpful to the purposes of legislation that endeavors to provide assistance to municipalities, the state, farms, and other entities that are directly involved with cleaning up the waters of the state.



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