

**From:** Mary Russ <mary@whiteriverpartnership.org>

**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2019 5:01 PM

**To:** Amy Sheldon <ASheldon@leg.state.vt.us>; Carol Ode <COde@leg.state.vt.us>; Chris Bates <CBates@leg.state.vt.us>; Christy Ketchel <CKetchel@leg.state.vt.us>; Harvey Smith <HSmith@leg.state.vt.us>; Jim McCullough <JMcCullough@leg.state.vt.us>; Kari Dolan <KDolan@leg.state.vt.us>; Leland Morgan <LMorgan@leg.state.vt.us>; Paul Lefebvre <PLefebvre@leg.state.vt.us>; Thomas Terenzini <TTerenzini@leg.state.vt.us>; Trevor Squirrel <TSquirrel@leg.state.vt.us>

**Cc:** Laura Bozarth <LBozarth@leg.state.vt.us>

**Subject:** S.96 concerns & recommendations

Hello Representative Sheldon & Committee Members,

I am writing to thank you for taking action on the Clean Water Fund this session and for allowing me to provide testimony on S.96 two weeks ago.

I am also writing to express 2 concerns about the current version of S.96:

**1. I am concerned that S.96 focuses primarily on addressing impaired waters.** The new Water Quality Restoration Formula Grant will replace all DEC grant programs for project development, design, and implementation - the current grant programs include the Ecosystem Restoration Program, Design & Implementation Block Grants, River Corridor Easement Block Grants, Woody Buffer Block Grants, and more. And the Water Quality Restoration Formula Grant will only be available to address impaired waters. **This means that funding for project development, design, and implementation will not be available state-wide!**

**2. I am concerned that S.96 underfunds projects that protect or improve water quality in all waters.** I believe we must invest in more than just pollution reduction projects. We need to fund projects that prevent waters from becoming impaired; improve flood resilience - an ongoing issue as we saw from the \$2 million in damages from last week's flooding; restore aquatic habitat for Vermont Species of Greatest Conservation Need; and more. And I believe it is imperative to make funds available for water quality protection and improvement projects across Vermont - not just for the important projects needed in Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog. **All Vermonters should benefit from the Clean Water Fund!**

To address these concerns, I ask you to consider the following recommendations as you make final edits to S.96 this week:

1. In Section 925, please consider **expanding the definition of the Water Quality Enhancement Grants to include projects to protect or improve water quality in all waters.**
2. In Section 1389d, please consider **changing the minimum level of funding for the Water Quality Enhancement Grants from \$1.5 million to \$5 million.**

The new Water Quality Enhancement Grants would be the only funds available statewide and the only funds available for projects that prevent waters from becoming impaired, improve flood resilience, restore aquatic habitat, etc. There are 4,000 of these clean water projects in the state's Watershed Projects Database: this demonstrates the need for funding now. **Please consider making these changes to S.96 to insure the "Clean Water Fund" actually funds**

**clean water projects across the state of Vermont!** Thank you again for your time.

Respectfully,

Mary Russ, Executive Director

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