

1 H.525

2 Representative Emmons of Springfield moves that the bill be amended as
3 follows:

4 First: By striking out Sec. 9 (funding for Vermont Environmental
5 Stewardship Program) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following
6 new Sec. 9 to read as follows:

7 Sec. 9. FUNDING VERMONT ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
8 PROGRAM

9 In addition to the existing capital and noncapital financial assistance that
10 may be available to a farmer from the Agency of Agriculture, Food and
11 Markets, the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets separately may use
12 funds available to the Agency and eligible for use for water quality programs
13 or projects to provide noncapital financial incentives to Vermont farmers
14 participating in the Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program to
15 implement regenerative farming practices to achieve certification as a Certified
16 Vermont Environmental Steward.

17 Second: By striking out Sec. 10, 6 V.S.A. § 4829, and its reader assistance
18 heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 10 and reader
19 assistance heading to read as follows:

1 * * * Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program * * *

2 Sec. 10. 6 V.S.A. § 4829 is added to read:

3 § 4829. CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

4 (a) The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is created in the
5 Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide the farms of Vermont
6 with State financial assistance for the implementation of alternative nutrient
7 reduction practices that improve soil quality, improve nutrient retention, and
8 reduce agricultural waste discharges. The Agency of Agriculture, Food and
9 Markets may approve one or more of the following practices for participation
10 in the program:

11 (1) riparian forest buffers;

12 (2) grassed waterways;

13 (3) grassed filter strips; or

14 (4) other practices approved by the Secretary and administered through
15 a memorandum of understanding with the Commodity Credit Corporation.

16 (b) Grant agreements entered into under this section shall at a minimum
17 have a term of 15 years in duration and can include permanent easements.

18 (c)(1) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall use capital
19 funding available to the Agency and eligible for use for water quality programs
20 or projects to provide financial assistance to Vermont farmers to complete

1 practices approved by the Agency for participation in the program under
2 subdivisions (a)(1)–(3) of this section.

3 (2) The Agency shall use noncapital funds eligible for use for water
4 quality programs or projects to provide financial assistance to Vermont farmers
5 to complete practices approved by the Agency for participation in the program
6 under subdivision (a)(4) of this section.

7 Third: By striking out Sec. 11, 6 V.S.A. § 4830, and its reader assistance
8 heading in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 11 and reader
9 assistance to read as follows:

10 * * * Ecosystem Services Incentive Program * * *

11 Sec. 11. 6 V.S.A. § 4830 is added to read:

12 § 4830. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES INCENTIVE PROGRAM

13 (a) The Ecosystem Services Incentive Program is created in the Agency of
14 Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide the farms of Vermont with State
15 financial assistance for the implementation of alternative nutrient reduction
16 practices that improve soil quality, nutrient retention, and reduce agricultural
17 waste discharges. The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets may approve
18 one or more of the following practices for participation in the program:

19 (1) conservation easements;

20 (2) land acquisition;

21 (3) farm structure decommissioning;

1 (4) site reclamation;
2 (5) payments for ecosystem services; or
3 (6) issue a grant as an in-lieu payment not to exceed \$200,000.00 as
4 an alternative to the best management practice program implementation to
5 otherwise address the same conservation issues for an equivalent or
6 longer term.

7 (b) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall use funds available
8 to the Agency and eligible for use for water quality programs or projects to
9 provide financial assistance to Vermont farmers, provided that:

10 (1) the Agency may use capital funds to provide financial assistance
11 for practices approved under subdivisions (a)(1)–(4) of this section if the
12 practice is:

13 (A) performed in conjunction with a term agreement of not less than
14 15 years in duration or a permanent easement protecting the investment; and

15 (B) abating a water quality resource concern on a farm;

16 (2) the Agency shall not use capital funds to provide financial assistance
17 for a practice approved under subdivision (a)(5) of this section; and

18 (3) the Agency may use capital funds to provide financial assistance for
19 a practice approved under subdivision (a)(6) of this section only upon the
20 approval of the State Treasurer.