

A LETTER TO LEGISLATORS

Dear Members of the General Assembly,


As we enter the 78th biennium of the Vermont Legislature, we recognize the significant challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in shaping the future of our state. Many challenges facing this body mirror those being felt by our farm, forest, and food producers: unpredictable and devastating weather events, inflation pressures, and rising cost of land and living. This report highlights the impact of VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability Program and Rural Economic Development Initiative through stories that demonstrate the resilience of our working landscape and the power of community-based economic development in the face of these challenges.

In FY2024, with the support of State and Federal funding, we:

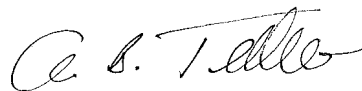
- Provided business development support to 108 working lands businesses, helping to increase profitability and adapt to the impacts of climate change
- Helped 37 rural towns with strategic fundraising for community infrastructure and economic development, with 16 of those towns securing \$3.9 million thus far and an additional \$1 million pending
- Piloted a food security and community garden grant program for nine community gardens serving low income and historically underserved Vermonters
- Made over \$800,000 in 20 water quality improvement grants to farmers leveraging \$4.6 million

Entering 2025, we are proud to have offered over two decades of service in support of our working landscape and improving quality of life for farmers, forest business owners, families, and rural communities across the state. We deeply appreciate your partnership in strengthening our working landscape and statewide food system.

Sincerely,



Executive Director Gustave Seelig
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board



Secretary Anson Tebbetts
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets



Commissioner Danielle Fitzko
Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation