



STATE OF VERMONT
General Assembly

Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group

MINUTES—November 19, 2019

The Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group met on Tuesday, November 19, 2019, beginning at 12:23 p.m. in the Ethan Allen Room of the State House in Montpelier, Vermont.

Working Group Members Present

Michael Snyder, Chair
Rep. John Bartholomew
Rep. Mark Higley
Sen. Ruth Hardy
Sen. Corey Parent

Jack Byrne- by phone
Cecilia Danks
Jim Shallow
Robert Turner
Stephen Webster

Staff Present

Myriah Burke, Office of Legislative Council
Deb Curtis, Office of Legislative Council
Ellen Czajkowski, Office of Legislative Council
Jane Lazorchak, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mark Perrault, Joint Fiscal Office
Keith Thompson, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
Becca Washburn, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Chair Snyder delayed the start of the meeting until 12:23 p.m., due to the inclement weather. The Chair then welcomed the Group, and all members introduced themselves. The members of the staff present introduced themselves. The members of the public present also introduced themselves: Dylan Zwicky of Leonine Public Affairs, Ed Larson from the Vermont Forest Products Association, and David from Orca Media, who filmed the meeting. Chair Snyder asked if anyone wanted to propose changes to the agenda. No changes were proposed.

Chair Snyder asked for a motion to approve last meeting's minutes. Mr. Turner moved to approve last meeting's minutes. Representative Bartholomew seconded. Chair Snyder asked if there was any discussion on the minutes. Mr. Webster asked Senator Hardy about a comment she made in the last meeting, as noted in the minutes. Mr. Webster asked Senator Hardy to explain her comment "that she has heard from constituents concerns about the makeup of the Group." Senator Hardy replied that people had asked her how the group was appointed because everyone had different perspectives and biases that they brought with them. Chair Snyder clarified that his comment that "he did not want to be chair" was meant to indicate that he had not sought to be appointed, but had been designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources, who was named chair of the Group in Act 83. Representative Higley asked why his question about the rules governing carbon accounting only had a short answer. Mr. Turner replied that the minutes captured that there are rules that govern carbon accounting, but which rules depend on the specific project and registry. The different rules will be discussed in the Group's Report. The different rules include those of the American Carbon Registry (ACR), the Climate Action

Reserve (CAR), and the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS). The Group then approved the minutes.

The next item on the agenda was updates from the last meeting. Mr. Shallow wanted to update the Group and the public that The Nature Conservancy's carbon sequestration project at Burnt Mountain has completed another stage. The Nature Conservancy is working with BlueSource and has decided the project will not be financially feasible in the California compliance market, so it will be registered in the voluntary market. The Nature Conservancy originally believed the project would be in the compliance market, but after completing the analysis, the trees are shorter than they expected, so they contain less carbon. Mr. Webster asked what the elevation of the project is. Mr. Shallow said it is between 1100 and 2900 feet.

Next on the agenda was the Group's report. Act 83 provided funding for five meetings. If the Group holds more than five meetings, the nonlegislative members will not be paid. This is the fifth meeting, so the Group needs to complete the bulk of their work at this meeting in order to finish the Report. Chair Snyder asked for a status update on each section of the report, as assigned at the last meeting. Senator Hardy has been editing each section for clarity and consistency. Senator Hardy led the discussion on each section. The draft Report does not currently contain a Findings section, a Recommendations section, or an Executive Summary. Those sections will be added. The Group discussed whether the Report should be structured to follow the charges as listed in Act 83. The Group decided that the language in Act 83 is not very clear and that more clear headings will be used for the Report sections. The Group decided to use APA format for the citations. The Group decided the Report needs a Glossary and a list of acronyms.

The sections on charges #7 and #8 are currently blank. Mr. Turner drafted language for charge #6, but the Group has not reached a decision on what the section should include. The Group decided to keep Mr. Turner's language as long as there is language explaining that it is only one possible recommendation. The Group decided that Mr. Turner will draft language for charge #7 by using hypothetical data in his financial feasibility spreadsheet. The section on charge #8 will include a discussion of the concern regarding double counting.

The next item on the agenda was the agenda for the next meeting. The Group decided to meet on December 18. This will be the sixth meeting, so members have the option to call in to the meeting because there is no funding for nonlegislative members to get paid for their time and travel. The Group will make final additions to the Report by Thanksgiving. Senator Hardy will then edit for clarity and consistency. The Group will vote on the final Report at the December 18 meeting.

The next agenda item was the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were made.

The next agenda item was a discussion of what the Group's recommendations should be. The Group decided that the preliminary list of recommendations includes:

- The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation should develop a public information resource regarding forest carbon sequestration programs.
- The Agency of Natural Resources should evaluate the feasibility of enrolling municipal forestland into a forest carbon sequestration aggregation program.
- The Agency of Natural Resources should analyze the feasibility of enrolling a parcel of State land into a forest carbon sequestration program.

The Group decided that they will decide the final recommendations at the final meeting.

The Working Group adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Czajkowski
Legislative Counsel