



Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, Inc.

*Farmers working together for a clean Lake Champlain
and thriving agriculture in Vermont.*

January 23, 2019

CVFC Talking Points: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

BACKGROUND

- Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc. is a 501(c)(5) non-profit farmer organization dedicated to protecting water quality in Lake Champlain and a thriving agricultural economy in Vermont. We strive to be a unified voice that represents a diversity of farms and farming practices. While we don't agree on everything, we do agree that our mission of water quality and sustainable farms is a priority for Vermont.
- We educate our members, the public and policy makers about farming practices that protect water quality and soil health.
 - In 2018, we held 8 workshops for farmers with 213 attendees on topics that included cover cropping, no-till, manure injection, grant writing for farm projects, connecting with your community, vegetable production and more.
 - Since 2015 we have held 41 workshops with 926 attendees
- Started in 2013 with a founding membership of 12, we currently have
 - 151 members, with
 - 100 farm-members representing 58 Small Farms, 28 Medium Farms, and 12 Large Farms.
 - Our members represent all types of agriculture including dairy, beef, vegetable, honey and small grains/cash crops.
 - 14% of our farmer members are organic (higher than the percentage of organic farms statewide).
 - Member farms operate over 87,000 acres of corn, soybeans, vegetables, hay and pasture in the Lake Champlain watershed.
 - We also have 48 members that are agricultural business or farm related non-profit organizations in addition to our UVM Extension members and support staff.
 - In addition, we fund two part-time coordinators to accomplish our work.
- Close partnership with UVM Extension's Middlebury agronomy team.
- Funded through grants and membership fees.
- CVFC played an active role engaging its members in the formulation of the RAPs in hopes of helping the agency create standards that protect water quality, but are practical to implement on Vermont farms. We want the RAPs to be work for water quality and be workable for farmers.
- We support the agency of agriculture and want to work with them to accomplish the goals of Act 64.

CURRENT PRIORITY ISSUES:

- Wetland permit
- Implementing the RAPs and monitoring progress
- Educating our farmer members on conservation practice implementation
- Tracking conservation practices implemented by our member farms
- Sharing the story of how farmers protect water quality and build resilient ecosystems with the public, the legislature
- Building a dynamic and thriving organization...strategic planning, future staffing initiatives, building/supporting our membership.

FUTURE VISION:

- We want to focus on how farms can be the solution to some of the most complex landscape challenges we face. We have been pointed to as the problem for so long, that citizens and lawmakers alike have neglected to realize that we may be the biggest potential solution to climate change, extreme weather events, water quality, food production and more.
- 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. We hope you will join us as we work to make this vision a reality.



Brian Kemp
President, Champlain Valley Farmers Coalition Inc.