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**Sent:** Tuesday, June 16, 2015 11:44 AM
**To:** Coriell, Scott
**Subject:** Gov. Peter Shumlin Signs Clean Water Bill


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
June 16, 2015

### Gov. Peter Shumlin Signs Clean Water Bill

**BURLINGTON** – On the shores of Lake Champlain, Gov. Peter Shumlin today signed into law the most comprehensive legislation to address the problem of polluted storm water runoff into Vermont's lakes and waterways in the history of the state. The legislation (H.35) recognizes that clean water is fundamental to Vermont's quality of life and economy and gives the state the authority and capacity to control pollution and keep waterways free from the most significant threats to these shared resources.

"This bill is not only about cleaning up Vermont's waterways and Lake Champlain, it is about protecting our economy and a natural habitat that binds Vermonters tightly to our state and inspires others to put roots down here," Gov. Shumlin said. "In short, this bill is about protecting what makes Vermont so special. Cleaning up our waterways won't happen overnight, but this bill puts us on a path to ensure that future generations of Vermonters grow up to enjoy the natural beauty that has defined this state since the beginning."

Recognizing the hard work of the many who helped to get this bill over the finish line, the Governor signed H.35 in two parts, at Waterfront Park in Burlington and St. Albans Bay State Park in St. Albans. The Governor specifically thanked the legislature, particularly the House Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources, Ways and Means, and Agriculture Committees; the Senate Natural Resources, and Energy, Finance, and Agriculture Committees; and the environmental, farming, and community organizations for their collaborative work helping to craft this legislation.

The Governor made cleaning up Lake Champlain and other Vermont waterways a priority at the beginning of the 2015 legislative session, calling eroding water quality the greatest threat to Vermont's local environment and dedicating the second half of his Inaugural Address to the issue. In that speech, the Governor pledged to be a partner in the efforts already underway to enhance water quality in Vermont and marshal the resources of the state to build on the good work being done. H.35 does that by giving state government additional tools, resources, and the obligation to reduce polluted storm water runoff from farm fields, roads, parking lots, and other developed areas. Specifically, H.35 will allow the state to:

- Assist towns in meeting their obligation to maintain roads to prevent runoff leading to erosion, which will keep nutrients and sediment out of Vermont's water, by helping them implement modern storm water management systems that capture and treat the polluted runoff from roads, streets, and parking lots.

- Direct significant new resources to help farmers and loggers reduce water pollution from their operations, keep livestock out of Vermont's streams, and seek more careful management of tilling practices and manure application.
- Redouble efforts – working with Attorney General Bill Sorrell – to enforce water quality regulations in the Lake Champlain Basin and around Vermont.
- Add teeth to hold the relatively few farmers not already doing the right thing more accountable by denying the tax benefit of current use if they do not come into compliance and follow the practices that prevent pollution, like the state does for forest landowners.

Vermont's Clean Water Initiative, as supported by H.35, is funded with a combination of increased federal dollars as well as money from the capital budget, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), and a new dedicated state Clean Water Fund.

The capital budget includes $6.75 million for technical assistance and direct investment in water quality projects in the Lake Champlain Basin and around the state. This includes $1.6 million in state matching funds which will leverage $8.2 million in federal EPA grants for a total of $9.8 million for low-interest loans to municipalities through the clean water state revolving fund. The capital budget also increases to $3.75 million funding for innovative storm water management projects, and $1.4 million in funding for the Agency of Agriculture's cost sharing program for livestock fencing and other agricultural practices. The Transportation bill also includes $3.2 million for storm water retrofits and other projects to reduce polluted runoff from our back roads.

To assist communities and partners in restoring and protecting Vermont's waterways, H.35 sets up a Clean Water Fund to be funded with a 0.2 percent surcharge on the property transfer tax, which will raise $5.3 million in FY2016. The Clean Water Fund is also set up in such a way to allow for additional federal and private funding, including a generous donation of $5 million from Keurig Green Mountain.

"Vermont's rivers and lakes are critical to our economy and quality of life," said House Speaker Shap Smith. "This law represents the culmination of many years of work by stakeholders, lawmakers, and countless Vermonters. By taking this step, we renew our commitment to clean water."

"Clean water is simply the most fundamental and essential element in a healthy environment," said Chair of Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee Christopher Bray. "H.35 is a thoughtful blueprint for an effective, wide-ranging program to protect and clean up all the waters of our state. I want to thank all my partners for taking up this immense challenge and for creating a program that will benefit Vermonters today and for generations to come."

"The Vermont Clean Water Act is a big deal for all of the waters of Vermont," said Rep. David Deen, Chair of the House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources. "The same water quality protection techniques that will reduce phosphorous discharges in the Lake Champlain watershed and reduce blue green algae blooms will reduce nitrogen discharges in the Connecticut River watershed and reduce the Long Island Sound dead zone."

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