

Dear Madame Chair, Senator Jane Kitchel, and members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

After reading Representative Maida Townsend's recent story in the Other Paper mentioning language in H.439 that would restore three water positions within the VTDEC Watershed Management Division, I write in strong support of funding these **three water program positions (in budget section as reference is B.711)**. The retention of the three DEC water program positions was also recommended by the House with the stipulation that one of the three restored positions be returned to the VTDEC Lakes and Ponds Program.

**The funding of these positions is important because** they are of critical importance in achieving the goals of Vermont's Clean Water Act 64, as indicated here:

1. By statute ([10 V.S.A. § 1451](#)), Vermont has committed to implementing an aquatic nuisance control policy to prevent the infestation and proliferation of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and adequately respond and manage new introductions by providing the means, staffing and funding necessary to protect the state's aquatic ecosystems and its economy that relies heavily on tourism.
2. Currently DEC's Lakes and Ponds Program has lost two essential permanent aquatic invasive species positions and is down to one full-time permanent position from a total of three in 2012. The one remaining full-time permanent DEC staff person oversees all AIS prevention, management, and control for Vermont's 800+ lakes and ponds, an arduous task for one person and a staffing scenario that reduces the impact of the statewide AIS prevention effort.
3. While available grant funds to municipalities for AIS management remain relatively level, there has been a steadily increasing demand in the number of grants awarded. This means that the budget funding request is spread more thinly with more programs and fewer VTDEC water program positions to meet this increased need. Municipalities, local volunteers, and lake associations cannot manage this growing need that serves Vermont's vital recreational and economic needs. Thus, it is important to recognize, even with municipal grant awards, the significant day-to-day burdens and costs of managing and controlling aquatic invasive species infestations in Vermont's freshwater resources fall on municipalities, local volunteers, and lake associations. As citizen volunteers like me and many others, we face many obstacles in protecting Vermont's lakes and ponds and so count heavily on technical assistance from the VTDEC Lakes and Ponds Program. As such, we need more, not fewer DEC water program positions!)
4. Without the funding and restoration of these water program positions, it will become that significantly more difficult to prevent the spread of AIS in Vermont's waterbodies. Once prevention efforts are lost, the cost of managing AIS increases exponentially. When this happens, the quality of Vermont's lakes

declines along with the quality of the recreational experiences of Vermonters and visitors to our state.

I urge you to fund and permanently restore these three positions.

Jack Widness

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