

H.926

An act relating to changes to Act 250

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

* * * Revisions to Capability and Development Plan * * *

Sec. 1. 1973 Acts and Resolves No. 85, Sec. 7(a)(20) is added to read:

(20) GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change poses serious risks to human health and safety, functioning ecosystems that support a diversity of species and economic growth, and Vermont's tourist, forestry, and agricultural industries. The primary driver of climate change in Vermont and elsewhere is the increase of atmospheric carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, which has a warming effect that is amplified because atmospheric water vapor, another greenhouse gas, increases as temperature rises. Vermont should minimize its emission of greenhouse gases and, because the climate is changing, ensure that the design and materials used in development enable projects to withstand an increase in extreme weather events and adapt to other changes in the weather and environment.

Sec. 2. 1973 Acts and Resolves No. 85, Sec. 7(a)(2) is amended to read:

(2) ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION AND UTILIZATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

(A) Healthy ecosystems clean water, purify air, maintain soil, regulate the climate, recycle nutrients, and provide food. They provide raw materials and resources for medicines and other purposes. They are at the foundation of civilization and sustain the economy. These ecosystem services are the state's natural capital.

(B) Biodiversity is the key indicator of an ecosystem's health. A wide variety of species copes better with threats than a limited number of species in large populations.

(C) Products of the land and the stone and minerals under the land, as well as the beauty of our landscape are principal natural resources of the state.

(D) ~~Preservation~~ Protection of healthy ecosystems in Vermont, preservation of the agricultural and forest productivity of the land; and the economic viability of agricultural units, conservation of the recreational opportunity afforded by the state's hills, forests, streams and lakes, wise use of the state's non-renewable earth and mineral reserves, and protection of the beauty of the landscape are matters of public good. Uses which threaten or significantly inhibit ~~these~~ healthy ecosystems and the state's natural and scenic

resources should be permitted only when the public interest is clearly benefited thereby.

* * * Revisions to State Land Use Law * * *

Sec. 3. 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 151. STATE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Subchapter 1. General Provisions

§ 6000. PURPOSE; CONSTRUCTION

The purposes of this chapter are to protect and conserve the environment of the State and to support the achievement of the goals of the Capability and Development Plan and of 24 V.S.A. § 4302(c). The chapter shall be construed broadly to effect these purposes.

§ 6001. DEFINITIONS

~~As~~ As used in this chapter:

(1) “Board” means the Natural Resources Board.

(2) “Capability and Development Plan” means the Plan prepared pursuant to section 6042 of this title and adopted pursuant to 1973 Acts and Resolves No. 85, Secs. 6 and 7, as amended by this act.

(3)(A) “Development” means each of the following:

* * *

(vi) The construction of improvements for commercial, industrial, or residential use at or above the elevation of 2,500 feet.

* * *

(xi) The construction of improvements for commercial or industrial use within 2,000 feet of a point of access to or exit from the interstate highway system as measured from the midpoint of the interconnecting roadways, unless it is in a designated center or unless a regional planning commission has determined, at the request of the municipality where the interchange is located or any municipality with land in the 2,000-foot radius, that municipal ordinances or bylaws applicable to properties around the interchange:

(I) Ensure that planned development patterns will maintain the safety and function of the interchange area for all road users, including nonmotorized, for example, by limiting curb cuts, and by sharing parking and access points and parcels will be interconnected to adjoining parcels wherever physically possible.

(II) Ensure that development will be undertaken in a way that preserves scenic characteristics both at and beyond the project site. This shall include a determination that site and building design fit the context of the area.

(III) Ensure that development does not destroy or compromise necessary wildlife habitat or endangered species.

(IV) Ensure that uses allowed in the area will not impose a burden on the financial capacity of a town or the State.

(V) Ensure that allowed uses be of a type, scale, and design that complement rather than compete with uses that exist in designated downtowns, village centers, growth centers, or other regional growth areas. Principle retail should be discouraged or prohibited in highway interchange areas.

(VI) Ensure that development in this area not establish or contribute to a pattern of strip development. Where strip development already exists, development in this area must be infill that minimizes the characteristics of strip development.

(VII) Require site design to use space efficiently by siting buildings close together; minimizing paved surfaces; locating parking to consider aesthetics, neighborhoods, and view sheds; and minimizing the use of one-story buildings.

(VIII) Require the permitted uses, patterns of development, and aesthetics of development in these areas to conform with the regional plan and be consistent with the goals of 24 V.S.A. § 4302.

(xii) The construction of a road or roads and any associated driveways to provide access to or within a tract of land of more than one acre owned or controlled by a person. For the purposes of determining jurisdiction under this subdivision, any new development or subdivision on a parcel of land that will be provided access by the road and associated driveways is land involved in the construction of the road. Jurisdiction under this subdivision

shall not apply unless the length of the road and any associated driveways in combination is greater than 2,000 feet. As used in this subdivision, "roads" shall include any new road or improvement to a Class IV road by a private person, including roads that will be transferred to or maintained by a municipality after their construction or improvement. For the purpose of determining the length of any road and associated driveways, the length of all other roads and driveways within the tract of land constructed within any continuous period of 10 years commencing after July 1, 2020 shall be included. This subdivision shall not apply to a State or municipal road, a utility corridor of an electric transmission or distribution company, or a road used primarily for farming or forestry purposes. The conversion of a road used for farming or forestry purposes that also meets the requirements of this subdivision shall constitute development.

(xiii) The construction of improvements for a Vermont trails system trail on a tract or tracts of land involving more than 10 acres.

(I) This subdivision shall be the exclusive mechanism for determining jurisdiction over a new or proposed recreational trail that is or will be a part of the Vermont trails system.

(II) This subdivision shall apply to the construction of improvements made on or after July 1, 2020.

(III) For purposes of this subdivision, involved land includes infrastructure that is necessary for the operation of the trail, including restrooms, parking areas, shelters, picnic areas, kiosks, and interpretive and directional signage. Involved land does not include any recreational trail constructed before July 1, 2020.

(IV) The total acreage of involved land shall include any ground disturbance and clearing that will occur. Area where no ground will be disturbed or cleared shall not be considered involved land.

(V) Development and subdivisions requiring a permit under another provision of this chapter shall include recreational trails for determining the amount of involved land that relates to that development but shall not consider the construction of improvements related to the trail as a part of the review of that permit application.

* * *

(vi) Recreational trails. Jurisdiction over a recreational trail shall extend only to the recreational trail and infrastructure that is necessary for the operation of the trail. Jurisdiction shall not extend to the rest of a parcel or parcels where a recreational trail is located.

* * *

~~(6) "Floodway" means the channel of a watercourse which is expected to flood on an average of at least once every 100 years and the adjacent land areas~~

~~which are required to carry and discharge the flood of the watercourse, as determined by the Secretary of Natural Resources with full consideration given to upstream impoundments and flood control projects.~~ “Flood hazard area” has the same meaning as under section 752 of this title.

(7) ~~“Floodway fringe” means an area which is outside a floodway and is flooded with an average frequency of once or more in each 100 years as determined by the Secretary of Natural Resources with full consideration given to upstream impoundments and flood control projects.~~ “River corridor” has the same meaning as under section 752 of this title.

* * *

(12) “Necessary wildlife habitat” means concentrated habitat ~~which~~ that is identifiable and is demonstrated as being decisive to the survival of a species of wildlife at any period in its life, including breeding and migratory periods.

* * *

(19)(A) “Subdivision” means each of the following:

(i) A tract or tracts of land, owned or controlled by a person, ~~which~~ located outside of a designated downtown, village center that has received an enhanced designation, or neighborhood development area, that the person has partitioned or divided for the purpose of resale into 10 or more lots within a radius of five miles of any point on any lot, or within the jurisdictional area of the same District Commission, within any continuous period of five

years. In determining the number of lots, a lot shall be counted if any portion is outside such an area and within five miles or within the jurisdictional area of the same District Commission.

(ii) A tract or tracts of land, owned or controlled by a person, ~~which~~ that the person has partitioned or divided for the purpose of resale into six or more lots, within a continuous period of five years, in a municipality ~~which~~ that does not have duly adopted permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws.

(iii) A tract or tracts of land, owned or controlled by a person, ~~which~~ that have been partitioned or divided for the purpose of resale into five or more separate parcels of any size within a radius of five miles of any point on any such parcel, and within any period of ten years, by public auction.

(I) ~~In~~ As used in this subdivision (iii), “public auction” means any auction advertised or publicized in any manner, or to which more than ten persons have been invited.

* * *

(38) “Connecting habitat” refers to land or water, or both, that links patches of habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of wildlife and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A connecting habitat may include recreational trails and improvements constructed for farming, logging, or forestry purposes.

(39) “Forest block” means a contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for nonforest use. A forest block may include recreational trails, wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover and improvements constructed for farming, logging, or forestry purposes.

(40) “Fragmentation” means the division or conversion of a forest block or connecting habitat by the separation of a parcel into two or more parcels; the construction, conversion, relocation, or enlargement of any building or other structure, or of any mining, excavation, or landfill; and any change in the use of any building or other structure, or land, or extension of use of land. However, fragmentation does not include the division or conversion of a forest block or connecting habitat by a recreational trail or by improvements constructed for farming, logging, or forestry purposes below the elevation of 2,500 feet.

(41) “Habitat” means the physical and biological environment in which a particular species of plant or wildlife lives.

(42) As used in subdivisions (38), (39), and (40) of this section, “recreational trail” means a corridor that is not paved and that is used for recreational purposes, including hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, and horseback riding.

(43) “Air contaminant” has the same meaning as under section 552 of this title.

(44) “Commercial purpose” means the provision of facilities, goods, or services by a person other than for a municipal or State purpose to others in exchange for payment of a purchase price, fee, contribution, donation, or other object or service having value, regardless of whether the payment is essential to sustain the provision of the facilities, goods, or services.

(45) “Greenhouse gas” has the same meaning as under section 552 of this title.

(46) “Technical determination” means a decision that results from the application of scientific, engineering, or other similar expertise to the facts to determine whether activity for which a permit is requested meets the standards for issuing the permit under statute and rule. The term does not include an interpretation of a statute or rule.

(47) “Forest-based enterprise” means an enterprise that aggregates forest products from forestry operations and adds value through processing or marketing in the forest products supply chain or directly to consumers through retail sales. “Forest-based enterprise” includes sawmills; veneer mills; pulp mills; pellet mills; producers of firewood, woodchips, mulch and fuel wood; and log and pulp concentration yards. “Forest-based enterprise” does not include facilities that purchase, market, and resell finished goods, such as

wood furniture, wood pellets, and milled lumber, without first receiving forest products from forestry operations.

(48) “Forest product” means logs, pulpwood, veneer wood, bolt wood, wood chips, stud wood, poles, pilings, biomass, fuel wood, maple sap, and bark.

(49) “Environmental justice” means that all people and communities have the right to equal environmental protection under the law and the right to live, work, and play in communities that are safe, healthy, and free of life-threatening conditions.

(50) “Recreational trail” shall have the same meaning as “trails” in subdivision 442(3) of this title.

(51) “Vermont trails system trail” means a recreational trail recognized by the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to section 443 of this title. The construction, operation, and maintenance of a Vermont trails system trail shall be for a municipal or State purpose under this chapter.

Subchapter 2. Administration

§ 6021. BOARD; VACANCY, REMOVAL

(a) A Natural Resources Board is created.

(1) The Board shall consist of five members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, so that one appointment expires in each year. In making these appointments, the Governor and the Senate shall

give consideration to experience, expertise, or skills relating to ~~the~~
~~environment or land use~~ environmental science, natural resources law and
policy, land use planning, community planning, environmental justice, or racial
equity.

(A) The Governor shall appoint a chair of the Board, a position that shall be a full-time position. The Governor shall ensure, to the extent possible, that the Board membership reflects the racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity of the State.

* * *

§ 6022. PERSONNEL

(a) Regular personnel. The Board may ~~appoint~~ retain legal counsel, scientists, engineers, experts, investigators, temporary employees, and administrative personnel, as it finds necessary in carrying out its duties, ~~unless the Governor shall otherwise provide~~ and may authorize the District Commissions to retain personnel to assist on matters within its jurisdiction, including oversight and monitoring of permit compliance. The Board shall ensure that District Commissions and district coordinators have the resources necessary to perform their duties, including access to legal resources and training.

(b) Personnel for particular proceedings.

(1) The Board may authorize or retain legal counsel, official stenographers, expert witnesses, advisors, temporary employees, and other research services:

(A) to assist the Board in any proceeding before it under this chapter; and

(B) to monitor compliance with any formal opinion of the Board or a District Commission.

(2) The personnel authorized by this section shall be in addition to the regular personnel of the Board. The Board shall fix the amount of compensation and expenses to be paid to such additional personnel.

* * *

§ 6026. DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

(a) For the purposes of the administration of this chapter, the State is divided into nine districts.

* * *

(b) A District Environmental Commission is created for each district. Each District Commission shall consist of three members from that district appointed in the month of February by the Governor so that two appointments expire in each odd-numbered year. Two of the members shall be appointed for a term of four years, and the Chair (third member) of each District shall be appointed for a ~~two-year~~ four-year term. In any district, the Governor may

appoint ~~not more than four~~ up to two alternate members from that district whose terms shall not exceed two years, who may hear any case when a regular member is disqualified or otherwise unable to serve. The Governor shall ensure, to the extent possible, that appointments are made in a timely manner and that each District Commission reflects the racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity of the State.

(c) Members shall be removable for cause only, except the Chair, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

(d) Any vacancy shall be filled by the Governor for the unexpired period of the term.

§ 6027. POWERS

(a) The Board and District Commissions shall have supervisory authority in environmental matters respecting projects within their jurisdiction and shall apply their independent judgment in determining facts and interpreting law.

They each shall have the power, with respect to any matter within its jurisdiction, to:

(1) administer oaths, take depositions, subpoena and compel the attendance of witnesses, and require the production of evidence;

(2) allow parties to enter upon lands of other parties for the purposes of inspecting and investigating conditions related to the matter before the Board or Commission;

(3) enter upon lands for the purpose of conducting inspections, investigations, examinations, tests, and site evaluations as it deems necessary to verify information presented in any matter within its jurisdiction; and

(4) apply for and receive grants from the federal government and from other sources.

(b) The powers granted under this chapter are additional to any other powers ~~which~~ that may be granted by other legislation.

* * *

(n) The Board shall have the authority to:

(1) hear appeals of a determination by a regional planning commission as to the sufficiency of municipal bylaws pursuant to subdivision 6001(3)(A)(xi) of this title;

(2) hear appeals of a determination by the Downtown Development Board designating a downtown development district, a village center that has received enhanced designation, or neighborhood development area pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A; and

(3) approve regional plans pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4348.

* * *

§ 6031. ETHICAL STANDARDS

(a) The Chair and members of the Board and the Chair and members of each District Commission shall comply with the following ethical standards:

(1) The provisions of 12 V.S.A. § 61 (disqualification for interest).

(2) The Chair and each member shall conduct the affairs of his or her office in such a manner as to instill public trust and confidence and shall take all reasonable steps to avoid any action or circumstance that might result in any one of the following:

(A) undermining his or her independence or impartiality of action;

(B) taking official action on the basis of unfair considerations;

(C) giving preferential treatment to any private interest on the basis of unfair considerations;

(D) giving preferential treatment to any family member or member of his or her household;

(E) using his or her office for the advancement of personal interest or to secure special privileges or exemptions; or

(F) adversely affecting the confidence of the public in the integrity of the District Commission.

(4) The District Commission shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications or consider other communications made to the District Commission outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding, except that:

(A) Where circumstances require, ex parte communications for scheduling, administrative purposes or emergencies that do not deal with substantive matters or issues on the merits are authorized, provided:

(i) the District Commission reasonably believes that no party will gain a procedural or tactical advantage as a result of the ex parte communication, and

(ii) the District Commission makes provision promptly to notify all other parties of the substance of the ex parte communication and allows an opportunity to respond.

(B) The District Commission may obtain the advice of a disinterested expert on the law applicable to a proceeding if the District Commission gives notice to the parties of the person consulted and the substance of the advice and affords the parties reasonable opportunity to respond.

(C) The District Commission may consult with personnel whose function is to aid the District Commission in carrying out its adjudicative responsibilities.

(D) The District Commission may, with the consent of the parties, confer separately with the parties and their lawyers in an effort to mediate or settle matters pending before the District Commission.

(E) The District Commission may initiate or consider any ex parte communications when expressly authorized by law to do so.

* * *

Subchapter 4. Permits

§ 6081. PERMITS REQUIRED; EXEMPTIONS

* * *

(1)(1) By no later than January 1, 1997, any owner of land or mineral rights or any owner of slate quarry leasehold rights on a parcel of land on which a slate quarry was located as of June 1, 1970, may register the existence of the slate quarry with the District Commission and with the clerk of the municipality in which the slate quarry is located, while also providing each with a map which indicates the boundaries of the parcel which contains the slate quarry.

* * *

(6) Registered slate quarries shall be added to the Agency of Natural Resources Natural Resource Atlas.

* * *

(o) If a designation pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A is removed, subsection (a) of this section shall apply to any subsequent substantial change to a ~~priority housing project~~ development or subdivision that was originally

exempt pursuant to subdivision 6001(3)(A)(iv)(I) of this title or subsection (p) of this section on the basis of that designation.

(p)(1) No permit or permit amendment is required for any subdivision, development, or change to a project that is located entirely within a downtown development district designated pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2793 ~~if the change consists exclusively of any combination of mixed use and mixed income housing, and the cumulative changes within any continuous period of five years, commencing on or after the effective date of this subsection, remain below any applicable jurisdictional threshold specified in subdivision 6001(3)(A)(iv)(I) of this title~~ village center that has received enhanced designation under 24 V.S.A. § 2793a(e), or a neighborhood development area designated pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2793e. Upon receiving notice and a copy of the permit issued by the appropriate municipal panel pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4460(f) a previously issued permit for a development or subdivision located in a downtown development area village center that has received an enhanced designation or a new neighborhood area shall be extinguished.

* * *

(v) ~~A permit or permit amendment shall not be required for a development or subdivision in a designated downtown development district for which the District Commission has issued positive findings and conclusions under section 6086b of this title on all the criteria listed in that section. A person shall~~

~~obtain new or amended findings and conclusions from the District Commission under section 6086b of this title prior to commencement of a material change, as defined in the rules of the Board, to a development or subdivision for which the District Commission has issued such findings and conclusions. A person may seek a jurisdictional opinion under section 6007 of this title concerning whether such a change is a material change. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

(y) No permit or permit amendment shall be required for the construction of improvements on a tract of land that would provide access across a trail provided that the access is not related to the use of the permitted recreational trail and would not establish jurisdiction under 10 V.S.A, chapter 151 on its own.

§ 6083a. ACT 250 FEES

* * *

(5) For projects involving the review of a master plan, the fee established in subdivision (1) of this section shall be due for any portion of the proposed project for which construction approval is sought and a fee equivalent to \$0.10 per \$1,000.00 of total estimated construction costs in current dollars in addition to the fee established in subdivision (1) of this subsection for any portion of the project seeking construction approval shall be due for all other portions of the proposed project. If construction approval is

sought in future permit applications, the fee established in subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be due, except to the extent that it is waived pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

(6) In no event shall a permit application fee exceed \$165,000.00.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, there shall be a minimum fee of \$187.50 for original applications and \$62.50 for amendment applications, in addition to publication and recording costs. These costs shall be in addition to any other fee established by statute, unless otherwise expressly stated.

(c) Fees shall not be required for projects undertaken by municipal agencies or by State governmental agencies, except for publication and recording costs.

~~(d) Neighborhood development area fees. Fees for residential development in a Vermont neighborhood or neighborhood development area designated according to 24 V.S.A. § 2793e shall be no more than 50 percent of the fee otherwise charged under this section. The fee shall be paid within 30 days after the permit is issued or denied. [Repealed.]~~

(e) A written request for an application fee refund shall be submitted to the District Commission to which the fee was paid within 90 days of the withdrawal of the application.

* * *

(4) District Commission decisions regarding application fee refunds may be appealed to the Natural Resources Board in accordance with Board rules.

* * *

~~(f) In the event that an application involves a project or project impacts that previously have been reviewed, the An applicant may petition the Chair of the District Commission to waive all or part of the application fee. ~~If an application fee was paid previously in accordance with subdivisions (a)(1) through (4) of this section, the Chair may waive all or part of the fee for a new or revised project if the Chair finds that the impacts of the project have been reviewed in an applicable master permit application, or that the project is not significantly altered from a project previously reviewed, or that there will be substantial savings in the review process due to the scope of review of the previous applications.~~~~

(1) In reviewing this petition, the District Commission shall consider the following:

(A) Whether a portion of the project's impacts have been reviewed in a previous permit.

(B) Whether the project is being reviewed as a major application, minor application, or administrative amendment.

(C) Whether the applicant relies on any presumptions permitted under subsection 6086(d) of this title and has, at the time of the permit application, already obtained the permits necessary to trigger the presumptions. If a presumption is rebutted, the District Commission may require the applicant to pay the previously waived fee.

(D) Whether the applicant has engaged in any preapplication planning that will result in a decrease in the amount of time the District Commission will have to consider the application.

(2) The District Commission shall issue a written decision in response to any application for a fee waiver. The written decision shall address each of the factors in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(3) If the classification of an application is changed from an administrative amendment or minor application to a major application, the Board may require the applicant to pay the previously waived fee.

(g) A Commission or the Natural Resources Board may require any permittee to file a certification of actual construction costs and may direct the payment of a supplemental fee in the event that an application understated a project's construction costs. Failure to file a certification or to pay a supplemental fee shall be grounds for permit revocation.

* * *

§ 6084. NOTICE OF APPLICATION; PREAPPLICATION PROCESS;
HEARINGS; COMMENCEMENT OF REVIEW

(a) The plans for the construction of any development or subdivision subject to the permitting requirements of this chapter must be submitted by the applicant to the District Commission, municipal and regional planning commissions, affected State agencies, and adjoining landowners not less than 30 days prior to filing an application under this chapter, unless the municipal and regional planning commissions and affected State agencies waive this requirement.

(1) The District Commission may hold a meeting on the proposed plans and the municipal or regional planning commission may take one or more of the following actions:

(A) make recommendations to the applicant within 30 days;

(B) once the application is filed with the District Commission, make recommendations to the District Commission by the deadline established in the applicable provision of this section, Board rule, or scheduling order issued by the District Commission.

(2) The application shall address the substantive written comments and recommendations made by the planning commissions related to the criteria of subsection 6086(a) of this title received by the applicant and the substantive

oral comments related to those criteria made at a public hearing under subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(3) This subsection shall not apply to a project that has been designated as using simplified procedures pursuant to subdivision 6025(b)(1) of this title or an administrative amendment.

~~(b) On or before the date of~~ Upon the filing of an application with the District Commission, the ~~applicant~~ District Commission shall send, by electronic means, notice ~~and a copy~~ of the ~~initial~~ application to the owner of the land if the applicant is not the owner; the municipality in which the land is located; the municipal and regional planning commissions for the municipality in which the land is located; the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; and any adjacent Vermont municipality and municipal and regional planning commission if the land is located on a municipal or regional boundary. The ~~applicant shall furnish to the~~ District Commission ~~the names of those furnished notice by affidavit, and shall post,~~ send by electronic means a copy of the notice ~~in~~ to the town clerk's office of the town or towns in which the project lies. The town clerk shall post the notice in the town office. The applicant shall also provide a list of adjoining landowners to the District Commission. Upon request and for good cause, the District Commission may authorize the applicant to provide a partial list of adjoining landowners in accordance with Board rules.

~~(b)~~(c) Upon an application being ruled complete, the District Commission shall determine whether to process the application as a major application with a required public hearing or process the application as a minor application with the potential for a public hearing in accordance with Board rules.

* * *

~~(e)~~(d) Anyone required to receive notice of commencement of minor application review pursuant to subsection ~~(b)~~(c) of this section may request a hearing by filing a request within the public comment period specified in the notice pursuant to Board rules. The District Commission, on its own motion, may order a hearing within 20 days of notice of commencement of minor application review.

~~(d)~~(e) Any hearing or prehearing conference for a major application shall be held within 40 days of receipt of a complete application; or within 20 days of the end of the public comment period specified in the notice of minor application review if the District Commission determines that it is appropriate to hold a hearing for a minor.

~~(e)~~(f) Any notice for a major or minor application, as required by this section, shall also be published by the District Commission in a local newspaper generally circulating in the area where the development or subdivision is located and on the Board's website not more than ten days after receipt of a complete application.

* * *

~~(f)~~(g) This subsection concerns an application for a new permit amendment to change the conditions of an existing permit or existing permit amendment in order to authorize the construction of a priority housing project described in subdivision 6081(p)(2) of this title.

* * *

~~(g)~~(h) When an application concerns the construction of improvements for one of the following, the application shall be processed as a minor application in accordance with subsections ~~(b)~~(c) through ~~(e)~~(f) of this section:

* * *

§ 6086. ISSUANCE OF PERMIT; CONDITIONS AND CRITERIA

(a) Criteria. Before granting a permit, the District Commission shall find that the subdivision or development:

(1) Air pollution. Will not result in undue ~~water or~~ air pollution. In making this determination, the District Commission shall at least consider: the air contaminants, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise to be emitted by the development or subdivision, if any; the proximity of the emission source to residences, population centers, and other sensitive receptors; and emission dispersion characteristics at or near the source.

(A) Air contaminants. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria,

the emission, if any, of air contaminants by the development or subdivision will meet any applicable requirement under the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. chapter 85, and the air pollution control regulations of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

(2) Water pollution. Will not result in undue water pollution. In making this determination ~~it~~, the District Commission shall at least consider: the elevation of land above sea level; and in relation to the flood plains, the nature of soils and subsoils and their ability to adequately support waste disposal; the slope of the land and its effect on effluents; the availability of streams for disposal of effluents; and the applicable Health and Environmental Conservation Department regulations.

(A) Headwaters. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the development or subdivision will meet any applicable Health and Environmental Conservation Department regulation regarding reduction of the quality of the ground or surface waters flowing through or upon lands ~~which~~ that are not devoted to intensive development, and which lands are:

- (i) headwaters of watersheds characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils; or
- (ii) drainage areas of 20 square miles or less; or
- (iii) above 1,500 feet elevation; or

(iv) watersheds of public water supplies designated by the Agency of Natural Resources; or

(v) areas supplying significant amounts of recharge waters to aquifers.

(B) Waste disposal. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the development or subdivision will meet any applicable Health and Environmental Conservation Department regulations regarding the disposal of wastes, and will not involve the injection of waste materials or any harmful or toxic substances into ground water or wells.

(C) Water conservation. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the design has considered water conservation, incorporates multiple use or recycling where technically and economically practical, utilizes the best available technology for such applications, and provides for continued efficient operation of these systems.

(D) ~~Floodways~~ Flood hazard areas; river corridors. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria:

(i) the development or subdivision of lands within a ~~floodway~~ flood hazard area or river corridor will not restrict or divert the flow of flood

waters, cause or contribute to fluvial erosion, and endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the public or of riparian owners during flooding; ~~and~~

~~(ii) the development or subdivision of lands within a floodway fringe will not significantly increase the peak discharge of the river or stream within or downstream from the area of development and endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public or riparian owners during flooding.~~

(E) Streams. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the development or subdivision of lands on or adjacent to the banks of a stream will, whenever feasible, maintain the natural condition of the stream, and will not endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public or of adjoining landowners.

(F) Shorelines. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other criteria, the development or subdivision of shorelines must of necessity be located on a shoreline in order to fulfill the purpose of the development or subdivision, and the development or subdivision will, insofar as possible and reasonable in light of its purpose:

(i) retain the shoreline and the waters in their natural condition;

(ii) allow continued access to the waters and the recreational opportunities provided by the waters;

(iii) retain or provide vegetation ~~which~~ that screen the development or subdivision from the waters; and

(iv) stabilize the bank from erosion, as necessary, with vegetation cover.

(G) Wetlands. A permit will be granted whenever it is demonstrated by the applicant, in addition to other criteria, that the development or subdivision will not violate the rules of the Secretary of Natural Resources, as adopted under chapter 37 of this title, relating to significant wetlands.

~~(2)~~(3) Water supply.

(A) Does have sufficient water available for the reasonably foreseeable needs of the subdivision or development.

~~(3)~~(B) Will not cause an unreasonable burden on an existing water supply, if one is to be utilized.

* * *

(5)(A) Transportation. Will not cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions with respect to use of the highways; waterways; railways; airports and airways; bicycle, pedestrian, and other transit infrastructure; and other means of transportation existing or proposed.

(B) ~~As appropriate, will~~ Will incorporate transportation demand management strategies and provide safe use, access, and connections to adjacent lands and facilities and to existing and planned pedestrian, bicycle,

and transit networks and services. ~~In determining appropriateness under this subdivision (B)~~ However, the District Commission ~~shall consider whether~~ may decline to require such a strategy, access, or connection ~~constitutes a measure if it finds~~ that a reasonable person would ~~take~~ not undertake the measure given the type, scale, and transportation impacts of the proposed development or subdivision.

* * *

(8) Ecosystem protection; scenic beauty; historic sites.

(A) Will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, or historic sites ~~or rare and irreplaceable natural areas.~~

~~(A)~~(B) Necessary wildlife habitat and endangered species. A permit will not be granted ~~if~~ unless it is demonstrated by ~~any party opposing~~ the applicant that a development or subdivision will not destroy or significantly imperil necessary wildlife habitat or any endangered species; ~~and or, if such~~ destruction or imperilment will occur:

(i) the economic, social, cultural, recreational, or other benefit to the public from the development or subdivision will ~~not~~ outweigh the economic, environmental, or recreational loss to the public from the destruction or imperilment of the habitat or species; ~~or~~

(ii) all feasible and reasonable means of preventing or lessening the destruction, diminution, or imperilment of the habitat or species have ~~not~~ been or will ~~not~~ continue to be applied; or

(iii) a reasonably acceptable alternative site is not owned or controlled by the applicant ~~which~~ that would allow the development or subdivision to fulfill its intended purpose.

(C) Will not result in an undue adverse impact on forest blocks, connecting habitat, or rare and irreplaceable natural areas. If a project as proposed would result in an undue adverse impact, a permit may only be granted if effects are avoided, minimized, and mitigated in accordance with rules adopted by the Board.

(9) Capability and development plan. Is in conformance with a duly adopted capability and development plan, and land use plan when adopted. However, the legislative findings of subdivisions 7(a)(1) through (19) of Act 85 of 1973 shall not be used as criteria in the consideration of applications by a District Commission.

* * *

(F) Energy conservation and efficiency. A permit will be granted when it has been demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the planning and design of the subdivision or development reflect the principles of energy conservation and energy efficiency, including

reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the use of energy, and incorporate the best available technology for efficient use or recovery of energy. An applicant seeking an affirmative finding under this criterion shall provide evidence, by certification that the subdivision or development complies with the applicable building energy standards and stretch codes under 30 V.S.A. § 51 or 53.

* * *

(K) Development affecting public investments. A permit will be granted for the development or subdivision of lands adjacent to governmental and public utility facilities, services, and lands, including highways, airports, waste disposal facilities, office and maintenance buildings, fire and police stations, universities, schools, hospitals, prisons, jails, electric generating and transmission facilities, oil and gas pipe lines, parks, hiking trails ~~and~~, forest and game lands, lands conserved under chapter 155 of this title, and facilities or lands protected in perpetuity and funded by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board under chapter 15 of this title, when it is demonstrated that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the development or subdivision will not unnecessarily or unreasonably endanger the public or quasi-public investment in the facility, service, or lands, or materially jeopardize or interfere with the function, efficiency, or safety of, or the public's use or enjoyment of or access to the facility, service, or lands.

* * *

(M) Climate adaptation. A permit will be granted for the development or subdivision when it has been demonstrated that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, the development or subdivision will employ building orientation, site and landscape design, and building design that are sufficient to enable the improvements to be sited and constructed, including buildings, roads, and other infrastructure, to withstand and adapt to the effects of climate change, including extreme temperature events, wind, and precipitation reasonably projected at the time of application.

(N) Environmental justice. A permit will be granted for the development or subdivision when it has been demonstrated by the applicant that, in addition to all other applicable criteria, no group of people or municipality will bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences of the development or subdivision.

(10) Local and regional plans. Is in conformance with any duly adopted local ~~or~~ plan that has been approved under 24 V.S.A. § 4350, regional plan that has been approved by the Board under 24 V.S.A. § 4348, or capital program under 24 V.S.A. chapter 117 § 4430. In making this finding, ~~if:~~

(A) The District Commission shall require conformance with the future land use maps contained in the local and regional plans and with the written provisions of those plans.

(B) The District Commission shall decline to apply a provision of a local or regional plan only if it is persuaded that the provision does not afford a person of ordinary intelligence with a reasonable opportunity to understand what the provision directs, requires, or proscribes.

(C) If the District Commission finds applicable provisions of the town plan to be ambiguous, the District Commission, for interpretive purposes, shall consider bylaws, but only to the extent that they implement and are consistent with those provisions, and need not consider any other evidence.

* * *

(c) Permit Conditions.

(1) A permit may contain such requirements and conditions as are allowable proper exercise of the police power and ~~which~~ that are appropriate within the respect to subdivisions (a)(1) through (10) of this section, including those set forth in 24 V.S.A. §§ 4414(4), 4424(a)(2), 4414(1)(D)(i), 4463(b), and 4464, the dedication of lands for public use, and the filing of bonds to ~~insure~~ ensure compliance. The requirements and conditions incorporated from Title 24 may be applied whether or not a local plan has been adopted. General requirements and conditions may be established by rule of the Natural Resources Board.

(2) Permit conditions on a forest-based enterprise.

(A) A permit condition that sets hours of operation for a forest-based enterprise shall only be imposed to mitigate an impact under subdivision (a)(1), (5), or (8) of this section.

(B) Unless an impact under subdivision (a)(1) or (5) of this section would result, a permit issued to a forest-based enterprise shall allow the enterprise to ship and receive forest products outside regular hours of operation. These permits shall allow for deliveries of forest products from forestry operations to the enterprise outside of permitted hours of operation, including nights, weekends, and holidays, for a minimum of 60 days per year.

(C) In making a determination under this subdivision (2) as to whether an impact exists, the District Commission shall consider the enterprise's role in sustaining forestland use and the impact of the permit condition on the forest-based enterprise. Conditions shall impose the minimum restriction necessary to address the undue adverse impact.

(3) Permit conditions on the delivery of wood heat fuels. A permit issued to a forest-based enterprise that produces wood chips, pellets, cord wood, or other fuel wood used for heat shall allow shipment of that fuel wood from the enterprise to the end user outside permitted hours of operation, including nights, weekends, and holidays, from October 1 through April 30 of each year.

(4) Forest-based enterprises holding a permit may request an amendment to existing permit conditions related to hours of operation and seasonal restrictions to be consistent with subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection. Requests for condition amendments under this subsection shall not be subject to Act 250 Rule 34E.

(d) Other permits and approvals; presumptions. The Natural Resources Board ~~may by rule~~ shall allow the acceptance of a permit or permits or approval of any State agency with respect to subdivisions (a)(1) through (5) of this section or a permit or permits of a specified municipal government with respect to subdivisions (a)(1) through (7) and (9) and (10) of this section, or a combination of such permits or approvals, in lieu of evidence by the applicant. ~~A District Commission, in accordance with rules adopted by the Board, shall accept determinations issued by a development review board under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4420, with respect to local Act 250 review of municipal impacts. The acceptance of such approval, positive determinations, permit, or permits shall create a presumption that the application is not detrimental to the public health and welfare with respect to the specific requirement for which it is accepted. In the case of approvals and permits issued by the Agency of Natural Resources, technical determinations of the Agency shall be accorded substantial deference by the Commissions. The acceptance of negative determinations issued by a development review board~~

~~under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4420, with respect to local Act 250 review of municipal impacts shall create a presumption that the application is detrimental to the public health and welfare with respect to the specific requirement for which it is accepted. Any determinations, positive or negative, under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4420 shall create presumptions only to the extent that the impacts under the criteria are limited to the municipality issuing the decision.~~ Such a rule may be revoked or amended pursuant to the procedures set forth in ~~3 V.S.A., chapter 25,~~ the Vermont Administrative Procedure Act.

(1) The rules adopted by the Board shall not approve the acceptance of a permit or approval of such an agency or a permit of a municipal government unless it satisfies the appropriate requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

(2) A presumption created under this subsection may be rebutted by the introduction of evidence contrary to the presumed fact.

(3) The District Commission, in accordance with rules adopted by the Board, shall accept determinations issued by a development review board under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4420, with respect to local review of municipal impacts under criteria of this section. The acceptance of such a determination, if positive, shall create a presumption that the application is not detrimental to the public health and welfare with respect to the specific requirement for which it is accepted and, if negative, shall create a

presumption that the application is so detrimental. Any determinations, positive or negative, under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4420 shall create presumptions only to the extent that the impacts under the criteria are limited to the municipality issuing the decision. If a municipality fails to respond to a request by the applicant within 90 days as to the impacts related to subdivision (a)(6) or (7), the application will be presumed not to have an unreasonable burden on educational, municipal, or governmental services.

* * *

§ 6087. DENIAL OF APPLICATION

(a) No application shall be denied by the District Commission unless it finds the proposed subdivision or development detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare.

* * *

(d) The District Commission may deny an application without prejudice if the applicant fails to respond to an incomplete determination or recess order within six months of its issuance.

§ 6088. BURDEN OF PROOF; PRODUCTION AND PERSUASION

(a) The initial burden of production, to produce sufficient evidence for the District Commission to make a factual determination, shall be on the applicant with respect to subdivisions 6086(a)(1) through (10) of this title.

(b) The burden of persuasion, to show that the application meets the relevant standard, shall be on the applicant with respect to subdivisions 6086(a)(1), (2), (3), (4), (8)(A) through (C), (9), and (10) of this title.

~~(b)(c)~~ The burden shall be on any party opposing the applicant application with respect to subdivisions 6086(a)(5) ~~through (8)~~, (6), (7), and (8), not including (8)(A) through (8)(C), of this title to show ~~an unreasonable or adverse effect~~ that the application does not meet the relevant standard.

* * *

§ 6090. ~~RECORDING; DURATION AND REVOCATION OF PERMITS~~

(a) Recording. In order to afford adequate notice of the terms and conditions of land use permits, permit amendments, and revocations of permits, they shall be recorded in local land records. Recordings under this chapter shall be indexed as though the permittee were the grantor of a deed.

(b) Permits for specified period.

(1) Any permit granted under this chapter for extraction of mineral resources, operation of solid waste disposal facilities, or logging above 2,500 feet, shall be for a specified period determined by the Board in accordance with the rules adopted under this chapter as a reasonable projection of the time during which the land will remain suitable for use if developed or subdivided as contemplated in the application, and with due regard for the economic considerations attending the proposed development or subdivision. Other

permits issued under this chapter shall be for an indefinite term, ~~as long as~~ provided there is compliance with the conditions of the permit.

(2) Expiration dates contained in permits issued before July 1, 1994 (involving developments that are not for extraction of mineral resources, operation of solid waste disposal facilities, or logging above 2,500 feet) are extended for an indefinite term, ~~as long as~~ provided there is compliance with the conditions of the permits.

(c) Change to nonjurisdictional use; release from permit.

(1) On an application signed by each permittee, the Board may release land subject to a permit under this chapter from the obligations of that permit and the obligation to obtain amendments to the permit, on finding each of the following:

(A) The use of the land as of the date of the application is not the same as the use of the land that caused the obligation to obtain a permit under this chapter or the municipality where the land is located has adopted permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws, but had not when the permit was issued.

(B) The use of the land as of the date of the application does not constitute development or subdivision as defined in section 6001 of this title and would not require a permit or permit amendment but for the fact that the land is already subject to a permit under this chapter.

(C) The permittee or permittees are in compliance with the permit and their obligations under this chapter.

(2) It shall be a condition of each affirmative decision under this subsection that a subsequent proposal of a development or subdivision on the land to which the decision applies shall be subject to this chapter as if the land had never previously received a permit under the chapter.

(3) An application for a decision under this subsection shall be made on a form prescribed by the Board. The form shall require evidence demonstrating that the application complies with subdivisions (1)(A) through (C) of this subsection. The application shall be processed in the manner described in section 6084 of this title and may be treated as a minor application under that section. In determining whether to treat as minor an application under this subsection, the Board shall apply the criteria of this subsection and not of subsection 6086(a) of this title.

* * *

§ 6093. MITIGATION OF PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL SOILS

* * *

(c) Mitigation and offsets for forest-based enterprises. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, a conversion of primary agricultural soils by a forest-based enterprise permitted under this chapter shall

be entitled to a ratio of 1:1 protected acres to acres of affected primary agricultural soil.

* * *

§ 6094. ALLOCATION OF COSTS; DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Department of Fish and Wildlife shall have the authority to bill the applicant for the costs of participating in any major permit application before a District Commission, including the costs of employee application review, submissions, comments, and testimony before a District Commission related to impacts on wildlife, necessary wildlife habitat, or connecting habitat. The Department may recover those costs from the applicant after notice to the applicant, including an estimate of the costs of the personnel or services.

(b) From time to time, the Department charging an applicant for personnel of services under this section shall provide the applicant with detailed statements showing the amount of money expended or contracted for in the work of such personnel and services. All funds collected from applicants under this section shall be paid directly to the Department.

(c) An applicant to which costs are allocated under this section may petition the Natural Resources Board to review the costs allocated. The Natural Resources Board shall conduct a hearing to determine the

reasonableness of the costs. The Board shall consider the size and complexity of the project and may revise the cost allocations if determined unreasonable.

Sec. 3a. 10 V.S.A. § 442(3) is amended to read:

(3) “Trails” means land used for hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, and other similar activities. Trails may be used for recreation, transportation, and other compatible purposes. “Trails” does not include land primarily used for the operation of a motor vehicle. For purposes of this definition, “motor vehicle” shall not include all-terrain vehicles or snowmobiles.

* * *

* * * Resource Mapping; Forest Blocks * * *

Sec. 4. 10 V.S.A. § 127 is amended to read:

§ 127. RESOURCE MAPPING

(a) ~~On or before January 15, 2013, the~~ The Secretary of Natural Resources ~~(the Secretary)~~ shall complete and maintain resource mapping based on the Geographic Information System (GIS) or other technology. The mapping shall identify natural resources throughout the State, including forest blocks, that may be relevant to the consideration of energy projects and projects subject to chapter 151 of this title. The Center for Geographic Information shall be available to provide assistance to the Secretary in carrying out the ~~GIS-based~~ resource mapping.

(b) The Secretary of Natural Resources shall consider the ~~GIS-based~~ resource maps developed under subsection (a) of this section when providing evidence and recommendations to the Public Utility Commission under 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5) and when commenting on or providing recommendations under chapter 151 of this title to District Commissions on other projects.

(c) The Secretary shall establish and maintain written procedures that include a process and science-based criteria for updating resource maps developed under subsection (a) of this section. Before establishing or revising these procedures, the Secretary shall provide opportunities for affected parties and the public to submit relevant information and recommendations.

* * * Designated Center Appeal * * *

Sec. 5. 24 V.S.A. § 2798 is amended to read:

§ 2798. DESIGNATION DECISIONS; ~~NONAPPEAL~~ APPEAL

(a) The A person aggrieved by a designation decisions decision of the State Board under this chapter are not subject to appeal section 2793, 2793a, or 2793e of this title may appeal to the Natural Resources Board established under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 within 30 days of the decision.

(b) The Natural Resources Board shall conduct a de novo hearing on the decision under appeal and shall proceed in accordance with the contested case requirements of the Vermont Administrative Procedure Act. The Natural

Resources Board shall issue a final decision within 90 days of the filing of the appeal. The provisions of 10 V.S.A. § 6024 regarding assistance to the Natural Resources Board from other departments and agencies of the State shall apply to appeals under this section.

Sec. 5a. 24 V.S.A. § 2793a is amended to read:

§ 2793a. DESIGNATION OF VILLAGE CENTERS BY STATE BOARD

* * *

(e)(1) A village center designated by the State Board pursuant to subsection (a) of this section is eligible to apply to the State Board to receive an enhanced designation. This enhanced designation shall allow the village center to be exempt from 10 V.S.A. chapter 151.

(2) To receive enhanced designation under this subdivision, village center shall have:

(A) a duly adopted and regionally approved municipal plan; and

(B) duly adopted permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws that include flood hazard and river corridor bylaws.

* * * Regional and Municipal Planning * * *

Sec. 6. 24 V.S.A. § 4348(f) is amended to read:

(f) A regional plan or amendment shall be adopted by not less than a 60 percent vote of the commissioners representing municipalities, in accordance with the bylaws of the regional planning commission, and

immediately submitted to the legislative bodies of the municipalities that comprise the region.

(1) The plan or amendment shall be considered duly adopted ~~and shall take effect~~ 35 days after the date of adoption, unless, within 35 days of the date of adoption, the regional planning commission receives certification from the legislative bodies of a majority of the municipalities in the region vetoing the proposed plan or amendment. In case of such a veto, the plan or amendment shall be deemed rejected.

(2) Upon adoption, the regional planning commission shall submit the plan or amendment to the Natural Resources Board established under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151, which shall approve the plan or amendment if it determines that the plan or amendment is consistent with the goals of section 4302 of this title. The plan or amendment shall take effect on the issuance of such approval. The Board shall issue its decision within 30 days after receiving the plan or amendment.

* * *

Sec. 7. 24 V.S.A. § 4382 is amended to read:

§ 4382. THE PLAN FOR A MUNICIPALITY

(a) A plan for a municipality ~~may~~ shall be consistent with the goals established in section 4302 of this title and compatible with approved plans of

other municipalities in the region and with the regional plan and shall include the following:

* * *

Sec. 8. 24 V.S.A. § 4460 is amended to read:

§ 4460. APPROPRIATE MUNICIPAL PANELS

* * *

(f)(1) This subsection shall apply to a subdivision or development that:

(A) was previously permitted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 151;

(B) is located in a downtown development district, village center that has received enhanced designation, or neighborhood development area designated pursuant to chapter 76A of this title; and

(C) has applied for a permit or permit amendment required by zoning regulations or bylaws adopted pursuant to this subchapter.

(2) The appropriate municipal panel reviewing an application for a municipal permit or permit amendment pursuant to this subsection shall include conditions contained within a permit previously issued pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 unless the panel determines that the permit condition pertains to any of the following:

(A) the construction phase of the project that has already been completed;

(B) compliance with another State permit that has independent jurisdiction that addresses the condition in the previously issued permit;

(C) federal or State law that is no longer in effect or applicable;

(D) an issue that is addressed by municipal regulation, and the project will meet the municipal standards; and

(E) a physical or use condition that is no longer in effect or applicable, or that will no longer be in effect or applicable once the new project is approved.

(3) After issuing or amending a permit containing conditions pursuant to this subsection, the appropriate municipal panel shall provide notice and a copy of the permit to the Natural Resources Board.

(4) The appropriate municipal panel's determinations shall be made following notice and a public hearing as provided in subdivision 4464(a)(1) of this title and to those persons requiring notice pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 6084(b). The notice shall explicitly reference the existing Act 250 permit.

(5) The appropriate municipal panel's decision shall be issued in accord with subsection 4464(b) of this title and shall include specific findings with respect to its determinations pursuant to subdivision (f)(2) of this section.

(6) Any final action by the appropriate municipal panel affecting a condition of a permit previously issued pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 shall be recorded in the municipal land records.

Sec. 9. REPEAL

10 V.S.A. § 6086b (downtown development; findings) is repealed.

* * * River Permits * * *

Sec. 10. 10 V.S.A. § 754 is amended to read:

§ 754. FLOOD HAZARD AREA RULES; USES EXEMPT FROM
MUNICIPAL REGULATION

(a) Rulemaking authority.

(1) On or before November 1, 2014, the Secretary shall adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 that establish requirements for the issuance and enforcement of permits applicable to:

~~(i)~~(A) uses exempt from municipal regulation that are located within a flood hazard area or river corridor of a municipality that has adopted a flood hazard bylaw or ordinance under 24 V.S.A. chapter 117; and

~~(ii)~~(B) State-owned and State-operated institutions and facilities that are located within a flood hazard area or river corridor.

(2) On or before November 1, 2022, the Secretary shall adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 that designate highest priority river corridors and establish requirements for the issuance and enforcement of permits applicable to uses located in highest priority river corridors. Highest priority river corridors are those that provide or have the potential to provide critical floodwater storage or flood energy dissipation thereby protecting adjacent and

downstream lands and property that are highly vulnerable to flood-related inundation and erosion.

(3) The Secretary shall not adopt rules under this subsection that regulate agricultural activities without the consent of the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, provided that the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall not withhold consent under this subdivision when lack of such consent would result in the State's noncompliance with the National Flood Insurance Program.

(~~3~~)(4) The Secretary shall seek the guidance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency in developing and drafting the rules required by this section in order to ensure that the rules are sufficient to meet eligibility requirements for the National Flood Insurance Program.

* * *

(d) General permit. The rules authorized by this section may establish requirements for a general permit to implement the requirements of this section, including authorization under the general permit to conduct a specified use ~~exempt from municipal regulation~~ subject to regulation under this section without notifying or reporting to the Secretary or an agency delegated under subsection (g) of this section.

* * *

(f)(1) Permit requirement.

(A) A person shall not commence or conduct a use exempt from municipal regulation in a flood hazard area or river corridor in a municipality that has adopted a flood hazard area bylaw or ordinance under 24 V.S.A. chapter 117 or commence construction of a State-owned and State-operated institution or facility located within a flood hazard area or river corridor, without a permit issued under the rules required under subsection (a) of this section by the Secretary or by a State agency delegated permitting authority under subsection (g) of this section. When an application is filed under this section, the Secretary or delegated State agency shall proceed in accordance with chapter 170 of this title.

(B) Beginning on November 1, 2021, a person shall not commence construction of a development or subdivision that is subject to a permit under chapter 151 of this title without a permit issued pursuant under the rules required under subsection (a) of this section by the Secretary or by a State agency delegated permitting authority under subsection (g) of this section.

(C) Beginning on November 1, 2023, a person shall not commence or conduct a use located in a highest priority river corridor without a permit issued pursuant under the rules required under subsection (a) of this section by the Secretary or by a State agency delegated permitting authority under subsection (g) of this section.

* * * Racial Equity Review * * *

Sec. 11. IMPACTS ON RACIAL EQUITY AND DIVERSITY; REVIEW

(a) Pursuant to the duties and powers established under 3 V.S.A. chapter 68, the Executive Director of Racial Equity, in cooperation with the Racial Equity Advisory Panel and the Human Rights Commission, shall conduct a comprehensive review of the processes, procedures, and language of 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 (Act 250) to assess the extent to which Act 250 has contributed to adverse impacts on racial equity and diversity within the State. The review shall:

(1) identify the impacts of acts or decisions made pursuant to Act 250 on inequities in home ownership, land ownership, and land distribution within the State;

(2) measure the extent to which minority populations in the State have incurred disproportional environmental impacts due to acts or decisions of the State pursuant to Act 250;

(3) assess the capability of the current public participation processes, notice requirements, and appointment processes under Act 250 to fairly represent the interests of minority populations within the State; and

(4) recommend legislative changes to Act 250 necessary to achieve the goals of racial equity and diversity representation for minority population.

(b) On or before October 15, 2021, the Executive Director of Racial Equity shall report to the General Assembly with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

* * * Planning Review * * *

Sec. 12. VERMONT REGIONAL AND MUNICIPAL PLANNING REVIEW

(a) On or before December 15, 2020, the Natural Resources Board, in consultation with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, shall submit a draft report, with recommendations, that addresses:

(1) How Sec. 7 of 1973 Acts and Resolves No. 85 (Capability and Development Plan Findings) should be incorporated into 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 and what changes should be made, if any, to the Capability and Development Plan Findings.

(2) How the State should update the Capability and Development Plan authorized by 10 V.S.A. chapter 151, subchapter 3. If the recommendation is to update the Capabilities and Development Plan, the report shall provide a schedule and budget for the proposed update.

(3) How 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 should require the creation of Capability and Development maps. If the recommendation is to require the creation of Capability and Development maps, the report shall identify the resources and land uses to be mapped and provide a schedule and budget for the proposed update.

(4) How Capability and Development Plan Findings, the Capability and Development Plan, and Capability and Development maps would be used in permitting under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 and how these would relate to the criteria considered under 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a).

(5) Whether designations of village centers, growth centers, and new town centers should be appealable. If these designations are appealable, which tribunal should hear the appeal.

(b) The Natural Resources Board shall have a public comment period of at least 30 days on the draft report required by subsection (a) of this section. The Board shall hold at least one public informational meeting on the draft report. Notice provided by the Board shall include affected State agencies, municipalities, regional planning commissions, the Vermont Planners Association, the Vermont Planning and Development Association, and other interested persons.

(c) On or before March 1, 2021, the Natural Resources Board shall provide a final report to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. The final report shall incorporate recommendations from the public engagement process under subsection (b) of this section and shall contain a response to stakeholder comments as a part of the final report.

* * * Permit Fee Review * * *

Sec. 13. ACT 250 PERMIT FEE REVIEW

On or before December 15, 2020, the Secretary of Administration shall submit to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife, and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Natural Resources and Energy, and on Finance a review of the Act 250 permit program and fees. The review shall include the following:

(1) the workload of the Natural Resources Board, including the District Commissions,

(2) whether the Natural Resources Board, including the District Commissions, has sufficient staff to administer the Act 250 program,

(3) the sufficiency of the current Act 250 permit fee structure to cover agency work done on Act 250 permit applications;

(4) the possibility of allocating Act 250 permit fees to other State agencies; and

(5) the possibility of State agencies directly charging applicants for work done on Act 250 permit applications.

* * * Revision Authority; Rulemaking; Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 14. REFERENCES; REVISION AUTHORITY

(a) In 10 V.S.A. § 6001 as amended by Sec. 3 of this act, the Office of Legislative Council shall:

(1) in subdivision (2), replace the reference to “this act” with the specific citation to this act as enacted; and

(2) reorganize and renumber the definitions so that they are in alphabetical order and, in the Vermont Statutes Annotated, shall revise all cross-references to those definitions accordingly.

(b) In 10 V.S.A. § 6086, the Office of Legislative Council shall insert the following subsection and subdivision headings:

(1) in subdivision (a)(4): Soil erosion; capacity of land to hold water.

(2) in subdivision (a)(6): Educational services.

(3) in subdivision (a)(7): Local governmental services.

(4) in subsection (b): Partial findings.

(5) in subsection (e): Temporary improvements; film or TV.

(6) in subsection (f): Stay of construction.

Sec. 14a. RECREATIONAL TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS AND
REPORT

On or before December 15, 2020, the Agency of Natural Resources shall report to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife and to the Senate Committee on Natural Resource and Energy with legislative recommendations for a best management practices driven program for Vermont trails system trails that includes technical assistance, education, and oversight from the Agency of Natural Resources. The report shall include

recommendations for a strategic plan and comprehensive mapping, legislative authority to administer the program, and potential funding sources. The Agency of Natural Resources shall consult with stakeholders on the proposed program, including the Vermont Trail Alliance, the Forest Partnership, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Sec. 15. CRITERION 8(C) RULEMAKING

(a) The Natural Resources Board (Board), in consultation with the Agency of Natural Resources shall adopt rules to implement the requirements for the administration of 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8)(C). Rules adopted by the Board shall include:

(1) How forest blocks and connecting habitat are further defined, including their size, location, and function, which may include:

(A) information that will be available to the public to determine where forest blocks and connecting habitat are located; or

(B) advisory mapping resources, how they will be made available, how they will be used, and how they will be updated.

(2) Standards establishing how fragmentation of forest block or connecting habitat is avoided or minimized, which may include steps to promote proactive site design of buildings, roadways and driveways, utility location, and location relative to existing features such as roads, tree lines and fence lines.

(3) Criteria to identify when a forest block or connecting habitat is eligible for mitigation.

(4) Standards for how impacts to a forest block or connecting habitat may be mitigated. Standards may include:

(A) appropriate ratios for compensation;

(B) appropriate forms of compensation such as conservation easements, fee interests in land, and other forms of compensation; and

(C) appropriate uses of on-site and off-site mitigation.

(b) The Board shall convene a working group to provide input to the rule prior to prefiling with the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules.

The Board shall convene the working group on or before September 1, 2020.

(c) The Board shall file a final proposed rule with the Secretary of State and Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules on or before September 1, 2021.

Sec. 16. EFFECTIVE DATES AND SUNSET

(a) This act shall take effect on passage, except that 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8) (Ecosystem protection; scenic beauty; historic sites) shall take effect on September 1, 2021.

(b) 10 V.S.A. § 6001(3)(A)(xiii) shall be repealed on January 1, 2022.