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VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Press Release

New Report Outlines Priority Actions to Improve Vermont's Water Quality

MONTPELIER, Vt. —Vermont's Clean Water Initiative was released today by the Agency of Natural Resources. Required by the Vermont General Assembly, this report outlines the priority actions needed to improve water quality statewide and recommends funding options to meet the first stage of funding needs for these improvement programs. This report also fulfills an obligation to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which is overseeing Vermont's efforts to control pollution into Lake Champlain.

"Clean water is essential to all Vermonters," said Governor Peter Shumlin. "This report is another important step forward in our effort to protect our streams, rivers, ponds and lakes."

Written in collaboration with the Agency of Transportation, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Agency of Agriculture, Foods and Markets, the report summarizes lessons learned from previous clean water efforts and recommends strategies for building on those lessons to restore and protect the state's waters.

The strategies include:

- increasing the capacity of state and local partners to meet clean water goals;
- updating accepted farming and logging practices;
- improving stormwater runoff management in parking lots and roads;
- restoring and protect river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and forest cover; and
- increasing investments in municipal wastewater treatment infrastructure.

Implementing these practices will benefit water quality, safeguard Vermont's tourism industry, and create new jobs. The report also outlines potential funding initiatives, including a mix of federal, state, and private funds, for the legislature to consider.

"The people of Vermont care deeply about clean water and are committed to protecting it -- we are responding to that sentiment in releasing this report," said David Mears, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. "The report provides a map to achieve our goals and we look forward to discussing it with the Legislature this session."

Vermont's Agriculture Secretary Chuck Ross agreed. "Clean water is a critical priority to everyone in the Vermont community. Only through a concerted, collective effort will we meet

our goals. That's why I'm so pleased so many stakeholders in our community are joining in this initiative – by working together, we will find ways to improve the water quality of our state.”

State agencies will be working with federal partners, municipalities, farmers, businesses, loggers, environmental advocates, and landowners to implement the priority actions as part of the clean water initiative to reduce phosphorus runoff in the Lake Champlain Basin and statewide. These coordinated efforts will serve as a model for water quality actions to be applied across the state.

On a related note, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced that it will be holding public meetings in western Vermont on November 17–19 to discuss the next steps in the Lake Champlain cleanup process. As part of those meetings, the priority actions in this report that affect that process will be reviewed in greater depth.

For more information about the EPA's November meetings and to download the report, go to the Department of Environmental Conservation's Restoring Lake Champlain website at <http://www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/erp/champlain/>