

To: Chairs Anne Watson and Amy Sheldon and Members of Senate Committee of Natural Resources and Energy and House Committee on Environment
From: Susan Ridzon, private citizen, Georgia VT
Re: H.481 and Stormwater Permit Challenges

I am writing to comment on H.481 and to share my perspective as a resident being affected by the so-called 3-acre stormwater requirement. Thank you for your work and consideration of this topic.

First, H.481. I am happy to see this bill trying to address some of the challenges associated with the 3-acre stormwater rule. Extension of the timelines makes sense, as does allocating consistent funding to help pay for the work. However, it remains optional for municipalities to assume full legal responsibility, and it appears that funding for HOAs, and other non-municipalities is not available. It also is not clear if funding will be available to municipalities who are permitting with other parties, such as HOAs, but are not taking full legal responsibility. **I would like to see the bill either require that municipalities or the State take full responsibility or at least allow funding for HOAs and other non-municipalities to offset the cost of compliance.** The State also needs to provide clear and friendly support to help affected parties understand and comply with the rules.

I am interested in this topic because in 2021, after months of trying to find affordable housing, I found and bought a townhome that I determined I could afford. About a year later I learned that my costs were going up dramatically because of a hard-to-understand 3-acre rule. Over the last 3 years our HOA has incurred roughly \$30,000 in expenses for permit engineering and permit renewals. In addition, members of our HOA have devoted countless hours finding a path forward with neighbors and the town, trying to understand the rules, and finding and hiring the professionals needed to guide us and get the permit. Senator Chittenden's [March 25 testimony](#) perfectly describes the impacts and challenges residents face with this rule. The process to understand and comply has not been easy, quick, clear, affordable, or sufficiently supported by the state. Frankly, what is being asked of residents is unacceptable.

What makes this even more frustrating is the fact that the requirement doesn't even make sense for our specific development, according to a Vermont waste water expert I asked to evaluate our situation for us. Our development is under 3 acres on our own and has a perfectly adequate stormwater system for our needs. But the rule lumps our HOA with residents in a nearby neighborhood putting us over the 3 acres, even though we have totally separate stormwater systems. When we asked the State to help us understand the rules and why our individual HOA was subject to the rule based on our unique circumstances, our valid and sincere questions were not addressed. We just received a terse statement that we must comply. The dismissive tone and approach were unnecessary and off-putting.

Of course, we all want to do our part to ensure clean water and follow the rules, so we teamed up with our neighboring HOA, as well as the town of Georgia, to obtain a permit and the funding to cover it. Fortunately, we were able to secure ARPA funds to cover the initial \$30K but now we're looking at an estimated \$90,000 in storm water system enhancements with no known funds or grants to offset these costs. This is a putting quite a strain on the residents in our HOAs who are faced with trying to comply and pay for these enhancements.

It does not make sense to put the onus of understanding and navigating these complicated stormwater rules and requirements on private residents. It is far too complicated and costly. It is much more appropriate for municipalities and/or the state to assume this responsibility and to ensure that stormwater costs are paid for in a fair and cost-effective manner. I kindly request that you amend H.481 accordingly.

Thank you for your time. Feel free to get in touch if I can be of assistance.