

Mar 12, 2025

1. H. 94 Accessory On-Farm Businesses

This is one of our board's priorities to keep working towards scale-appropriate regulations for Accessory On-Farm Businesses that do farm stays and farm events. As we're a member led organization we held a couple of stakeholder group meetings on H.94 this session. We will work with our members and in collaboration over the summer to come forward with a more comprehensive proposal for how to address Act 250 permitting as it relates to farm events and farm stays.

However, we have a member who has been approached by the Act 250 review board requiring them to pursue Act 250 permitting for a multi-use structure that is used for the processing and storage of agricultural products as well as for farm events. Multi-use farm structures are only explicitly exempt from local zoning as "farm structures." We recommend adding the sentence below to H.94 and would also support moving the bill so that we can work on this more in the Senate.

Recommended language:

No permit or permit amendment is required for multi-use structures, as long as the new or existing structure is primarily used as a farm structure as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4413(d)(2)(A).

2. H. 401 Cottage Food Law

This is also one of our boards priorities and we had members reaching out to us with an interest in updating the income gaps for cottage food producers. We're in support of this bill as it's an important step in the right direction. We would appreciate the committee moving this bill to the Senate where we may discuss not having any income gap at all anymore and to look across our state boundaries to what our neighboring states are doing who don't have these income gaps anymore.

3. H. 134 Current Use and Future Agricultural Land Use Maps

Recommendation to add a mandate for Regional Planning Commissions to issue Future Agricultural Land Use maps.

Recommended language:

Regional Planning Commissions are mandated to develop Future Agricultural Land Use Maps that layout a recommendation to protect farmland from development as part of their Land Use revision of their regional plans. Future Agricultural Land Use Maps shall delineate more than what's currently included in soil type maps. They should build the basis for subsequent policy considerations for how and where Vermont would need to protect farmland from development to move towards the regional goal of New England Feeding New England towards more local-self reliance. For subsequent policy considerations, the Future Agricultural Land Use Maps layers shall visualize:

1. Current Agricultural Land (ANR)
2. Prime Ag Soils (ANR)
3. Soils of State Relevance (ANR)
4. Agricultural Land in Current Use (Dep. Taxes)
5. Agricultural Land in Easements (VHCB, VLT etc.)
6. Current Agricultural Land Certified Organic (NOFA-VT)
7. Conversion risk 1: Projected Farmland loss as Critical Resource Area (Act 121 2024)
8. Conversion risk 2: Projected Farmland loss to retirement of a farmer 65+ yrs (AFT)
9. Conversion risk 3: Projected Farmland loss to development (Act 181 2024; Act 43 2023)
10. Underutilized Agricultural Land needed in production to reach NEFNE 30x30 goal (NEFNE)
11. Additional Agricultural Land needed in production to reach NEFNE 30x30 goal (NEFNE)