

Act 250 Timeline for Goodridge Lumber Inc.
Albany, Vermont

April 2013-----Received letter from Kirsten Sultan, Coordinator, District #7 Environmental Commission, stating that Goodridge Lumber may need an Act250 permit and listed criteria for needing such permit. This letter was in response to receiving a letter of complaint from a neighbor, whose property joins Goodridge Lumber, concerning log storage in front of her property and all the “stuff” behind her property, most of which were there when she purchased the property 15 years before, and anything that was added/changed from the time she purchased it, was done so with her approval over the years.

(***Comment-This letter of complaint to the state was submitted after Goodridge Lumber was unable to pay an exorbitant amount, far above fair market value, to purchase her home. This is an example of using a state law for something other than for what the law was intended for. In this case the law was used to inflict harm or closure of a business out of retribution. WE NEED A “RIGHT TO PRACTICE FORESTRY” LAW”. Another example of using a state law for something other than for what the law was intended was the fact that this neighbor called in a list of safety complaints to VOSHA, who visited the mill to investigate these complaints-all found to be not true. The VOSHA inspector had us call her supervisor in Montpelier to report this event. VOSHA is about safety. He noted that this complaint should never have gotten through the screening process and changes were made in procedures there so that this type of activity would not happen again. This was meant to be a fishing expedition by VOSHA to find something(s) that would cause harm to our business.)

April 2013-----Goodridge Lumber immediately responded to this letter and corresponded with Kirsten Sultan. We did meet the criteria for needing an Act 250 Permit. We asked to set up a meeting with her to discuss what needs to be done to secure our permit. Kirsten was busy with Jay Peak/Burke Mountain permitting and we were assigned to Geoffrey Green, Coordinator, from Essex, VT.

(***Comment- Kirsten Sultan was excellent to work with-very knowledgeable and helpful!)

May 7,2013-----Called Mr. Green, reviewed our situation and we set up an appointment with him to come to the sawmill to meet with us to help determine our “roadmap” to securing our permit. Upon Mr. Green’s arrival, he looked at the log pile facing Route 14 and remarked “What an eyesore!”. The meeting was disappointing and went downhill from there-his thought being “you need to buy your neighbor’s house-this is a nuisance case and I only have limited resources that I do not want to use up on this case”. He also noted that we may not be able to use the upper and lower log storage areas that we rent from others, because those landowners would need to be co-applicants in the Act 250 process, thus subjecting not only the land we were renting, but also all of their land that joined these rental portions, to Act 250 jurisdiction. (The 1.43 acre area joins a 40 acre field and the 3 acres in the upper yard is part of a farm, half of which lies on that side of Route 14.) We found this NOT TO BE TRUE, but not wanting to involve our neighbors in the Act 250 process, we proceeded to purchase those two log storage areas.

(***Comment-We were very disappointed with the lack of interest and bias of Mr. Green, coordinator, hired by the state to help businesses navigate the Act 250 process. Commissioner Snyder was called and informed of the situation. We also found during our research/questions with various people in the state, that we were getting different answers to the same question that we asked-making it very difficult to make business decisions.)

July 2013-----Hired Diana Peduzzi, Riverside Consulting, Woodbury, VT as our consultant to help with our Act 250 application process-so as not to put a stain on Mr. Green’s limited resources. We decided to complete all areas of the application such as prime agricultural land, storm water permit, mapping, surveying and land purchases of

two log storage yards from two landowners BEFORE submitting our application-spent from July 2013 until submission of our permit on May 30, 2014-working on these areas.

August 27,2013-----Determining prime ag status. The sawmill area was mapped as prime ag land, which it was not. Began emails with Kyle Davis to make determination-asked for a site visit-no response. October 28th Mr. Davis leaves position and we were assigned to Louise Waterman. Beginning November 15, 2013 back/forth emails, many asking for information that had already been provided-still no site visit. Colleen attended a VFPA Annual Meeting February 2014, where Deputy Commissioner of Ag, Jolinda LaClair was speaking. After the meeting Colleen explained the situation and asked if we were corresponding with the wrong person concerning the prime ag determination.

(***Comments-the sawmill area was not prime ag land if viewed. The log storage area facing Route 14 was prime ag as it was part of an adjoining cornfield-however-1)shouldn't agriculture and forestry be treated equally? And 2)no soil is disturbed with the storage of logs.)

March 17,2014-Received letter from Beth Fenstermacher, Act 250 Coordinator, VT Agency of Agriculture, noting that land surrounding the sawmill was not prime ag. The 1.43 acre log storage area facing Route 14 is prime ag, but as long as the soil is not disturbed-no reduction in prime ag soils.

(***Comments-The determination of ag soil status took almost 7 months! It was difficult to project possible mitigation fees that might have been incurred and the effect it would have on the viability of the business.)

May 30,2014-Submission of Act 250 Application.

July 2, 2014-Public hearing and site visit-well attended-Senator Bobby Starr attended and spoke about keeping businesses such as Goodridge Lumber operating-so important as part of our working lands. Dave Snedecker, executive director of NVDA, attended as well as Bill Sayre, who also spoke on behalf of Goodridge Lumber and the industry as a whole. Kirsten Sultan was present as our coordinator, as Mr. Green had a conflict in his schedule and could not attend.

July 2,2014-ANR responds to application submitted on May 30th,2014-they will be attending the hearing that evening and are asking to make a site visit.

(***Comment-the Act 250 application was filed May 30,2014. It was unfortunate that ANR waited until the day of the hearing to respond to the application and ask for a site visit at that point—adding another month to the process.)

July 11,2014-ANR site visit with Agency staff, Jen Mojo, Staci Pomeroy, river scientist, and Len Gerardi, fish biologist. Jared Nunery, Orleans County forester, visited Goodridge Lumber on July 14th. ANR/Jared Nunery/Goodridge Lumber were able to work out realistic solutions to some concerns-there were no violations.- Example-concerning snow removal-is it possible to load in dump truck and take off site rather than plowing over a bank? Not practical or possible. Solution-revised our snow plowing plan regarding areas to push snow.

August 1, 2014-ANR comments and recommendation received.

(***Comment-Jared Nunery, Orleans County forester, played a huge role in helping coordinate all entities involved working together to support this business, an important part of our working landscape. Jared's written comments, based on discussion with Commissioner Snyder and others at ANR, which are part of the findings of

fact in our permit, were critical in keeping Goodridge Lumber operating and will serve as a guide for the future in determining the importance of all forest based activities. Jen Mojo was very good to work with in providing a report that was accurate.)

October 23,2014-Lany Use Permit #7R1347 granted

No appeals.

Notes of interest-the cost of going through the Act 250 process for Goodridge Lumber was about \$100,000 with \$69,000 used for land purchase, with \$30,000 of that amount being provided by a Working Lands Grant. We feel that if this application had been submitted before the identity of the core values of Vermonters-their farms and forests-through the Council of Rural Development survey, and the creation of the Working Lands Legislation, the outcome of this application would have been much different-we probably would not be operating.

Colleen Goodridge
Goodridge Lumber Inc.
Albany, VT
Celebrating 43 years in the business!
1974-2017