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Subject: ARPA Funding Proposals for A&E tomorrow
Date: Thursday, December 16, 2021 1:22:01 PM

Good afternoon, Ag & Eco!

David and I took the lead on coming up with two ARPA funding proposals (articulated below) for our discussion tomorrow. The first is for a flood resilience funding strategy, which combines a few overlapping actions from our subcommittee and Rural Resilience & Adaptation. We've run this proposal by the co-chairs of RRA, who are supportive of this proposal. The second proposal is increased funding for our farm and forest economic sector and its associated ecological viability through existing programs. Looking forward to discussing you all tomorrow.

Best,
Lauren

I. A consistent theme across the Agriculture & Ecosystems and Rural Resilience & Adaptation subcommittees is the need to increase our investments in flood resilience, and realize the myriad co-benefits those investments will yield. Flood resilience, which is achieved through the restoration and reforestation of floodplains, wetlands, and river corridors, right-sizing culverts to reduce infrastructure vulnerability, removing dams, incentivizing water storage through expansion of easements, among other efforts, is a critical climate strategy for Vermont. Leveraging ARPA funds to support flood resilience would have lasting, positive impacts for Vermont and Vermonters, and would meet the ARPA eligibility criteria as follows:

- Funding would be used for implementable projects that support both built and natural infrastructure, and could be allocated by the 2024 deadline.
- Low-income Vermonters are more likely to live in flood hazard areas (e.g. 12% of mobile homes in mobile home parks are located in floodplains versus 4% of single family homes).
- Given Vermont's historic settlement patterns, many of our villages and downtown centers – our towns' economic hubs – are located in or near flood hazard areas.

Strategic investments should be directed by using existing tools, like AOT's [Transportation Resilience Planning Tool \(TRPT\)](#) and culvert upgrade inventory and DEC's [Functioning Floodplain Initiative](#).

Recommended ARPA investment: \$40-50 million

II. We recommend that the State of Vermont significantly increase funding to support the economic and ecological viability of small farm and forest landowners and businesses, and to increase options for small farm and forest landowners to remain successful in a globally competitive market for food and fiber products through investments in innovation. Supporting the economic health of these landowners is a direct investment in keeping Vermont's lands working – in so doing, this investment will not only advance our climate mitigation and adaptation goals, but will also advance rural prosperity and create local jobs. Two existing programs that are proven to be successful and which are called out in the Subcommittee's recommendation could be strengthened in the following manner: (1) Increasing the Working Lands Enterprise Fund to \$10-15 million and authorizing the use of these funds to support infrastructure investments as necessary to take advantage of new markets using sustainable production practices; and (2) Increasing the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's Farm and Forest Viability Program to \$10-15 million. Through these dramatic increases in our investment in Vermont's farmers and our forest landowners and businesses, we can ensure the long-term viability of these vital components of our state's ecology and economy.