

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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Issue 7

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WEEK 7

With only two weeks until Town meeting break and four weeks till crossover the legislature still has not picked up the pace. Crossover is when House bills need to go to the Senate and Senate bills need to go to the House. If a bill does not make crossover it is considered dead until next session. However, there are always exemptions for this rule but time is ticking by.

I would also remind you that if you have a question or concern or would like to visit the statehouse please reach out to me. If you are interested in testifying on any issue I will also help schedule that.

WATER QUALITY

The House Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife committee continues to wrestle with options for funding to support clean water. The chart below shows the latest sources and the amounts they would raise.

As I have said previously this bill will go to House Ways and Means, where the hard work will be done, to determine what if any of the options would be used to fund clean water. As you can see at the bottom of the chart there is a “Working Group” to develop a recommendation for assessing a statewide parcel fee to generate revenue to fund water quality restoration. The working group would report back to the General Assembly by January 15 of 2018 with draft legislation to establish a statewide method of assessing an impervious surface fee or per parcel fee or both. Remember these are still just suggestions.

	What the fee or tax is	How much it raises	Where it goes
	Repeals sunset of 0.2% Clean Water Surcharge on Property Transfer Tax	\$4.7 to \$5 million	Clean Water Fund
Sec. 2	Increases fee on agricultural fertilizer from \$0.50 to \$25.00 per ton	\$930,000	98% deposited in Clean Water Fund 2% deposited in Agency of Ag special fund to run program

Sec. 5	Directs that fines collected by Agency of Agriculture for water quality violations be deposited in Clean Water Fund	\$175,000 to \$225,000	Clean Water Fund
Sec. 6	Directs that fines collected by ANR for water quality violations be deposited in Clean Water Fund	\$200,000	Clean Water Fund
Sec. 7	Directs that fines collected by Attorney General for water quality violations be deposited in Clean Water Fund	No estimate available	Clean Water Fund
Sec. 13	Increases the diesel tax one cent per gallon	\$690,000	Transportation Fund for State and municipal management of stormwater from roads
Sec. 15	Increases the gas tax one cent per gallon	\$3,000,000	Transportation Fund for State and municipal management of stormwater from roads
Sec. 16	Clean Water Affinity Card	Minimal	Clean Water Fund

Sec. 18	\$5.00 a night surcharge on room occupancy	\$18m	Clean Water Fund
Sec. 18	1% increase in rooms tax to 10% 1% increase in meals tax to 10% 1% increase in alcohol tax to 11%	\$5.3m rooms \$11.7m meals \$1.9m alcohol \$18.9m total	95% of rooms, meals, alcohol tax deposited in General Fund 5% of rooms, meals, alcohol tax deposited in Clean Water Fund
Sec. 21	Application of sales tax to rental of marina slip spaces, limousine services, parking spaces, self storage facilities	\$940,000 storage \$610,000 limos \$280,000 parking lots \$210,000 marinas \$2.04m total	0.75 percent of the revenue from sales and use taxes deposited in Clean Water Fund
Sec. 22	Application of use tax to rental of marina slip spaces, limousine services, parking spaces, self storage facilities	No estimate provided	0.75 percent of the revenue from sales and use taxes deposited in Clean Water Fund
Sec. 26	Working Group on Water Quality to recommend assessment of statewide	Estimate depends on recommended legislation	To be determined

	impervious surface fee, or per parcel fee, or both		
Total Estimated Revenue		Between \$48.6m and \$50m annually	

TILE DRAINAGE REPORT

The House and Senate Agricultural committees will hold a joint hearing on the tile drainage report Wednesday February 22 from 9:00 until 10:30. Jim Leland, from the Agency of Agriculture, will update the committees on the report. The following week, Wednesday March 1, the committees will again meet to hear from other interested parties on the tile drainage report. Miner Institute will be testifying on March 1 on the research that they have been conducting on tile drainage.

AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE LISTENING TOUR

Under the direction of newly appointed Ag Secretary, Anson Tebbetts, and Deputy Secretary, Alyson Eastman, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets has announced plans to host a statewide listening tour throughout the month of February. The public meetings, which will be held in Lyndonville, St. Albans, Brattleboro, and Middlebury, are designed to open the lines of communication between the Agency, the farming community, and the public.

“I am inviting all farmers, and all Vermonters interested in agriculture, to attend these meetings, to share thoughts and ideas about the future of farming in our state,” said Tebbetts. “I want to learn about the issues that matter most to our farmers, and how the Agency can support them.”

Most meetings will be held from 10 a.m. – noon and one in the evening

- Monday, Feb. 27 – Middlebury Parks & Recreation Gym
- Thursday, March 2 – St. Albans City Hall Auditorium
- Wednesday, March 15 – Pavilion Auditorium, Montpelier, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- For complete location details and directions, please visit <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/listeningtour2017>

FORESTLAND REPORT

Commissioner Snyder presented the Intergenerational Transfer of Forestland Report to the House Ways and Means committee Tuesday morning. The report was commissioned by the legislature last year.

From the report:

“Today, more than 2.9 million acres or 62% of Vermont’s forestland is owned by families and individuals. The demographics of these landowners are changing. Males over the age of 55

comprise over 65% of the population of forestland owners. Fifteen percent of Vermont's forestland is owned by people over the age of 75. As landowners age, the way that they transfer their land to younger generations will, at least in part, determine the future of Vermont's forests. The transfer of forestland in a way that keeps it intact will protect forests while the transfer of land in a way that results in smaller parcels will drive fragmentation and the degradation of forest integrity."

The report contains a number of recommendations, I encourage you to read the report, it can be found on the legislative page under reports for 2017.

FROM THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Economist Tom Kavet provided the House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee with some additional data related to H.93, a proposal to increase Vermont's minimum wage to \$15.00/hour by 2022. He noted that Vermont is currently tied as the sixth highest state minimum wage in the country and that increasing Vermont's minimum wage to \$15.00/hour in 2022 would likely put Vermont at or near the top of minimum wage rates nationally. In discussion with the Committee, Kavet talked about winners and losers under the proposal, explaining that most workers not impacted by the benefits cliff would be winners. He commented that businesses that can pass their costs on through higher prices would absorb the increased labor cost more easily. He added that businesses for which labor is a major cost of doing business, especially those who cannot pass on that increased cost, would be "losers" under the proposal. He noted that New Hampshire's minimum wage is set to the federal level. Businesses that compete on price with competitors in New Hampshire would likely find the proposal most difficult to absorb. The Committee is expected to continue their work on H.93.

ANR Listening Sessions

Secretary Of ANR, Julie Moore, invites business owners, planners, real estate agents and others with regular business before the Agency of Natural Resources to attend and share your experiences with the Agency. The Secretary wants to hear about opportunities to further improve the Agency's current permitting and regulatory systems to deliver better, more efficient business and organizational outcomes while protecting Vermont's natural resources. Below is a list of locations and dates where the listening sessions will occur.

St. Johnsbury: Thursday, February 23 from 4:00pm-5:00pm

Northeast Vermont Development Authority, 30 Eastern Avenue

Burlington: Friday, February 24 from 10:00am-11:00am

Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, 60 Main Street

Rutland: Wednesday, March 1 from 9:00am-10:00am

Rutland Economic Development Corp., 67 Merchants Row, 3rd Floor

Brattleboro: Thursday, March 2 from 11:00am-12:00pm

Marlboro Graduate Center, 28 Vernon Street (Hosted by Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.)

White River Junction: Thursday, March 2 from 2:00pm-3:00pm

Hotel Coolidge, 39 S. Main Street (Hosted by Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission)

No RSVP is required to participate in a discussion.

BILLS

H-251 An act relating to wind generation and trout habitat

This bill proposes to require that a certificate of public good may be issued for a wind generation facility exceeding 500 kilowatts only if the applicant demonstrates the proposed location does not drain into waters that provide habitat for native eastern brook trout or are managed as fisheries for wild brown trout.

H-261 An act relating to application of stormwater permitting to municipalities

This bill proposes to provide that compliance with the municipal roads stormwater general permit and the legacy stormwater general permit shall not be required in a municipality in which every water or water segment within the municipal boundaries is meeting the Vermont water quality standards and no water or water segment is listed as impaired.

H-262 An act relating to the licensing of nuisance wildlife control operators

This bill proposes to require persons engaged in nuisance wildlife control services to obtain a permit from the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife.

H-287 An act relating to ways used for vehicular travel

This bill proposes to:

(1) regulate the use of chains across public or private ways used for

vehicular travel;

(2) eliminate certain limitations that may exist on the liability of a person responsible for the installation of, or who owns or controls property with, a chain across a public or private way that the person knows or should know lawfully is used for vehicular travel.

H-289 An act relating to a registry for conservation rights and interests

This bill proposes to establish a registry for conservation rights and interests, including trail easements.

H-317 An act relating to valuing property subject to a use value appraisal at 25 percent of its fair market value

This bill proposes to establish that property receiving a use value appraisal be valued at 25 percent of its fair market value, rather than the use values established each year by the Current Use Advisory Board.

H-328 An act relating to the use of the herbicide glyphosate

This bill proposes, beginning on January 1, 2019, to prohibit the use of the herbicide glyphosate by State agencies and municipal governments. The bill would also, on passage, prohibit the application of the herbicide glyphosate: within 500 feet of a State water; on farms or other food sources; and in schools and other educational facilities.

H-331 An act relating to how to classify maple sugar lands for the purpose of use value appraisals

This bill proposes to require that any land subject to a use value appraisal which includes 75,000 or more maple taps must be enrolled as forestland.

H-336 An act relating to membership of the Fish and Wildlife Board

This bill would establish a Wildlife Management Advisory Board to advise the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife and the General Assembly on issues involving the protection, propagation, management, and conservation of all fish and wildlife in the State. The bill would rename the Fish and Wildlife Board as the Fish and Game Board. The bill also would require the appointment of six nonconsumptive users of wildlife to the Fish and Game Board.

Below is the link to the Vermont Legislative website
Legislature.vermont.gov

EVENTS OF INTEREST

18th Annual Vermont Dairy Producers Conference
Tuesday February 21, 2017

8:00 to 4:00

Sheraton Burlington Hotel and Conference Center
Register online at **vermontdairyproducers.com**

20th Anniversary of the 2 + 2 Program
Dairy Reception
Thursday March 30th, 2017
4:00 to 6:00
Cedar Creek Room
At the Statehouse

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Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, staying together is success”

– Henry Ford

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