

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to which was referred House
3 Bill No. 566 entitled “An act relating to the establishment of the Vermont
4 Forest Future Program” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

8 The General Assembly finds that:

9 (1) Private and public forestlands:

10 (A) constitute unique and irreplaceable resources, benefits, and
11 values of statewide importance;

12 (B) contribute to the protection and conservation of wildlife habitat,
13 air, water, and soil resources of the State;

14 (C) mitigate the effects of climate change; and

15 (D) benefit the general health and welfare of the persons of the State.

16 (2) The forest products sector, including maple sap collection:

17 (A) is a major contributor to and is valuable to the State’s economy
18 by providing nearly 14,000 jobs for Vermonters, generating \$2.1 billion in
19 annual sales, and supporting \$30.8 million in additional economic activity
20 from trail uses and seasonal tourism;

1 (B) is essential to the manufacture of forest products that are used
2 and enjoyed by the persons of the State; and

3 (C) benefits the general welfare of the persons of the State.

4 (3) Private and public forestlands are critical for and contribute
5 significantly to the State’s outdoor recreation and tourism economies.

6 (4) Eighty percent of Vermont’s forest is held in private ownership of
7 which 56 percent of private lands are enrolled in the forestland category of
8 Vermont’s Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA). UVA is Vermont’s most
9 important conservation program and contains the largest foundation of supply
10 to support a vibrant forest-based rural economy.

11 (5) Economic realities and demand pressures for urban, commercial, and
12 residential land uses throughout the State continues to challenge forest
13 landowners trying to maintain intact forests. Forest fragmentation can
14 adversely affect the natural environment and viable forest management.

15 Addressing the economic and social needs of the forest products sector is
16 paramount to keeping forests intact, viable, and healthy.

17 (6) The encouragement, development, improvement, and preservation of
18 forestry operations will result in extant, intact, and functioning forests that will
19 provide a general benefit to the health and welfare of the persons of the State
20 and the State’s economy.

1 (7) To strengthen, promote, and protect the Vermont forest products
2 sector, the State should establish the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
3 Roadmap.

4 Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. chapter 82 is added to read:

5 CHAPTER 82. VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

6 § 2531. VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

7 (a) Creation. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall
8 contract with the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to create the Vermont Forest
9 Future Strategic Roadmap to strengthen, modernize, promote, and protect the
10 forest products sector in Vermont.

11 (b) Intended outcomes. The intended outcomes of the Vermont Forest
12 Future Strategic Roadmap are to:

13 (1) increase sustainable economic development and jobs in Vermont's
14 forest economy;

15 (2) promote ways to expand the workforce and strengthen forest product
16 enterprises in order to strengthen, modernize, promote, and protect the
17 Vermont forest economy into the future;

18 (3) promote the importance of healthy, resilient, and sustainably
19 managed working forests that provide a diverse array of high-quality products
20 now and in the future; and

1 (4) identify actionable strategies designed to strengthen, modernize,
2 promote, and protect the forests products sector in Vermont, including
3 opportunities for new product development, opening new markets for Vermont
4 products, adopting modern manufacturing processes, and utilizing new ways to
5 market Vermont forest products.

6 (c) Strategic Roadmap content. In developing the Vermont Forest Future
7 Strategic Roadmap, the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, in consultation with
8 the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, shall:

9 (1) review all existing data, plans, and industry level research completed
10 over the past 10 years, including the Working Lands Enterprise Fund’s Forest
11 Sector Systems Analysis, and identify any recommendations in those reports in
12 order to build upon previous efforts;

13 (2) identify infrastructure investment and funding to support and
14 promote Vermont forest products enterprises;

15 (3) identify regulatory barriers and propose policy recommendations to
16 support and strengthen the Vermont forest economy;

17 (4) identify opportunities for all State agencies to engage with and
18 enhance the Vermont forest products sector, including the Department of
19 Buildings and General Services, the Agency of Commerce and Community
20 Development, the Department of Tourism and Marketing, the Agency of
21 Education, the Agency of Transportation, the Department of Public Service,

1 the Agency of Natural Resources, the Department of Financial Regulation, and
2 the Department of Labor;

3 (5) develop recommendations to support education and training of the
4 current and future workforce of Vermont forest products sector;

5 (6) propose alternatives for the modernization of transportation and
6 regulation of Vermont forest enterprises, including modernization of local and
7 State permits;

8 (7) identify methods or programs that Vermont forest enterprises can
9 utilize to access business assistance services;

10 (8) recommend how to maintain access by Vermont forest products
11 enterprises to forestland and how to maintain the stewardship and conservation
12 of Vermont forests as a whole;

13 (9) propose methods to enhance market development and manufacturing
14 by Vermont forest enterprises, including value chain coordination and regional
15 partnerships;

16 (10) recommend consumer education and marketing initiatives; and

17 (11) recommend how to clarify the roles of various public entities and
18 non-governmental organizations that provide certain services to the forestry
19 sector and to ensure coordination and alignment of those functions in order to
20 advance and maximize the strength of the forest products industry.

21 (d) Process for development of Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap.

1 (1) The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund shall develop the Vermont
2 Forest Future Strategic Roadmap and all subsequent revisions after
3 consultation with the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation and
4 through the use of a public stakeholder process that includes and invites
5 participation by interested parties representing all users of Vermont’s forests,
6 including representatives of forest enterprises, State agencies, investors,
7 forestland owners, recreational interests, loggers, foresters, truckers, sawmills,
8 firewood processors, wood products manufacturers, education representatives,
9 and others.

10 (2) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, in collaboration
11 with the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and forest products sector
12 stakeholders, shall review the Strategic Roadmap periodically and shall update
13 the Strategic Roadmap at least every 10 years.

14 (e) Advisory panel; administration.

15 (1) The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, in collaboration with the
16 Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, shall convene a Vermont
17 Forest Future Strategic Roadmap Advisory Panel to review and counsel in the
18 development and implementation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
19 Roadmap. The Advisory Panel shall include representatives of forest
20 enterprises, State agencies, investors, forestland owners, foresters, loggers,
21 truckers, wood products manufacturers, recreational specialists, education

1 representatives, trade organizations, and other partners as deemed appropriate.

2 The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, with consultation from
3 the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, shall select representatives to the
4 Advisory Panel.

5 (2) The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund or the Commissioner of Forests,
6 Parks and Recreation may seek grants or other means of assistance to support
7 the development and implementation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
8 Roadmap.

9 Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION

10 (a) The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, in collaboration with the
11 Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, shall submit to the General
12 Assembly:

13 (1) draft recommendations for the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
14 Roadmap on or before July 1, 2023; and

15 (2) a final report and recommendations for the Vermont Forest Future
16 Strategic Roadmap on or before January 1, 2024.

17 (b) Any recommendation submitted under this section shall include
18 recommended appropriations sufficient to implement the recommendation or
19 the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap as a whole.

1 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATIONS

2 In addition to any other funds appropriated to the Department of Forests,
3 Parks and Recreation in fiscal year 2023, there is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Department \$250,000.00 to enter a two-year contract in
5 fiscal year 2023 for the purpose of contracting with the Vermont Sustainable
6 Jobs Fund for its role in the development of the Vermont Forest Future
7 Strategic Roadmap required by 10 V.S.A. § 2531.

8 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

9 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

10 and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act
11 relating to the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap”

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17 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE