



TOWN OF GRAND ISLE
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April 6, 2026

ATTN: Sen. Patrick Brennan, Rep. Leland Morgan, Rep. Michael Morgan, Governor Phil Scott, Lt. Gov. John Rodgers, Jill Krowinski, Speaker of the House, House Environmental Committee, Vermont Land Use Review Board, Vermont Woodland Association, Vermont Sugar Makers Association, VLCT, NRPC, State of Vermont

REGARDING: Vermont Act 181

To Whom It May Concern,

It is the opinion of the Town of Grand Isle Selectboard that Act 181's regulations do not adequately respect the rights of rural property owners and, furthermore, that the Act's imposed restrictions are not equitable to rural communities such as Grand Isle. While we share the statewide goal of conserving Vermont's natural beauty, this aspirational vision should not be translated into state-imposed Future-Land-Use projections that undermine property rights and municipal authority. We support all bills and ideas currently being considered would reduce the impact of Act 181 on rural towns.

The state's Future-Land-Use projections have not been informed by the lived experiences, history, or stewardship practices of our families. Generations of Grand Isle residents have cared for their land—often for more than a century—balancing agriculture, recreation, forestry, and community use. Imposing state-level land-use restrictions and organizing all land into "connectivity blocks," particularly when paired with new state-level reviews of municipal road development, continues a troubling legacy of centralized control over rural lands. These projections fail to recognize the cultural, historical, and economic value of the landscapes our residents maintain, including old farm roads, stone walls, shoreline access points, and historic features that do not appear on state maps but remain integral to our community's identity and daily life.

Act 181's restrictions will be felt more severely by rural towns such as Grand Isle, which insults the integrity of the hardworking custodians of these lands. Grand Isle is geographically unique—an island community with limited developable land, limited tax base growth opportunities, and higher infrastructure costs due to our location. Despite our size, our population has remained relatively stable for generations, and our municipal resources are far more limited than those of larger or more affluent towns. Grand Isle has no local option tax, no enterprise funding, and a modest grand list that must support essential governmental functions including road maintenance, clerk operations, zoning administration, and emergency services.

The additional fees, permitting requirements, and land-use restrictions resulting from Act 181 could realistically threaten the viability of family farms, small agricultural operations, and local businesses. Many of these already comply with Current Use requirements, Agency of Natural Resources permitting, and local zoning regulations. Any further restrictions on development will undermine our ability to grow our grand list and maintain financial stability. Navigating and enforcing Act 181 locally will impose undue hardship on both the municipality and the families who call Grand Isle home.

Our Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws already prioritize careful, steady, and responsible growth. If unchanged, Act 181's land-use restrictions will impose an unfair economic burden on our landowners and on the long-term economic stability of the Town of Grand Isle. As such, we strongly encourage you to take all possible action to pause, amend, or repeal the most harmful components of Act 181, including but not limited to:

- H.70 – Use existing “current use” laws to meet conservation goals and prevent skyrocketing land costs
- H.602 – Repeal the “Road Rule” permit requirement and extend Act 250 relief
- H.730 – Require notification and property tax reduction for Act 250/181 designation impacts
- H.805 – Streamline Act 250 permitting and provide property tax relief for restrictive land-use designations
- H.749 – Remove requirements to permanently preserve 30% and ultimately 50% of Vermont land under Act 59

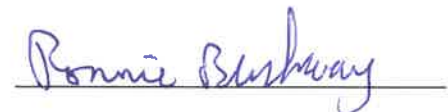
Thank you for the important role you play in advocating for what is best for our state. We urge you to proceed wisely and hope you will share our concerns as you address this legislation.

Respectfully Yours,

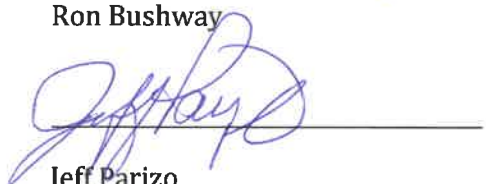
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Ellen Howrigan