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July 19th, 2024

RE: Supplemental Testimony and Public Comment on Act 59 implementation and the draft “Inventory Report” as submitted to the House Committee on Environment and Energy

Dear Chair Sheldon, Members of the House Committee on Environment and Energy, VHCBC Executive Director Seelig and VHCBC Director of Conservation Martin:

My written and oral testimony, and that of other witnesses, objected to the inclusion of forest and agricultural properties that do not satisfy the statutory definition of “conserved” land. My written testimony also stated that some conservation easements are not in perpetuity. For both reasons, without a map or list showing each parcel and why it was included, it is impossible for the Committee or the public to assess the reliability of the Report.

At the hearing, Chair Sheldon asked Mr. Martin why a list or map of the properties included in the inventory was not provided. Mr. Martin replied that he agreed that a list of the properties included in the inventory is needed, and that VHCBC is still working on that.

Standing Trees, therefore, urges VHCBC to issue a second draft report that includes in the inventory only lands that satisfy the definition of “conserved” land and that includes a usable map or list of the properties that VHCBC has included in the inventory. Standing Trees urges that a second comment period be scheduled to review that second draft report, so that the Committee and the public can examine and comment on the inventory that the legislature intended before a final report is issued.

Sincerely,

James A. Dumont

James A. Dumont, Esq.

for

Standing Trees