

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY STEVE LIBBY

As Executive Director of the Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) I am writing in support of H.777 – specifically the Sections of the bill that enable the funding of “Natural Resources Projects” (Section 4751 (17)).

Over the past ten years VRC has worked in Partnership with the Agency of Natural Resources Ecosystem Restoration Program to purchase easements on private lands to protect and restore critical floodplain and river “corridor” properties. Purchasing these easements ensures long term enhancement of water quality by the deposition and attenuation of nutrients and sediments on floodplain surfaces and removal of those nutrients and sediments from the flowing waters of Vermont’s rivers and streams.

Creating the opportunity to conserve and restore floodplains as “Natural Resource Projects” will greatly enhance the investments being made in municipal waste water treatment and stormwater management systems. Every cubic foot of sediment, and nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen adhered to those sediments, that is captured and stored in upstream floodplains is a cubic foot that will not reach our lakes and ponds. These natural systems, once conserved, will provide these no-cost water quality benefits forever.

The new opportunities to fund Natural Resources Projects through this legislation will fairly compensate private landowners for the public benefit their lands provide. VRC has worked with over seventy private landowners in the establishment of floodplain and river corridor easements over the past ten years, and the option of providing landowner compensation has been a compelling incentive for landowner participation.

Sincerely,

Steve Libby
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