

January 25, 2019

Vermont House Committee on Agriculture & Forestry
Vermont House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife
Vermont Senate Committee on Agriculture
Vermont Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Energy
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Representative Partridge, Representative Sheldon, Senator Starr and Senator Bray:

The Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc., Franklin-Grand Isle Farmer's Watershed Alliance and the Connecticut River Watershed Farmers Alliance Directors are working together to launch a pilot project hiring farmers to produce better ecosystem services across Vermont.

Over the last 10 years, our farms have been focusing on how we can be the solution to some of the most complex water quality and land use challenges we face including climate change, extreme weather events, rapidly expanding population, water quality problems, and food security.

We have been pointed to as the problem for so long that citizens and lawmakers alike have neglected to realize that we may hold the biggest opportunity to build our state's resiliency to these challenges.

We believe that we can change that narrative and provide farmers and all Vermonters with a new paradigm in which to operate with **verified science** and emerging technology to provide real-time **landscape** feedback to inform our land management decisions and quantify the results of our conservation approaches on an individual farm basis and as an industry across Vermont.

In this paradigm, farmers - and all land-managers - will be hired to produce **quantified** environmental benefits that our responsible land stewardship provides to our communities and watersheds, not just for the milk, meat, crops, vegetables, fruit, honey, maple or fiber we currently are paid to produce.

Our three organizations collectively represent 221 farms of all types and sizes who manage 122,000 acres of farmland in the Lake Champlain and Connecticut River watersheds. In addition we have 98 members that represent agricultural service providers and supportive individuals who are closely tied to the farming industry and often carry a lot of influence with farmers across the state.

We have a strong and unified voice of individuals and organizations that are committed to managing our land sustainably and sharing information with others. We can move a project like this forward, especially with help from our fellow Vermonters, **you** - their elected representatives - and our UVM Extension partners.

**Pilot Project Concept:
Hiring Vermont Farmers to Produce Healthy Soil, Clean Water and
a Sustainable Working Landscape**

The invention in 1833 of the Fairbanks platform-scale accelerated the agricultural and industrial revolutions by accurately and quickly weighing the mass of commodities. In a similar way, we plan to deploy a new type of scale that tracks landscape function and production of ecosystem services and provides feedback to managers for real time conservation decisions.

It is our goal in the next year to deploy monitoring instruments on six farms to collect comprehensive energy/water/biomass data and utilize 3D soil mapping and remote sensing technology to measure whole landscape function and farmer-production of watershed ecosystem services. We will investigate and create a prototype ecosystem services funding model to pay farmers for the production of fairly valued ecosystem services.

We have member farms who are ready to participate as host sites for this project. In addition, our organizations can use our networks to ensure good communication about the project and its results. We want to start the planning phase of this project and are actively working to secure the required resources to get this project off the ground.

We are excited about the role farmers can play in solving the many challenges we face in Vermont as we look at maintaining a resilient working landscape rooted in a sustainable agricultural economy. Will you join us as we work to make this vision a reality?

Sincerely,



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