



January 25, 2026

Dear Senator Ingalls,

**The Orleans County Fair Association and the Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) are seeking funding to enable the district to purchase a building at the fairgrounds in Barton.** In the past, the State of Vermont assisted the Poultney-Mettowee Conservation District with the purchase of a building with funding from the Capital Bill. We understand this is a budget adjustment year for the Capital Bill.

This project would have multiple benefits for our organizations, but also all of Orleans County.

- Provide funds to the Orleans County Fair Association, which would retain office space in the building and will provide virtual strategic transformation of the declining fair association.
- Enable the district to conduct business and expand staff and locally led core services.
- Provide a location for the district to host community meetings and workshops for landowners and farmers.
- Provide space for the district to store the conservation equipment it rents at cost to local farmers and landowners which are now at different locations throughout the county.
- Through a potential partnership with Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO), provide office space and a needed "NEK Resiliency Hub" location for disaster assistance, coordination and provision.

During the government shutdown in October, the Orleans County Conservation District Board formally voted to find new space for the district outside of the USDA office in Newport because of the impact of the repeated government shutdowns on the district's ability to support its constituents. We're excited by the ways a partnership with the fair association and potentially with NEKO would benefit Orleans County residents, as well as our organizations.

Is there a time we could meet with you to discuss the proposal and potential next steps?

Respectfully,

Sarah Damsell, Orleans County NRCD Executive Director

Art LaPlante, Orleans County Fair Association President