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## **Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Investment Bill Moves Forward** *House Agriculture Committee Votes Unanimously to Support the Bill*

MONTPELIER, VT—The Vermont House Agriculture committee gave their unanimous support to the Working Lands Enterprise Investment bill (H.496) Thursday morning with an 11-0 vote. The bill is expected to move to the Government Operations committee next. The bill comes out of the committee with strong support after several weeks of testimony and committee discussion. The bill would create the Working Lands Enterprise Fund and Board, and the intent of these is “to stimulate a concerted economic development effort on behalf of Vermont’s agriculture and forest products sectors by systematically advancing entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation.”

The Vermont Working Landscape Partnership (VWLP), a project of the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), has been supporting the bill. The VWLP celebrated this first step of the bill’s progress through the legislative process. Paul Costello, Executive Director of VCRD, remarked, “The committee fully understands the importance of the working landscape and has done a great job of creating a structure to support economic development efforts in the farm, food, and forest products sectors.”

Kate McCarthy, Sustainable Communities Program Director at Vermont Council on Natural Resources (VNRC) added, “The House Agriculture committee crafted a thoughtful bill that works strategically to make working lands viable – one of the best ways to promote stewardship of these important natural resources.”

The bill as passed by the House Agriculture committee and supporting explanatory documents can be found at: <http://vtworkinglands.org/programs/policy-councils/working-landscape/bill>.

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*The Vermont Working Landscape Partnership (VWLP) is a non-partisan and broad-based effort to support local agriculture and forestry, grow and attract farm and forest entrepreneurs, and conserve Vermont’s Working Landscape far into the future. The Partnership’s members believe that all Vermonters benefit from the state’s working landscape and everyone should contribute to ensure its future.*