

March 20, 2017

Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Vermont General Assembly:

The undersigned municipal, business, environmental, and farming organizations recognize the value of clean water to all Vermonters, and urge the General Assembly to act this year on water quality funding.

Clean water is essential to Vermonters' health and the State's economy. Currently, the condition of our rivers and lakes is unacceptable. Pollutants entering our waterways have caused harmful algae blooms, closed beaches, public health threats, lowered property values, and lost business. In Vermont's Clean Water Act (Act 64) of 2015, the General Assembly found that:

Sufficiently addressing, improving, and forestalling degradation of water quality in the State in a sustainable and effective manner will be expensive and the burden of the expense will be felt by all citizens of the State, but without action the economic, cultural, and environmental losses to the State will be immeasurable.

The Vermont Treasurer reported that a minimum of an additional \$62.4 million per year for the next twenty years is needed to effectively implement new requirements established in Vermont's Clean Water Act and federal pollution agreements. These requirements include implementing best management practices on farm fields, treating stormwater runoff from our developed landscape, upgrading wastewater treatment facilities, and conserving sensitive lands. If not addressed by the State, the regulated communities – farmers, businesses, and municipalities – will bear the full cost of these projects.

We strongly urge the General Assembly to take, at a minimum, the following actions this year:

1. Enact the “bridge funding” of bonds and short-term revenue included in Governor Scott's budget proposal totaling \$50 million over the next two years.
2. Establish a working group as recommended by the House Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife Committee to develop an equitable and effective long-term funding method that includes a representative from key stakeholders including farmers, businesses, environmental groups, and municipalities.
3. Enact a simple per parcel fee to take effect in FY2020 as a backstop to provide surety that long-term water quality funding will go into effect once the “bridge funding” expires.

Combined, these actions are a necessary step to ensure the State meets the legal, economic, and moral obligation to provide clean, safe water to all Vermonters. We support spending additional time to develop an “all in,” long-term funding source such as an impervious surface or per acre

fee that is equitable and has a nexus to the pollution sources. However, we cannot afford further delay without reassurance that funding for clean water will materialize once the short-term sources dry up. The simple per parcel fee will serve as a trigger to ensure clean water funding is continuous regardless of the outcome of the working group.

Thank you for your consideration, and we hope you will support both short and long-term solutions for meeting Vermont's water quality funding needs.

Sincerely,

Conservation Law Foundation
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
Vermont Farm Bureau
Vermont Mayors Coalition
Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
Lake Champlain Committee
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Vermont Conservation Voters
Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club
Connecticut River Watershed Council
Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited