

TO: Vermont Climate Council

FROM: Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittee

CC: Jane Lazorchak, Marian Wolz

DATE: October 7, 2022

SUBJECT: Recommendations for State Surplus Funding

At the request of the Vermont Climate Council, the Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittee met on Thursday, 9/29 to discuss opportunities for funding climate action using some of the State's surplus funds. Individual members submitted priorities to the co-chairs, which were then compiled and sent out to the full Subcommittee in advance of the meeting for consideration. The following eight actions have been elevated to the full Council for consideration by majority vote of the Subcommittee.

Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittee State Surplus Funding Recommendations:

- Support work identified as priority by the Just Transitions subcommittee **\$100k**
- Provide farms in Vermont with financial assistance for the implementation of climate change mitigation practices, including: soil-based practices that improve soil quality and nutrient retention. Assistance may take the form of programs that provide education, training, or instruction to farmers. **\$1M via Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets**
- Agriculture and Forestry Resilience & Viability grants to be made to eligible projects in the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative. **\$1M via Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets**
- **\$100k** for climate curriculum that includes traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)
- Provide enhanced technical assistance and support to municipalities and regions, including outreach and education for landowners and community members, to develop and implement town plans intended to maintain forest blocks and connecting habitat as authorized by Act 171, and effective zoning and subdivision bylaws to maintain forest blocks and connecting habitat. **\$500k**
- Use best available data and mapping to analyze existing portfolio of conserved agricultural lands to identify forest, wetland or natural community restoration opportunities and prioritize funding for these projects. **\$1.5M**
- Expand use of the Water Infrastructure Sponsorship Program (WISPr) to improve accessibility and use for restoration projects. **\$1M via Agency of Natural Resources**
- Fund a one-year commission and subsequent report that examines if language used in State of Vermont agencies regarding natural resources is inappropriate and/or references eugenics (e.g. low-grade trees, defective trees, working lands), with recommendations for how to make changes to address and resolve harm. **\$50k**

The Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittee would also like to acknowledge the influx of federal funds (e.g. Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act, Justice40 Initiative, etc.) to Vermont that could and should support the suite of actions in the Climate Action Plan, in order to quickly and effectively address climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. The specific actions recommended above represent only a small number of actions, in recognition of the limited funds available in the current State surplus, thus we implore the Climate Council to consider opportunities and effective means to allocate the aforementioned federal funds to meet the goals and requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act and create a more climate resilient Vermont.