

648 Symphony Woods Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20901/
1995 Hathaway Point Road
St. Albans Bay, VT 05478
August 15, 2014

Agriculture Secretary's Office
c/o Laura DiPietro
116 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620

Dear Secretary Ross:

As a property owner in St. Albans Bay, I attended the hearing held in St. Albans on July 16, related to the petition of the Conservation Law Foundation concerning agricultural practices and their affect on the Mississquoi Watershed. I found the hearing well run and informative, and was impressed by the thoughtful questions you posed to the speakers.

My family has owned property on St. Albans Bay since 1975. I have always considered the State of Vermont, and specifically St. Albans Bay, like a second home, and Lake Champlain and St. Albans Bay are treasured gems for me, my family and many others.

The agricultural practices that are negatively affecting the Mississquoi Watershed are also affecting St. Albans Bay, which has had increasing amount of seaweed and increasing numbers of algae blooms, which are not only a visual blight on the Bay, but also a health hazard.

The farmers who spoke at the hearing were concerned about laws and regulations being enforced in a rote manner, not taking into account the particulars of their land and operations. I understand their concerns, and fully support a system whereby representatives of the Department of Agriculture work closely with farmers whose land is deemed to include "critical sources" of agricultural run-off, to determine the best way to diminish or eliminate this run-off.

Voluntary programs will often garner significant but not total compliance, and I gather that many farmers are already involved in efforts to comply with regulations. However, there are some who apparently are operating in a manner that continues to produce significant run-off. As with many efforts to change behavior, it often takes both "carrot" and "stick" to change the behavior of a certain percentage of offenders. I fully support a system whereby farmers might be rewarded in some manner for compliance, and (after appropriate efforts to help them change) fined for non-compliance.

I fully realize that the above system would require the raising of money. You asked on several occasions about how much it would cost to address the problem. I do not have any more information about this than the speakers at that hearing. However, I do think

that the beauty and cleanliness of Lake Champlain is something all citizens of Vermont value, and hence, I hope that money can be found or raised by the citizens of Vermont to address these issues. I pay a rather hefty real estate tax each year, and would love to see some of that money go to such an effort.

The recent problems in Ohio with toxic algae blooms affecting drinking water on Lake Erie is something all citizens in Vermont should be concerned about, as there is an increasing amount of the same kind of algae on Lake Champlain and its bays that has so negatively affected the water supply on Lake Erie. Clearly there is a need to enforce the best agricultural practices, to do so in a manner that is palatable to the farmers, which may include some financial help. If the citizens of Vermont were to be informed of the price of doing nothing, I think they would prefer the price of addressing this problem.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Koenig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'S' at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Stephanie Koenig