

Good morning, for the record Amber Perry, Vermont Farm Bureau, thank you for allowing me to come in to testify today.

Vermont Farm Bureau supports the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets to continue their oversight on water quality of nonpoint source discharges on farms, and farms with point source discharges be overseen by of the Agency of Natural Resources. We would also like to see the Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets to continue to maintain oversight and enforcement of the required ag practices.

We understand that the EPA has concerns about a “dual agency” approach. Our farmers know the staff at AAFM and are comfortable with them being on their farms. We see this dual approach being vital during the transition period. We acknowledge that ANR will have the authority to inspect and enforce while the AAFM can serve and act as a liaison.

We also would like to see Section 9- Community Stake Holder Group on Agricultural Water Quality remain within the bill. This shift from one agency to the other is bigger than just the people that have taken the time to come into this building to testify. Allowing this section to remain will allow more farmers and stakeholders to have an opportunity to weigh in and to be a part of the process. We all know that farmers are busy people, especially starting in the spring and going well into the fall. This stakeholder group should take that into consideration and plan meetings accordingly at a time that will be convenient for the farmers.

Regarding the permitting concern. Again, we need to be mindful of the farmers’ schedules and if we can ease the burden of the need for two permits verses one, I believe they would welcome that.

Farmers exhibit a profound commitment to their craft and community, often facing numerous challenges and hardships with resilience and determination. Their dedication to improving water quality in Vermont is a testament to this unwavering commitment. Despite the difficulties, they remain committed to their efforts to ensure that their practices contribute positively to the environment. They diligently work on their farms, adhering to required agricultural practices and striving to meet regulatory standards. This dedication is not only a reflection of their professional responsibilities but also of their deep connection to the land and their role in sustaining the natural resources of Vermont. Farmers' willingness to engage with regulatory agencies, adapt to new regulations, and participate in community stakeholder groups underscores their proactive approach to environmental stewardship and their commitment to the long-term sustainability of their farms and the broader ecosystem.

Thank you again for allowing me to come in today.