

April 6, 2020

Dear Governor Scott,

The undersigned groups appreciate the hard work that your Administration is doing to address the unprecedented public health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus. As you know, our groups have a long history of working on a range of issues, and with people across Vermont. We are part of the community and feel the impact of this crisis along with all of our friends and neighbors.

We understand that in times of crisis, sometimes steps must be taken that deviate from the norm in order to address acute needs of Vermonters. At the same time, as groups whose missions are to protect and restore natural resources, promote sound environmental policies, and safeguard public health, we want to ensure that any actions taken by the government during this crisis are consistent with Vermont's long-standing tradition of environmental protection and sustainability.

To that end, we request that all Vermont Agencies, Boards and Commissions adhere to the following principles and take the following actions with regard to any changes in practice, process or policy in response to the COVID-19 crisis:

- Provide clear and easily accessible information regarding any changes in practice, process or policy for the public to be able to review. At a minimum, such information should be readily available on government websites. In addition, any changes should be announced so that the public is alerted about a change as it happens.
- Any change to policies or practices related to enforcing laws related to environmental and public health protection should state the specific rationale for the change; be made on a case by case basis and narrowly defined; be limited to impacts that are directly related to the public health emergency; be temporary; and under no circumstances authorize actions that will result in harm to public health or the environment.
- Any criteria or standard that must be met to protect the environment and public health should not be weakened.
- Any changes to the decision-making process for permits that affect the environment or public health should still allow for the public to have meaningful input into the permitting decision in a manner that complies with current guidelines for social distancing.
- Any delay to a proposed rule or policy required by law must include the rationale for the delay and the impact of the delay on the environment.

Thank you for your consideration,

Audubon Vermont
Conservation Law Foundation
Lake Champlain Committee
The Nature Conservancy in Vermont
Toxics Action Center
Vermont Conservation Voters
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Vermont Public Interest Research Group

