

**From:** Jon Groveman <jgroveman@vnrc.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 23, 2019 11:28 AM

**To:** Amy Sheldon <ASheldon@leg.state.vt.us>; Paul Lefebvre <PLefebvre@leg.state.vt.us>; Trevor Squirrel <tsquirrel@sover.net>; Chris Bates <CBates@leg.state.vt.us>; Kari Dolan <KDolan@leg.state.vt.us>; Jim McCullough <JMcCullough@leg.state.vt.us>; Imorgan@state.vt.us; Carol Ode <COde@leg.state.vt.us>; Harvey Smith <HSmith@leg.state.vt.us>; Thomas Terenzini <TTerenzini@leg.state.vt.us>; Laura Bozarth <LBozarth@leg.state.vt.us>

**Cc:** <lorif@lakechamplaincommittee.org> <lorif@lakechamplaincommittee.org>; Lauren Hierl <lhierl@vermontconservationvoters.org>; Kathy Urffer <kurffer@ctriver.org>; Philip B. Huffman <phuffman@tnc.org>; Jen Duggan <jduggan@clf.org>; Ehlers, James <james@mychamplain.net>; James Ehlers <james@champlain.ngo>

**Subject:** Request Regarding S.96, Water Quality Enhancement Grant Provisions

Dear House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife,

On behalf of the undersigned clean water advocacy groups, we appreciate the Committee's hard work on S.96, the clean water bill, and believe the language has improved considerably. We hope this priority bill moves forward soon.

Before it moves forward, we wanted to remind the committee of our clean water funding principles that we shared when you began working on this bill, which emphasized the need to apply funding to waters statewide, protect high quality waters, prevent waters from becoming impaired, address already-impaired waters, increase investments in natural resources projects that address climate and flood resilience, enhance floodplain connectivity, improve aquatic and riparian habitat and fish passage, and implement tactical basin plans.

To ensure this bill meets our principles, we have two requests for the committee to consider before moving this bill forward:

- Section 925: Expand the definition of the Water Quality Enhancement Grants to explicitly include projects to maintain or improve water quality in all waters; and
- Section 1389d: Change the minimum of the Water Quality Enhancement Grants from \$1.5 million to \$5 million.

The new Water Quality Enhancement Grant program established in this bill would be the only funds available statewide, and the only funds available for any projects beyond addressing a specific nutrient reduction target in impaired waters. Therefore, we believe \$1.5 million is far too low to meet these other important state clean water obligations, and to ensure funds are going to water quality projects throughout the state.

We believe a minimum of \$5 million would allow us to continue to address clean water and healthy watersheds, and prevent more waters from becoming impaired. These state funds are also critical for groups to be able to leverage private and federal funds, and without an increase to at least \$5 million we would be leaving significant dollars on the table outside of the Champlain Basin and Lake Memphremagog.

We look forward to working through these remaining issues with your committee, as this priority bill moves through the legislative process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jon Groveman, Policy and Water Program Director  
Vermont Natural Resources Council

Lauren Hierl, Executive Director  
Vermont Conservation Voters

Lori Fisher, Executive Director  
Lake Champlain Committee

Jennifer Duggan, Vice President and Vermont Director  
Conservation Law Foundation

James Ehlers, Executive Director  
Lake Champlain International

Phil Huffman, Director of Government Relations & Policy  
The Nature Conservancy

Kathy Urffer, River Steward  
Connecticut River Conservancy

--

Jon Groveman  
VNRC Policy and Water Program Director  
802-249-7736 (Mobile)  
802-223-2328 x-111 (Office)