

GOODRIDGE LUMBER, Inc.



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Act 250 Comments
Colleen Goodridge, President
Goodridge Lumber, Inc
Albany, Vermont

Many of us have attended the public forums concerning Act 250 - a review of where we have progressed since 1970, nearly 50 years and where we are today. We ask ourselves "what will the next 50 years look like?"

In reviewing the goals of Act 250-Protecting Vermont's Environment and Promoting Economic Prosperity, I feel we have protected the environment well - possibly at the expense of economic prosperity, where we fall short. Vermont is rated at the bottom of the list as far as being classified as "business friendly." Both the environment and the economy are important, however, we must maintain a balance between the two goals. Promoting economic prosperity must be a focus when reviewing Act 250 and strategies developed to address this need - perhaps less regulation vs. more regulation. In our zeal to "protect", unintended consequences may occur as a result, destroying the very thing we are trying to protect or preserve.

I am most familiar with forest based business since our family business, Goodridge Lumber has been in existence since 1974 - 44 years.

Considerations for improvement to Act 250 for forest-based businesses:

- Better recognition of forest based businesses and the people who dedicate their lives working the land - both need to be accepted, appreciated, valued and supported or face being lost forever - negatively affecting our environment over time.
- Because of Vermont's reputation of being unfriendly toward business, in general, investors look to neighboring states to establish their businesses.
- We need to promote the development of markets close to the wood source, resulting in more dollars for all in the supply chain, providing employment opportunities, and the environmental benefit of less carbon footprint while transporting products to market.
- A strong forest product industry is the best safeguard against forest fragmentation and development. Landowners able to market and sell their wood products, which produce income, will be less likely to need to sell land to meet economic needs - thus keeping their tract of land intact as a whole.
- Forest operations should be exempt from prime ag mitigation - agriculture and forestry are the same.
- Flexible conditions - since the forest industry faces seasonal and weather conditions, there may be a need to operate different hours and days to keep wood products moving, protect town/state roads and still maintain a viable business - same challenges as agricultural businesses.
- Costs of operating a business are ever increasing, making it a challenge to keep the business healthy and viable. If the permitting process becomes too restrictive through regulation or too expensive and cannot be completed in a reasonable time frame, the project will not exist - not economically viable.

- Many current operating businesses that were established prior to 1970 are grandfathered - but are now needing improvements for expansion, efficiency or other changes - Act 250 comes into play. Some businesses are closing as Act 250 requirements are beyond what they can afford.
- Few forest based facilities have been built in Vermont since 1970.

I have attached the Goodridge Lumber Act 250 timeline (with comments) as well as my testimony on Act 250 at the Senate Ag Committee meeting.

In the Act 250 review and the development of strategies for moving ahead for the next 50 years, let us strive to create solutions where problems do exist, but let us make sure we do not try to create solutions for problems that do not exist. Our future depends on creating that balance between Protecting the Environment and Promoting Economic Prosperity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colleen Goodridge".

Colleen Goodridge
Goodridge Lumber, Inc
Albany, VT