

1 H.812

2 Introduced by Representatives Pearson of Burlington and Hooper of

3 Montpelier

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Conservation and development; land use; statewide land use planning;

7 natural resources; energy; transportation; climate change impacts in

8 Vermont

9 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the

10 Secretary of Natural Resources to produce a report addressing the effects of

11 climate change in Vermont. The report will include a 20-year plan

12 recommending steps to address those effects.

13 An act relating to addressing the impacts of climate change in Vermont

14 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

15 Sec. 1. AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT;

16 ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IN VERMONT

17 (a) On or before November 1, 2015, the Secretary of Natural Resources

18 shall submit to the House and Senate Committees on Natural Resources and

19 Energy a report assessing the projected effects of climate change on Vermont's

20 natural resources and proposing a 20-year plan to mitigate those effects.

1 (1) As used in this section, “climate change” refers to any significant
2 change in the global climate lasting for an extended period, including change
3 due to human activities that affect the atmosphere’s composition, such as
4 burning fossil fuels, and that affect land surface, such as deforestation.

5 (2) In preparing this report, the Agency shall build on the assessment
6 and recommendations set forth in the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
7 Climate Change Adaptation Framework, prepared by Tetra Tech, Inc. and
8 released in May 2013, and shall refer to the findings of that document.

9 (b) The report shall focus on land use planning and infrastructure
10 improvement and shall include each of the following:

11 (1) Effects of climate change. An assessment of historical climatic
12 trends in Vermont, and of the projected future effects of climate change on
13 Vermont’s natural resources.

14 (2) Mitigation plan. A series of concrete recommendations to be
15 implemented by the State over the course of the next 20 years in order to
16 mitigate the effects of climate change on Vermont’s natural resources, food
17 resources, and economy. The mitigation plan shall address each of the
18 following:

19 (A) Statewide land use planning.

20 (i) The plan shall consider the feasibility of a statewide land use
21 plan that would identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas throughout

1 the State and where development should be allowed to accommodate changes
2 in population or to encourage dense development surrounded by countryside.

3 (ii) The plan shall identify contiguous forestlands and important
4 wildlife habitat areas and recommend measures to control development in
5 those areas to prevent forest fragmentation and increase habitat connectivity.
6 The plan shall consider the cost of a statewide conservation easement program
7 to bring large tracts of forestland under conservation easements.

8 (B) Stormwater infrastructure. The plan shall include an analysis of
9 the cost and feasibility of systematically replacing undersized culverts
10 throughout the State, in preparation for future large rain events similar to
11 Hurricane Irene; and shall consider increased investment in municipal
12 stormwater systems, and the phasing out of municipal combined sewer
13 systems.

14 (C) Food security. The plan shall analyze the percentage of farms
15 statewide that are within floodplains; evaluate increasing tracts of farmland in
16 upland areas in order to decrease the vulnerability of agricultural production
17 during large rain events; and recommend measures to increase investment in
18 the development of community gardens and community-owned food hubs to
19 encourage local production, processing, and distribution of food.

1 (D) Energy use and production.

2 (i) The plan shall consider and propose measures to increase the
3 efficient use of energy and deployment of renewable electric generation
4 facilities, such as solar electric generation; and shall analyze Vermont's
5 electric transmission capacity and determine where improvements are
6 necessary to connect renewable electric generation facilities to the grid.

7 (ii) The plan shall propose specific measures that should be
8 undertaken to meet the State's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals as
9 identified in 10 V.S.A. § 578.

10 (E) Transportation. The plan shall explore alternatives to
11 single-occupant vehicle commuting, including greater investment in park and
12 ride infrastructure, car-sharing programs, and increased public transportation
13 options; and shall consider the feasibility of installing more electric-vehicle
14 charging stations throughout the State to encourage the purchase and use of
15 electric and hybrid electric vehicles.

16 (c) In preparing the report, the Secretary shall consult with other State
17 agencies, affected parties, and members of the public, including the Secretaries
18 of Transportation and of Agriculture, Foods and Markets, the Commissioner of
19 Public Service, and the Chair of the Natural Resources Board.

20 (d) Prior to submitting the report, the Agency shall issue a draft report for
21 public comment. On issuance of the draft report, the Agency shall provide

1 notice of a public meeting on the report and an opportunity to submit written
2 comment. The notice shall include the date and location of the meeting, and a
3 brief description of the report and mitigation plan, and the deadline for written
4 comments. The dates of the public meeting and deadline for written comments
5 shall be not less than 30 days after issuance and publication of the notice.

6 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

7 This act shall take effect on passage.