



VERMONT FOREST PARTNERSHIP

April 12, 2021

Dear Chair Kitchel and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

As you all begin to reconcile funding proposals in the Senate version of FY22 budget, including the House-passed FY22 budget and the Governor's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) plan, we know you will be focused on strategic investments for a strong pandemic recovery while holding the general fund base level. We think the following programs below meet both of those goals and will provide many other important benefits for Vermonters - provided they are implemented in compliance with existing environmental safeguards such as Act 250 and ANR permits.

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board: With the property transfer tax at an all-time high, we support the House's investment of \$54.8M to VHCB, including funding to meet pressing needs and opportunities both for affordable housing and for conservation with its associated rural economic development benefits.

Working Lands: We support the House version of \$2,000,000 to the Working Lands program administered by the Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets and of \$594,000 to the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB).

Outdoor recreation: We applaud the inclusion of outdoor recreation as one of the Governor's top economic development priorities for ARPA capital grant funds. We support investments in sustainable outdoor recreation infrastructure and access that protects and enhances our forested landscape.

Livable and Prosperous Vermont Cities, Towns and Villages: We support the recommendation of \$5,000,000 for the Better Places Program to improve and revitalize public spaces that is in House Bill, H159, and \$11,000,000 for the Brownfields Revitalization Fund administered by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Vermont's forests are a critical investment in our future, and the investments highlighted above will help protect our forests while also supporting our state's recovery.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Co-chairs of Vermont Forest Partnership:

David Mears, Audubon Vermont
Phil Huffman, The Nature Conservancy
Shelby Semmes, The Trust for Public Land
Lauren Hierl, Vermont Conservation Voters
Tracy Zschau, Vermont Land Trust
Jamey Fidel, Vermont Natural Resource Council

Cc:

Senator Bray
Senator Sirotkin