

Peter Danforth State Testimony for February 9th, 2022

Hello, my name is Peter Danforth. I am a resident of Underhill Center and District Manager of the Lamoille County Natural Resources Conservation District.

I am testifying today to request FY2023 funding for one-time and ongoing funds for the Vermont NRCDs of:

- \$2.1 million in one-time funding for a 3-year Agricultural Resource Specialist (ARS) Training Program
- \$248,000 in one-time funding for immediate equipment and capital improvement needs
- \$1,388,000 in base funding to increase the Natural Resource Conservation Council budget line item to \$1.5 million to support ongoing Natural Resource Conservation District operational costs.

As Manager of a Conservation District, I am responsible with my staff for connecting people, organizations, and resources to steward our land and water resources for the future.

As an example, Lamoille NRCD facilitated **2 Lake Watershed Action Plans** over the last 4 years. The assessments of Lake Eden and Lake Elmore involved the participation of at least 6 state departments, an independent contractor, Lake Associations, private landowners, adjacent towns, and community groups. Lamoille County NRCD acted as the **catalyst** to bring together these diverse actors to complete these Action Plans. Now, for the next 4 years, our district must spearhead their implementation—an effort that can be accomplished **only** through **ongoing** supportive relationships with these numerous entities.

If, during the process of implementing these action plans, a district was to **lose** a key staff member, entire projects would be set back by years. Our conservation districts are currently funded at levels that do not promote longevity in staff retention.

The ability to retain qualified staff that this funding provides would not only stretch these important dollars but would allow district leaders, like myself, to continue to build trusting and productive relationships with key stakeholders, significantly, the community and landowners that drive our vision.

Our state relies on **healthy, long-acting** organizations to implement essential conservation and clean water projects, which is why we are requesting this FY2023 funding increase.

Thanks for listening!