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My name is Bernie Gracy. I am President of the Averill Lakes Association. Our organization represents the interests and aspirations of the camp and landowners on Big and Little Averill Lakes in the Northeast Kingdom. Among our aims is to encourage public education in the principles of conservation, preservation, and restoration.

To that end, we treasure our relationship with the Essex County Natural Resources Conservation District, which has played such a vital role in local - and direct - owner engagement, education, and advocacy through Vermont's Lake Wise program to protect our beautiful lakes. I have personally witnessed – and have been the beneficiary of -- Sam Mayne's wise counsel to our members. The Essex County Natural Resources Conservation District is an indispensable local partner and collaborator.

Our association's leadership and board of directors are unanimous in support of increasing the base funding of the Natural Resources Conservation Council by \$2.5M for a total base budget of \$3M. This will address the chronic underfunding of Vermont's Natural Resources Conservation Districts that undergirds Vermont's local conservation delivery system that the Averill Lakes Association so vitally depends on.