

2024 Legislative Wrap-Up



The Flood Safety Act – Act 121. Following the flooding of 2023, the Legislature was compelled to pass impactful regulatory solutions that would improve our collective flood preparedness. The primary focus of Act 121 is on limiting development in high flood hazard areas, known as river corridors. This will effectively conserve 5,500 miles of river corridor, corresponding to ~200,000ac protected from development/conversion, and in turn, protecting Vermonters who may have otherwise inhabited these dangerous, erosive zones. Act 121 also creates better measures for reversing the State’s wetland loss trend, requiring wetland restoration efforts for any wetland converted for development at a 2:1 ratio (what is known as a net-gain policy). It also creates improved efficiency for Vermont’s Dam Safety Program, better building standards for floodplain development, and a ban on polystyrene dock foam, which pollutes our waterways with each passing storm. Together, Act 121 represents a comprehensive approach to Vermont’s flood resilience and water quality, and we were grateful to have been a lead advocate for it. It passed into law by the Legislature, without the Governor’s signature.

The “Bee Bill” (H.706). This bill follows New York’s state leadership in banning the sale of seeds treated with a group of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, consequently improving pollinator health and restoring biodiversity. This passed a gubernatorial override yesterday.

Make Big Oil Pay – Act 122. This is a first-in-the-nation law that seeks to require oil companies to compensate Vermont for climate change-driven damages. It passed into law by the Legislature, without the Governor’s signature.

Renewable Energy Standard Modernization (H.289). Changes to Vermont’s Renewable Energy Standard (RES) will now make Vermont only the second state in the country to deliver 100% renewable electricity by 2035, the equivalent of removing 160,000-250,000 cars off the road. This passed a gubernatorial override yesterday.

Act 250 Modernization (H.687). Representing a seven-year effort, Act 250 has been officially amended to improve consistency and efficiency, create new natural resource tiers to streamline environmental review while promoting well-sited housing, and reduce forest fragmentation. This passed a gubernatorial override yesterday.