

NRCS STATE & LOCAL POLICY CRITERION: VERMONT CASE STUDY

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Vermont Housing &



Conservation Board

Statutory Purpose

“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.”

10 V.S.A.15 §302



Farmland Conservation Program

Since 1987:

- 173,000 acres conserved
 - 808 farms conserved
 - \$96M in State Funds
 - \$87M in Federal Funds
 - \$3M annually from ACEP-ALE
- Certified Entity since 2016.
- 18 month pipeline: 85 projects, 15,000 acres

Why did we start using the State and Local Policy Criterion?

To reflect the varied Vermont agricultural landscape – hilltop farms are productive and valuable!



How do these parcels qualify for enrollment?

State Policy (VSA Title 10, Chapter 015, effective 1987 and amended as notated)

Vermont Statutes - Title 10: Conservation And Development - Chapter 015 : Vermont Housing And Conservation Trust Fund

Subchapter 001 : General Provisions – § 302. Policy, findings, and purpose

- (a) The dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont's agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands are of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.
- (b) In the best interests of all of its citizens and in order to improve the quality of life for Vermonters and to maintain for the benefit of future generations the essential characteristics of the Vermont countryside, and to support farm, forest, and related enterprises, Vermont should encourage and assist in creating affordable housing and in preserving the State's agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas and recreational lands, and in keeping conserved agricultural land in production and affordable for future generations of farmers.
- (c) It is the purpose of this chapter to create the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund to be administered by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to further the policies established by subsections (a) and (b) of this section. (Added 1987, No. 88, § 1, eff. June 11, 1987; amended 2011, No. 118 (Adj. Sess.), § 1; 2011, No. 142 (Adj. Sess.), § 3, eff. May 15, 2012.)

How do these parcels qualify for enrollment?

Vermont Statutes - Title 10 : Conservation And Development - Chapter 015 : Vermont Housing And Conservation Trust Fund Subchapter 003 : Powers And Duties - § 321. General powers and duties

(d) On behalf of the State of Vermont, the Board shall seek and administer federal farmland protection and forestland conservation funds to facilitate the acquisition of interests in land to protect and preserve in perpetuity important farmland for future agricultural use and forestland for future forestry use. Such funds shall be used to implement and effectuate the policies and purposes of this chapter. In seeking federal farmland protection and forestland conservation funds under this subsection, the Board shall seek to maximize State participation in the federal Wetlands Reserve Program and such other programs as is appropriate to allow for increased or additional implementation of conservation practices on farmland and forestland protected or preserved under this chapter.

(Added 1987, No. 88, § 1, eff. June 11, 1987; amended 1991, No. 93, § 16a, eff. June 26, 1991; 1995, No. 46, § 27; 1991, No. 62, § 54, eff. April 26, 1995; 2005, No. 71, § 219a; 2009, No. 1 (Sp. Sess.), § E.813.1; 2009, No. 110 (Adj. Sess.), § 12, eff. May 18, 2010; 2009, No. 156 (Adj. Sess.), § E.810, eff. June 3, 2010; 2011, No. 142 (Adj. Sess.), § 3, eff. May 15, 2012; 2015, No. 11, § 7.)

How do these parcels qualify for enrollment?

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Policy (updated as notated)

June 2016 Vermont Housing and Conservation Board – Policy on Funding Conservation of Agricultural Land

Goals of the VHCB Agricultural Program: It is the intent of the State of Vermont to perpetually protect and preserve agricultural lands, encourage sound soil management practices in accordance with generally accepted agricultural practices, preserve natural resources, maintain land in active agricultural use and make reasonable efforts to assure that conserved farmland is accessible and affordable to future generations of farmers. To accomplish these goals, and to promote a strong agricultural economy, VHCB will give priority to farmland conservation projects in strong farming communities, support agricultural innovation and diversification, and encourage projects that facilitate transfers to both new and established farmers.

April 20, 2017 Vermont Housing and Conservation Board – Conservation Easement Holding and Stewardship Policy

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (“VHCB”) makes grants to nonprofit conservation organizations, municipalities and certain state agencies for the purpose of conserving important agricultural lands, historic properties, outdoor recreation opportunities and natural areas. VHCB usually funds the purchase of a fee simple interest and/or the purchase of a conservation easement of perpetual duration. Grantee organizations that develop VHCB-funded conservation projects may, under a limited set of circumstances, co-hold the conservation easement resulting from the project and may also serve as a primary steward of that easement. Prior to assuming an easement co-holding or primary steward role, an applicant must demonstrate that it is participating in a stewardship program approved by Board staff.



How has it been working?

- Hugely important to the success of program.
- Avg of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of enrollments fall into this category.
- Straightforward, streamlined process.
- On par with Certified Entity status for importance.



Questions or
Comments?



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

THANK YOU



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