

1 H.306

2 Introduced by Representatives Dolan of Waitsfield, Anthony of Barre City,
3 Birong of Vergennes, Bock of Chester, Carroll of Bennington,
4 Chesnut-Tangerman of Middletown Springs, Christie of
5 Hartford, Colston of Winooski, Conlon of Cornwall, Durfee of
6 Shaftsbury, Fegard of Berkshire, Forguites of Springfield,
7 Gonzalez of Winooski, Hill of Wolcott, Hooper of Burlington,
8 James of Manchester, Killacky of South Burlington,
9 McCullough of Williston, O'Brien of Tunbridge, Ode of
10 Burlington, Ralph of Hartland, Redmond of Essex, Sheldon of
11 Middlebury, Squirrell of Underhill, Szott of Barnard, Walz of
12 Barre City, and Webb of Shelburne

13 Referred to Committee on

14 Date:

15 Subject: Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund; Rural Economic

16 Development Initiative; designation of funds; barn restoration

17 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to limit the
18 expenditure of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund solely to
19 the goals of affordable housing, natural resource conservation and protection,
20 and agricultural and historic preservation as designated under 10 V.S.A.
21 chapter 15. This act proposes to establish a minimum allocation requirement

1 for Fund expenditure to conservation and protection of Vermont's natural
2 resources. This act also proposes to expand the Historic Barns Preservation
3 Grant Program to those barns located on designated State Scenic Roads and
4 Byways.

5 An act relating to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund and
6 the Historic Barns Preservation Grant Program

7 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

8 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

9 The General Assembly finds:

10 (1) Historically, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund has
11 not received the minimum allocation of funds derived from 50 percent of the
12 property transfer tax under 32 V.S.A. chapter 231 as required by 10 V.S.A.
13 § 312.

14 (2) The Fund is necessary to support the Vermont Housing and
15 Conservation Board's statutory obligations under 10 V.S.A. chapter 15,
16 including the conservation and protection of Vermont's important natural
17 areas, forestland, and historic properties.

18 (3) Vermont's working landscapes serve as gateways to the tourism
19 economy of small, rural communities.

1 Sec. 2. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

2 It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

3 (1) Full funding be granted to the Vermont Housing and Conservation
4 Trust Fund as required by 10 V.S.A. § 312, with a minimum of \$22,000,000.00
5 allocated to the Fund in fiscal year 2020.

6 (2) The Fund is for the sole use of the Vermont Housing and
7 Conservation Board to institute the goals, purpose, and policies established
8 under 10 V.S.A. chapter 15.

9 (3) The Board increase the proportion of allocated funds toward the
10 conservation and protection of Vermont's natural resources and support
11 projects with the purpose of natural resource restoration.

12 (4) The Board provide increased grant opportunities to organizations
13 developing and maintaining Vermont's trail networks.

14 (5) The Board prioritize village center revitalization when funding
15 housing projects and historic building renovation.

16 (6) The Board expand the Farm and Forest Viability Program to serve
17 more farm and forest enterprises with one-on-one financial planning and
18 business assistance, to include outdoor recreation enterprises and to provide
19 access to farm and forestland for new owners.

1 (7) A pilot program be created under the Historic Barns Preservation
2 Grant Program to assist farmers and barn owners in renovating barns along
3 designated scenic travel corridors.

4 Sec. 3. 10 V.S.A. § 312 is amended to read:

5 § 312. CREATION OF VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION
6 TRUST FUND

7 (a) There is created a special fund in the State Treasury to be known as the
8 “Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund.” The Fund shall be
9 administered by the Board and expenditures therefrom shall only be made to
10 implement and effectuate the policies and purposes of this chapter. The Fund
11 shall be ~~comprised~~ composed of 50 percent of the revenue from the property
12 transfer tax under 32 V.S.A. chapter 231 and any monies from time to time
13 appropriated to the Fund by the General Assembly or received from any other
14 source, private or public, approved by the Board. Unexpended balances and
15 any earnings shall remain in the Fund for use in accord with the purposes of
16 this chapter.

17 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Fund and its revenue
18 source shall remain intact and inviolate for the purposes set out in this section.
19 No portion of the revenues dedicated to the Fund shall ever be available to use
20 for another governmental purpose.

1 Sec. 4. 10 V.S.A. § 322 is amended to read:

2 * * *

3 (c) The Board shall allocate a minimum of \$2,000,000.00 of the Fund to
4 projects for the purpose of natural resource restoration and conservation.

5 Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 325m is amended to read:

6 * * *

7 (e) Priority projects. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall seek
8 to assist the following priority types of projects:

9 * * *

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

11 (7) restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings in community
12 centers;

13 (8) revitalization of village centers and designated downtown areas; and

14 (9) development and maintenance of Vermont's trail networks.

15 * * *

16 Sec. 6. REPEAL

17 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 77, Sec. 12 (July 1, 2021 repeal of 10 V.S.A.

18 chapter 15, subchapter 4, relating to the Rural Economic Development

19 Initiative) is repealed.

1 Sec. 7. 24 V.S.A. § 5603 is amended to read:

2 § 5603. HISTORIC BARN PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAM

3 (a) Creation. There is established ~~an~~ a Historic Barns Preservation Grant
4 Program ~~which~~ that shall be administered by the Division for Historic
5 Preservation in the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

6 Grants shall be made available to barn owners for:

7 (1) restoring historic barns; and

8 (2) restoring and maintaining barns located on a State Scenic Road or

9 Byway as designated under 19 V.S.A. § 2501.

10 (b) Grant Requests. A request under this section shall not exceed 75
11 percent of the total project cost or \$15,000.00, whichever is less.

12 Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATES

13 (a) This section and Sec. 6 shall take effect on passage.

14 (b) The remainder of this act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.