

State of Vermont
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
103 South Main Street, 10 South
Waterbury, VT 05671-0601
www.vtfpr.org

Agency of Natural Resources

[fax] 802-244-1481
[tdd] 800-253-0191

January 4, 2010

Dear County Forester:

I write to follow up on our discussion at the County Forester annual meeting about the Use Value Appraisal (UVA) policy.

It was clear that—because of the significant rural economic activity it generates; its important contribution to the conservation of our working landscape; and the environmental benefits to all Vermonters—this policy is strongly supported among our department's County Foresters.

The legislative majority's hasty and shortsighted mandate to cut \$1.6 million out of this important rural economic development tool would be penny wise and pound foolish—a short term budget cut that stifles economic activity and further weakens critically important legacy industries. In addition, the majority's proposed cut would also constitute a property tax increase.

Over the time since our meeting, Secretary Wood and I have been working closely with colleagues across the Administration to preserve to the greatest extent possible the economic value of the Current Use policy. We understand that the best way to balance the budget is to grow the economy.

Governor Douglas agrees that our priority must be making budgetary decisions that will stimulate economic activity, for both the short and long term, rather than stifle it. As a result, the Administration will recommend to the Legislature that UVA not be cut by the \$1.6 million called for by the Legislature. This will be reflected in the Governor's budget.

While not ideal, we will consider a one year moratorium on new enrollments for next year. A moratorium on enrollment would reduce upward pressures for FY12 by about \$1.5 million and provide the State of Vermont, and all stakeholders, with an opportunity for a more informed discussion (free from a last minute and arbitrary budget cutting target) about the value of this program and the best ways to improve its efficiency and increase the economic activity it generates.



**FORESTRY
CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION**

As we move forward, I encourage you to engage our constituents in this important dialogue.

Thank you for your advocacy for this important economic policy and your continued counsel on this matter and others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason G. Gibbs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jason G. Gibbs
Commissioner