

1 S.160

2 Introduced by Committee on Agriculture

3 Date:

4 Subject: Rural development; agriculture

5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
6 Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets to develop a strategic plan for the
7 stabilization and revitalization of the dairy industry in Vermont. The bill also
8 would require the Department of Economic Development to conduct an
9 analysis of the feasibility of developing a milk processing plant in the State for
10 the purpose of increasing access of Vermont dairy products to major
11 metropolitan markets in New England and the Northeast. The bill would
12 require the Farm and Forest Viability Program of the Vermont Housing and
13 Conservation Board to convene a working group to recommend financial
14 incentives designed to encourage farmers in Vermont to implement agricultural
15 practices that improve soil health productivity, enhance crop resilience, or
16 reduce agricultural runoff to waters. The bill would require the State Treasurer
17 to determine whether to establish and sponsor a Clean Water Affinity Card for
18 the benefit of water quality improvement in the State. The bill would repeal
19 the sunset of the authority to conduct on-farm slaughter and would clarify who
20 is a livestock owner for the purposes of on-farm slaughter. The bill would
21 require commercial slaughterhouses to maintain records and would authorize

1 the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets to access records at a
2 commercial slaughterhouse. The bill would establish a forest carbon program
3 to promote the entrance of forestlands into carbon markets. The bill would
4 also establish an accident prevention and safety training curriculum for logging
5 contractors. The bill would also authorize a program to provide grants to
6 persons completing logging safety training or applying for master logger
7 certification and a separate program to provide financial assistance to value-
8 added forest product businesses. In addition, the bill would repeal the sunset
9 of the maximum fee for manure pipeline in wetland.

10 An act relating to agricultural development

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

12 * * * Strategic Plan * * *

13 Sec. 1. STRATEGIC PLAN TO STABILIZE AND REVITALIZE THE
14 VERMONT AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

15 (a) On or before January 15, 2020, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and
16 Markets shall submit to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House
17 Committee on Agriculture and Forestry a strategic plan for the stabilization,
18 diversification, and revitalization of the agricultural industry in Vermont. The
19 strategic plan shall:

1 (1) recommend new markets, products, or ingredients for farmers,
2 including recommended State investment in research and development by
3 universities or other qualified organizations to establish new markets, products,
4 or ingredients;

5 (2) recommend methods, products, or incentives available to farmers to
6 assist in the diversification of agricultural products produced on the farm;

7 (3) recommend methods for improving the marketing of Vermont
8 agricultural products outside the State, outside the region, and outside the
9 country;

10 (4) recommend alternatives or methods for encouraging maintaining or
11 increasing the amount of land in agricultural production in the State;

12 (5) evaluate whether State programs that fund farming and existing
13 exemptions in law for farming are the most effective means for supporting the
14 agricultural industry in Vermont;

15 (6) recommend sources of financing for research and development by
16 universities and businesses of innovative methods for managing and
17 commoditizing manure to mitigate the environmental concerns raised by
18 current manure management techniques;

19 (7) propose techniques or systems for improving the ecological footprint
20 and environmental sustainability of farming in the State;

1 (8) after consultation with the Northeast Organic Farming Association
2 and Vermont FEED, provide an assessment of the potential to increase the
3 amount of Vermont agricultural products that are purchased by school nutrition
4 programs in the State, including an inventory of agricultural products, such as
5 beef, eggs, or cheese, where demand from schools would create a viable
6 market for Vermont farmers; and

7 (9) approaches for improving transparency in the agricultural industry so
8 that the public is educated and aware of the need for and effect of certain dairy
9 practices.

10 (b) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall consult with
11 interested parties in developing the strategic plan required under subsection (a)
12 of this section and shall hold at least four public hearings around the State to
13 receive public input on alternatives for stabilizing and revitalizing the
14 agricultural industry in Vermont.

15 * * * Feasibility Analysis of Dairy Processing Plant * * *

16 Sec. 2. DAIRY PROCESSING PLANT; REPORT

17 On or before January 15, 2020, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and
18 Markets shall report to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House
19 Committee on Agriculture and Forestry regarding the development of a dairy
20 processing plant in the State for the purpose of increasing the access of

1 Vermont dairy products to major metropolitan markets in New England and
2 the Northeast. The report shall:

3 (1) recommend whether the State should facilitate the development of a
4 dairy processing plant in the State;

5 (2) if the Secretary recommends that the State facilitate development of
6 a dairy processing plant under subdivision (1) of this subsection, summarize
7 how the State could facilitate development of a dairy processing plant through
8 public-private partnerships, joint ventures, or other economic incentives;

9 (3) identify existing funding sources or economic incentives that could
10 be utilized to fund the development of a dairy processing plant; and

11 (4) include any other information that the Secretary deems necessary for
12 review of the feasibility of developing a dairy processing plant in Vermont.

13 * * * Soil Conservation Practices * * *

14 Sec. 3. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SOIL
15 CONSERVATION PRACTICES

16 (a) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall convene a Soil
17 Conservation Practice Working Group to recommend financial incentives
18 designed to encourage farmers in Vermont to implement agricultural practices
19 that exceed the requirements of 6 V.S.A. chapter 251 and that improve soil
20 health productivity, enhance crop resilience, and reduce agricultural runoff to
21 waters. The Working Group shall:

1 (1) identify agricultural standards or practices that farmers can
2 implement that improve soil health productivity, enhance crop resilience, and
3 reduce agricultural runoff to waters;

4 (2) recommend existing financial incentives available to farmers that
5 could be modified or amended to incentivize implementation of the
6 agricultural standards identified under subdivision (1) of this subsection or
7 incentivize the reclamation or preservation of wetlands;

8 (3) propose new financial incentives, including a source of revenue, for
9 implementation of the agricultural standards identified under subdivision (1) of
10 this subsection if existing financial incentives are inadequate or if the goal of
11 implementation of the agricultural standards would be better served by a new
12 financial incentive; and

13 (4) recommend legislative changes that may be required to implement
14 any financial incentive recommended or proposed in the report.

15 (b) The Soil Conservation Practice Working Group shall consist of persons
16 with knowledge or expertise in agricultural water quality, soil health, economic
17 development, or agricultural financing, and, at a minimum, the Working Group
18 shall include:

19 (1) the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets or designee;

20 (2) a representative of the Farm and Forest Viability Program of the
21 Vermont Housing and Conservation Board;

1 (3) the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee;

2 (4) a representative of the Dairy Water Collaborative, appointed by the
3 Collaborative;

4 (5) a representative of at least two Farmer's Watershed Alliances,
5 appointed by the Alliances;

6 (6) a representative of the Natural Resources Conservation Council,
7 appointed by the Council; and

8 (7) at least two members of the Agricultural Water Quality Partnership,
9 appointed by the Partnership.

10 (c) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets or designee shall be the
11 chair of the Working Group, and the representative of the Farm and Forest
12 Viability Program shall be the vice chair.

13 (d) On or before January 15, 2020, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and
14 Markets shall submit to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House
15 Committee on Agriculture and Forestry the findings and recommendations of
16 the Soil Conservation Practice Working Group regarding financial incentives
17 designed to encourage farmers in Vermont to implement agricultural practices
18 that improve soil health productivity, enhance crop resilience, and reduce
19 agricultural runoff to waters.

* * * Clean Water Affinity Card * * *

Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 584 is amended to read:

§ 584. VERMONT CLEAN WATER ~~VERMONT STATE SPONSORED~~
AFFINITY CARD PROGRAM

(a) The State Treasurer is hereby authorized to sponsor and participate in an Affinity Card Program for the benefit of water quality improvement in the ~~residents~~ of this State upon his or her determination that such a Program is feasible and may be procured at rates and terms in the best ~~interest~~ interests of the cardholders. ~~In selecting an affinity card issuer, the Treasurer shall consider the issuer's record of investments in the State and shall take into consideration program features which will enhance the promotion of the State sponsored affinity card, including consumer friendly terms, favorable interest rates, annual fees, and other fees for using the card.~~

(b) In selecting an affinity card issuer, the Treasurer shall consider the issuer's record of investments in the State and shall take into consideration program features that will enhance the promotion of the State-sponsored affinity card, including consumer-friendly terms, favorable interest rates, annual fees, and other fees for using the card. ~~The Treasurer shall consult with other State agencies about potential public purpose projects to be designated for the Program and shall allow cardholders to designate that funds be used either to support sustainable agricultural programs, renewable energy~~

1 ~~programs, State parks and forestland programs, or any combination of these.~~
2 ~~The net proceeds of the State fees or royalties generated by this program shall~~
3 ~~be transmitted to the State and shall be deposited in a State sponsored Affinity~~
4 ~~Card Fund and subsequently transferred to the designated State programs and~~
5 ~~purposes as selected by the cardholders. The funds received shall be held by~~
6 ~~the Treasurer until transferred for the purposes directed by participating State-~~
7 ~~sponsored affinity cardholders in accordance with the trust fund provisions of~~
8 ~~section 462 of this title.~~

9 (c) The net proceeds of the State fees or royalties generated by the Vermont
10 Clean Water Affinity Card Program shall be transmitted to the State and shall
11 be deposited into the Clean Water Fund under 10 V.S.A. § 1388 to provide
12 financial incentives to encourage farmers in Vermont to implement agricultural
13 practices that improve soil health productivity, enhance crop resilience, or
14 reduce agricultural runoff to waters. All program balances at the end of the
15 fiscal year shall be carried forward and shall not revert to the General Fund.
16 Interest earned shall remain in the program.

17 (d) The State shall not assume any liability for lost or stolen credit cards
18 nor any other legal debt owed to the financial institutions.

19 (e) The State Treasurer is authorized to adopt such rules as may be
20 necessary to implement the Vermont Clean Water ~~State sponsored~~ Affinity
21 Card Program.

1 Sec. 5. FUNDING; REPORT ON FUNDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE;
2 AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES; SOIL HEALTH PRODUCTIVITY

3 Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 584, requiring deposit of proceeds from the
4 Vermont Clean Water Affinity Card into the Clean Water Fund, in fiscal year
5 2020 and 2021:

6 (1) one-half of the proceeds from the Vermont Clean Water Affinity
7 Card that were generated in fiscal year 2020 and 2021 shall be deposited into
8 the General Fund for use to complete the dairy processing plant feasibility
9 analysis required under Sec. 2 of this act; and

10 (2) one-half of the proceeds from the Vermont Clean Water Affinity
11 Card that were generated in fiscal year 2020 and 2021 shall be deposited into
12 the General Fund for use to complete the report required under Sec. 3 of this
13 act regarding financial incentives designed to encourage farmers in Vermont to
14 implement agricultural practices that improve soil health productivity, enhance
15 crop resilience, or reduce agricultural runoff to waters.

16 * * * On-Farm Slaughter * * *

17 Sec. 6. REPEAL OF SUNSET OF ON-FARM SLAUGHTER AUTHORITY

18 2013 Acts and Resolves No. 83, Sec. 13, as amended by 2016 Acts and
19 Resolves No. 98, Sec. 2 (sunset of authority to conduct on-farm slaughter) is
20 repealed.

1 Sec. 7. 6 V.S.A. § 3351a is amended to read:

2 § 3311A. LIVESTOCK; INSPECTION; LICENSING; PERSONAL
3 SLAUGHTER; ITINERANT SLAUGHTER

4 (a) As used in this section:

5 (1) “Assist in the slaughter of livestock” means the act of slaughtering
6 or butchering an animal and shall not mean the farmer’s provision of a site on
7 the farm for slaughter, provision of implements for slaughter, or the service of
8 disposal of the carcass or offal from slaughter.

9 (2) “Sanitary conditions” means a site on a farm that is:

10 (A) clean and free of contaminants; and

11 (B) located or designed in a way to prevent:

12 (i) the occurrence of water pollution; and

13 (ii) the adulteration of the livestock or the slaughtered meat.

14 (b) The requirement for a license under section 3306 of this title or for
15 inspection under this chapter shall not apply to the slaughter by an ~~individual~~
16 owner of livestock that the ~~individual~~ owner raised for the ~~individual’s~~ owner’s
17 exclusive use or for the use of members of his or her household and his or her
18 nonpaying guests and employees.

19 (c) The requirement for a license under section 3306 of this title or for
20 inspection under this chapter shall not apply to the slaughter of livestock that
21 occurs in a manner that meets all of the following requirements:

1 (1) ~~An individual~~ A person or persons purchases livestock from a farmer
2 that raised the livestock.

3 (2) The farmer is registered with the Secretary, on a form provided by
4 the Secretary, as selling livestock for slaughter under this subsection.

5 (3) The individual or individuals who purchased the livestock performs
6 the act of slaughtering the livestock, as the owner of the livestock.

7 (4) The act of slaughter occurs, after approval from the farmer who sold
8 the livestock, on a site on the farm where the livestock was purchased.

9 (5) The slaughter is conducted under sanitary conditions.

10 (6) The farmer who sold the livestock to the individual or individuals
11 does not assist in the slaughter of the livestock.

12 (7) No more than the following number of livestock per year are
13 slaughtered under this subsection:

14 (A) 15 swine;

15 (B) five cattle;

16 (C) 40 sheep or goats; or

17 (D) any combination of swine, cattle, sheep, or goats, provided that
18 no more than 6,000 pounds of the live weight of livestock are slaughtered per
19 year.

20 (8) The farmer who sold the livestock to the individual or individuals
21 maintains a record of each slaughter conducted under this subsection and

1 reports quarterly to the Secretary, on a form provided by the Secretary, on or
2 before April 15 for the calendar quarter ending March 31, on or before July 15
3 for the calendar quarter ending June 30, on or before October 15 for the
4 calendar quarter ending September 30, and on or before January 15 for the
5 calendar quarter ending December 31. If a farmer fails to report slaughter
6 activity conducted under this subsection, the Secretary, in addition to any
7 enforcement action available under this chapter or chapter 1 of this title, may
8 suspend the authority of the farmer to sell animals to an individual or
9 individuals for slaughter under this subsection.

10 (9) The slaughtered livestock may be halved or quartered by the
11 individual or individuals who purchased the livestock but solely for the
12 purpose of transport from the farm.

13 (10) The livestock is slaughtered according to a humane method, as that
14 term is defined in subdivision 3131(6) of this title.

15 (d) The requirement for a license under section 3306 of this title or for
16 inspection under this chapter shall not apply to an itinerant slaughterer engaged
17 in the act of itinerant livestock slaughter or itinerant poultry slaughter.

18 (e) An itinerant slaughterer may slaughter livestock owned by a person on
19 the farm where the livestock was raised under the following conditions:

20 (1) the meat from the slaughter of the livestock is distributed only as
21 whole ~~or half~~, halved, or quartered carcasses to the person who owned the

1 animal for his or her personal use or for use by members of his or her
2 household or nonpaying guests; ~~and~~

3 (2) the slaughter is conducted under sanitary conditions; and

4 (3) the livestock is slaughtered according to a humane method, as that
5 term is defined in subdivision 3131(6) of this title.

6 (f) A carcass or offal from slaughter conducted under this section shall be
7 disposed of according to the requirements under the required agricultural
8 practices for the management of agricultural waste.

9 * * * Animal Welfare; Traceability * * *

10 Sec. 8. 6 V.S.A. § 1152 is amended to read:

11 § 1152. ADMINISTRATION; INSPECTION; TESTING; RECORDS

12 (a) The Secretary shall be responsible for the administration and
13 enforcement of the livestock disease control program. The Secretary may
14 appoint the State Veterinarian to manage the program, and other personnel as
15 are necessary for the sound administration of the program.

16 (b) The Secretary shall maintain a public record of all permits issued and of
17 all animals tested by the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets under this
18 chapter for a period of five years.

19 (c) The Secretary may conduct any inspections, investigations, tests,
20 diagnoses, or other reasonable steps necessary to discover and eliminate
21 contagious diseases existing in domestic animals in this State. The Secretary

1 shall investigate any reports of diseased animals, provided there are adequate
2 resources. In carrying out the provisions of this part, the Secretary or his or her
3 authorized agent may enter any real estate, premises, buildings, enclosures, or
4 areas where animals may be found for the purpose of making reasonable
5 inspections and tests. A livestock owner or the person in possession of the
6 animal to be inspected, upon request of the Secretary, shall restrain the animal
7 and make it available for inspection and testing.

8 (d) The Secretary may contract and cooperate with the U.S. Department of
9 Agriculture, other federal agencies or states, and accredited veterinarians for
10 the control and eradication of contagious diseases of animals. The Secretary
11 shall consult and cooperate, as appropriate, with the Commissioners of Fish
12 and Wildlife and of Health regarding the control of contagious diseases.

13 (e) If necessary, the Secretary shall set priorities for the use of the funds
14 available to operate the program established by this chapter.

15 (f) Any commercial slaughterhouse operating in the State shall maintain
16 and retain for three years records of the number of animals slaughtered at the
17 facility, the physical address of origination of each animal, the date of
18 slaughter of each animal, and all official identification numbers of slaughtered
19 animals. A commercial slaughterhouse shall make the records required under
20 this subsection available to the Agency upon request.

1 (g) Records produced or acquired by the Secretary under this chapter shall
2 be available to the public, except that:

3 (1) the Secretary may withhold from inspection and copying records that
4 are confidential under federal law; and

5 (2) the Secretary may withhold or redact a record to the extent needed to
6 avoid disclosing directly or indirectly the identity of individual persons,
7 households, or businesses.

8 Sec. 9. 6 V.S.A. § 1470 is added to read:

9 § 1470. RECORDS

10 (a) A commercial slaughter facility operating in the State shall maintain
11 and retain for three years records of the number of animals slaughtered at the
12 facility, the physical address of origination of each animal, the date of
13 slaughter of each animal, and all official identification numbers of slaughtered
14 animals. A commercial slaughterhouse shall make the records required under
15 this subsection available to the Agency upon request.

16 (b) Records produced or acquired by the Secretary under this chapter shall
17 be available to the public for inspection and copying, except that:

18 (1) the Secretary may withhold from inspection and copying records that
19 are confidential under federal law; and

1 (2) the Secretary may withhold or redact a record to the extent needed to
2 avoid disclosing directly or indirectly the identity of individual persons,
3 households, or businesses.

4 Sec. 10. REPORT ON RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION FOR
5 LIVESTOCK

6 On or before January 15, 2020, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and
7 Markets shall submit to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on
8 Appropriations and the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on
9 Appropriations a report regarding the use of radio frequency identification
10 (RFID) tags and readers by livestock owners and federally inspected
11 commercial slaughter facilities in the State. The report shall include:

12 (1) a summary of the current Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
13 practice of providing metal or plastic animal identification tags to livestock
14 owners at no or low cost;

15 (2) a summary of any existing or pending federal requirements for the
16 use of RFID tags and readers by livestock owners or federally inspected
17 commercial slaughter facilities;

18 (3) a summary of how RFID tags and readers are used to manage
19 livestock or track animals through the slaughter process, including the benefits
20 of RFID in comparison to metal or plastic animal identification tags;

1 (4) an analysis of whether RFID tags and readers are beneficial for the
2 management or slaughter of all livestock, including whether use of RFID tags
3 and readers is appropriate for certain livestock types, small farms, or small
4 slaughter facilities;

5 (5) an estimate of the cost of equipping a farm or a federally inspected
6 commercial slaughter facility with RFID tags and readers; and

7 (6) a recommendation of whether the State should provide financial
8 assistance to livestock owners or federally inspected commercial slaughter
9 facilities for the purchase of RFID tags and readers, including eligibility
10 requirements, cost-share, timing, or other criteria recommended by the
11 Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the provision of RFID tags and
12 readers to livestock owners or federally inspected commercial slaughter
13 facilities in in the State.

14 Sec. 11. 6 V.S.A. § 4607 is amended to read:

15 § 4607. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE VERMONT WORKING LANDS

16 ENTERPRISE BOARD

17 (a) Duties. The Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board is charged with:

18 (1) optimizing the agricultural and forest use of Vermont lands and other
19 agricultural resources;

20 (2) expanding existing markets and identifying and developing new
21 profitable in-state and out-of-state markets for food, fiber, forest products, and

1 value-added agricultural products, including farm-derived renewable energy
2 and independent animal welfare certification programs; and

3 * * *

4 (d) Definition. As used in this section, “independent animal welfare
5 certification program” means a program offered by a body approved by the
6 Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets that uses qualified, third-party, on-
7 farm auditors to routinely assess whether a livestock producer or commercial
8 slaughter facility is 100 percent compliant with specific farm animal welfare
9 standards exceeding industry standards based on industry guidelines, provided
10 that:

11 (1) the protocol of the standards are made public;

12 (2) the standards include, at a minimum, provisions for humane
13 slaughter, space allowance, environmental enrichment and ability to engage in
14 natural behaviors, pain control and physical alterations, handling, and
15 responsible antibiotic use;

16 (3) routine caging, crating, or tethering of animals is prohibited;

17 (4) the auditors have no vested or financial interest in audit outcomes;

18 and

19 (5) the auditors possess a background in animal welfare science or have
20 received equivalent training and are able to recognize, review, and apply
21 established farm animal welfare standards and protocols.

1 * * * Carbon Markets; Pilot Program; Assistance * * *

2 Sec. 12. GREEN MOUNTAIN STATE FOREST CARBON PILOT
3 PROJECT

4 (a) Findings and purpose.

5 (1) Vermont's public forestlands provide many benefits to the State
6 including access to outdoor recreation, increased tourism, and helping keep our
7 environment healthy.

8 (2) Private owners of forestlands are facing increased pressure to
9 develop their forestlands and possess limited financial resources to resist this
10 pressure.

11 (3) Private owners of forestlands are significant in this State as they own
12 nearly 80 percent of the forestlands in Vermont.

13 (4) The purpose of this section is to create a pilot project to allow the
14 Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to demonstrate how parcels of
15 Vermont's forestlands may enter both compliance and voluntary carbon
16 markets and produce a report and materials to aid private owners of forestlands
17 entering both compliance and voluntary carbon markets.

18 (b) The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall establish the
19 Green Mountain State Forest Carbon Pilot Project that shall:

20 (1) enter at least one parcel of forestland into a voluntary carbon market;

1 (2) enter at least one parcel of forestland into a compliance carbon
2 market; and

3 (3) produce a report and any necessary materials that will aid in the
4 education of private owners of Vermont forestlands on the process of entering
5 their lands into a carbon market.

6 (c) The Department shall have the authority to use available private, State,
7 and federal funding to implement the pilot project as described in
8 subsection (b) of this section.

9 (d) On or before January 15, 2021, the Department shall submit a report to
10 the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Agriculture
11 and Forestry addressing:

12 (1) the implementation of the pilot project;

13 (2) any materials created to educate private owners of Vermont
14 forestlands on the process of entering their lands into a carbon market; and

15 (3) any recommendations for further action.

16 Sec. 13. 10 V.S.A. chapter 83, subchapter 9 is added to read:

17 Subchapter 9. Vermont Forests in Carbon Markets

18 § 2685. Green Mountain State Forest Carbon Program

19 (a) Definitions. As used in this subchapter:

1 (1) “Carbon dioxide equivalent” means an amount of a greenhouse gas
2 that would cause the same amount of warming as a ton of carbon dioxide
3 emissions.

4 (2) “Carbon market” means a voluntary or compliance market place that
5 trades carbon allowances representing the reduction, avoidance, or
6 sequestration of carbon measured using tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

7 (3) “Contracted entity” or “entity” means the entity that enters into a
8 contract with the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to supply the
9 services identified in subsection (c) of this section.

10 (4) “Department” means the Department of Forests, Parks and
11 Recreation.

12 (5) “High ecological value” means an area that has been designated as a
13 fragile area in the Fragile Areas Registry pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 158.

14 (b) Establishment. The Department shall establish the Green Mountain
15 State Forest Carbon Program to support and promote the entrance by owners of
16 tracts of Vermont forestlands into international, national, and regional carbon
17 markets. The Department shall contract with an entity to implement the
18 program and provide services to owners of forestland that will facilitate the
19 entrance of the forested land into a carbon market.

20 (c) Services.

1 (1) The contracted entity shall provide the following services to owners
2 of forestlands:

3 (A) technical assistance to private owners of forestlands on how to
4 gain access to carbon markets;

5 (B) technical assistance to private owners of forestlands on
6 aggregation of multiple small parcels of forested land into parcels that are
7 economically attractive to carbon marketplaces, including creating forest
8 management plans; and

9 (C) services related to legal requirements and frameworks to gain
10 access to carbon marketplaces.

11 (2) When providing services under this subsection, the contracted entity
12 shall give priority to forestlands that have been previously identified as having
13 high ecological value.

14 (d) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Department of Forests,
15 Parks and Recreation shall submit to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and
16 the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry a report regarding the
17 activities and progress of the contracted entity. The report shall include:

18 (1) a summary of the contracted entities activities;

19 (2) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the services provided by the
20 contracted entity to private owners of forestlands;

1 (3) a summary of the contracted entity’s progress in aggregating
2 Vermont’s forestlands into marketable parcels for carbon markets;

3 (4) an accounting of how the contracted entity used the funds dispersed
4 and whether these funds are sufficient to provide the services necessary to
5 achieve the purpose of the program;

6 (5) recommended changes to the program, including legislative
7 amendments to expand access for private owners of Vermont forestlands to
8 carbon markets.

9 * * * Logger Safety * * *

10 Sec. 14. 10 V.S.A. §§ 2622b and 2622c are added to read:

11 § 2622b. ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND SAFETY TRAINING FOR
12 LOGGING CONTRACTORS

13 (a) Training Program. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation
14 shall develop a logging operations accident prevention and safety training
15 curriculum and supporting materials to assist logging safety instructors in
16 providing logging safety instruction. In developing the logging operations
17 accident prevention and safety training curriculum and supporting materials,
18 the Commissioner shall consult with and seek the approval of the training
19 curriculum by the Workers’ Compensation and Safety Division of the
20 Department of Labor.

1 (1) The accident prevention and safety training curriculum and
2 supporting materials shall consist of an accident prevention and safety course
3 that addresses the following:

4 (A) safe performance of standard logging practices, whether
5 mechanized or nonmechanized;

6 (B) safe use, operation, and maintenance of tools, machines, and
7 vehicles typically utilized and operated in the logging industry; and

8 (C) recognition of health and safety hazards associated with logging
9 practices.

10 (2) The Commissioner shall make the accident prevention and safety
11 training curriculum and supporting materials available to persons,
12 organizations, or groups for presentation to individuals being trained in forest
13 operations and safety.

14 (b) Request for proposal. The Commissioner shall prepare and issue a
15 request for proposal to develop at least three course curriculums and associated
16 training materials. The Commissioner may cooperate with any reputable
17 association, organization, or agency to provide course curriculums and
18 training required under this subsection.

19 (c) Certificate of completion. The Commissioner, any logging safety
20 instructor, or a logger safety certification organization shall issue a certificate
21 of completion to each person who satisfactorily completes a logging operations

1 accident prevention and safety training program based on the curriculum
2 developed under this section.

3 § 2622c. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE; LOGGER SAFETY; MASTER
4 LOGGER CERTIFICATION; COST-SHARE

5 (a) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation annually shall
6 award a grant to the Vermont Logger Education to Advance Professionalism
7 (LEAP) program for the purpose of providing financial assistance to logging
8 contractors to reduce the total costs of logger safety training or continuing
9 education in logger safety. Financial assistance from the LEAP program shall
10 be in the form of grants. The following costs to a logging contractor enrolled
11 in the LEAP program shall be eligible for assistance:

12 (1) the costs of safety training, continuing education, or a loss
13 prevention consultation;

14 (2) the costs of certification under the Master Logger Certification
15 Program; or

16 (3) the costs of completion of a logging career technical education
17 program.

18 (b) A grant awarded under this section shall pay up to 50 percent of the
19 cost of an eligible activity.

20 (c) Of the grant funds awarded annually to the LEAP program under
21 subsection (a) of this section, the LEAP program annually shall award grants to

1 pay for the costs of the initial certification of up to 10 logging contractors
2 enrolled in the Master Logger certification program through the Trust to
3 Conserve Northeast Forestlands.

4 Sec. 15. 10 V.S.A. § 2702 is added to read:

5 § 2702. VALUE-ADDED FOREST PRODUCTS; FINANCIAL
6 ASSISTANCE

7 The Commissioner shall award grants of up to \$10,000.00 to applicants
8 engaged in adding value to forest products within the State. A grant awarded
9 under this section may be used by the applicant to pay for expenses associated
10 with State and local permit application costs, project consultation costs,
11 engineering and siting costs, and expert witness analysis and testimony
12 necessary for permitting.

13 Sec. 16. APPROPRIATION

14 In addition to other funds appropriated in fiscal year 2020, \$95,000.00 is
15 appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Natural Resources,
16 Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in fiscal year 2020 to be used as
17 follows:

18 (1) \$15,000.00 for the logging operations accident prevention and safety
19 training curriculum established under 10 V.S.A. § 2622b;

20 (2) \$30,000.00 for the annual grant to the Vermont LEAP program
21 under 10 V.S.A. § 2622c to be used as follows:

