

MEMORANDUM

To:

Joint Fiscal Committee Members

From:

Nathan Lavery, Fiscal Analyst

Date:

June 1, 2012

Subject:

Grant Request

Enclosed please find two (2) items that the Joint Fiscal Office has received from the administration.

JFO #2566 – \$90,000 grant from the Institute for Intergovernmental Research to the Vermont Department of Public Safety. These funds will be used to comply with the provisions of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act through purchase and implementation of systems related to sex offender management.

[*JFO received 5/25/12*]

JFO #2567 – \$221,000 donation (in form of land value) from the Vermont Land Trust to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). This donation represents the difference between the appraised value of the donated property (\$296,000) and the purchase price (\$75,000) to be paid by DEC. The property is a 269 acre parcel located in Canaan and Lemington, and will become a Wildlife Management Area.

[*JFO received 5/25/12*]

Please review the enclosed materials and notify the Joint Fiscal Office (Nathan Lavery at (802) 828-1488; nlavery@leg.state.vt.us) if you have questions or would like an item held for Joint Fiscal Committee review. Unless we hear from you to the contrary by June 15 we will assume that you agree to consider as final the Governor's acceptance of these requests.

PHONE: (802) 828-2295

FAX: (802) 828-2483



State of Vermont

Department of Finance & Management 109 State Street, Pavilion Building Montpelier, VT 05620-0401

[phone] 802-828-2376 [fax] 802-828-2428 Agency of Administration

SPO 2567

	FIN	IANCE &			F VERMO	NT 'REVIEW FOR	M	
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Grant Summary:			Land donation of 269 acres in Canaan and Lemington to become a Wildlife Management Area					
Date:			5/1/2012	2			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
Department:			ANR- D	EC 6140	020500			
Legal Title of Grant:			Johnson Farm Land Donation					
Federal Catalog #:			N/A					
Grant/Donor Nan	ne and Add	ress:	Vermon	t Land Tr	ust, Montpelie	r, VT		
Grant Period:	From:		To:					
Grant/Donation			\$221,00 purchase	0 (Differe e price of	nce between th \$75,000.00)	ne appraised value	of \$296,000.00 and the	
	SFY	1	SFY		SFY 3	Total	Comments	
Grant Amount:	\$221,	000	\$(0	\$0	\$221,000		
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Additional Comm								
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Secretary of Admir	nistration ,					nd 15/0/1;	(Initial)	
Sent To Joint Fisca	l Office			· <u> </u>	**************************************		Date	
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RECEIVED

MAY 25 2012

JOINT FISCAL OFFICE

STATE OF VERMONT REQUEST FOR GRANT ACCEPTANCE (Form AA-1)

BASIC GRANT INFORM	IATION			
1. Agency:	Natural Resources			
2. Department:	Fish and Wildlife		·····	
3. Program:	Land Donation			
4. Legal Title of Grant:				
5. Federal Catalog #:				
<u> </u>				
6. Grant/Donor Name and	Address:			
	st, Montpelier, Vermont			
	rom:	To:		
7. Grant I crious				
8. Purpose of Grant:				
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	providing public access f			
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9. Impact on existing prog		nted.		
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	life dependent activities			
	nfluenced wetlands.	and conservation of sign	meant whethe habit	it merading the
10. BUDGET INFORMAT				
	SFY 1	SFY 2	SFY 3	Comments
Expenditures:	FY 2012	FY	FY	
Expenditures: Personal Services	FY 2012	\$	\$	
			\$ \$	
Personal Services	\$	\$	\$	
Personal Services Operating Expenses	\$ \$ \$75,000	\$ \$	\$ \$	
Personal Services Operating Expenses Grants	\$ \$ \$75,000	\$ \$ \$	\$ \$ \$	
Personal Services Operating Expenses Grants Tor Revenues:	\$ \$ \$75,000	\$ \$ \$ \$	\$ \$ \$	
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Personal Services Operating Expenses Grants Tor Revenues: State Funds: Cash	\$ \$75,000 tal \$75000 \$ \$75,000	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	
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STATE OF VERMONT REQUEST FOR GRANT ACCEPTANCE (Form AA-1)

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PERSONAL SERVICE INFORMATION 11. Will monies from this grant be used to fund one or more Personal Service Contracts? Yes No If "Yes", appointing authority must initial here to indicate intent to follow current competitive bidding process/policy. Appointing Authority Name: Agreed by: (initial) 12. Limited Service Position Information: # Positions Title
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Total Positions
12a. Equipment and space for these
positions:
13. AUTHORIZATION AGENCY/DEPARTMENT
I/we certify that no funds Signature: Date: Date
beyond basic application
preparation and filing costs Title: Patrick Berry, Commissioner, Department of Fish and Wildlife
have been expended or
committed in anticipation of Joint Fiscal Committee Date:
approval of this grant, unless
previous notification was Title: Deb Markowitz, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources
made on Form AA-1PN (if
applicable):
14. SECRETARY OF ADMINISTRATION
(Secretary or designee signature)
Approved:
15. ACTION BY GOVERNOR
Check One Box:
Accepted 1
(Governar's signature)
Rejected
16. DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED
Required GRANT Documentation
Request Memo Notice of Donation (if any)
Dept. project approval (if applicable) Grant (Project) Timeline (if applicable) Request for Extension (if applicable)
□ Notice of Award □ Request for Extension (if applicable) □ Grant Agreement □ Form AA-1PN attached (if applicable)
Grant Budget
End Form AA-1

September 13, 2011

8 Bailey Avenue Montpelier, VT 05602 (802) 223-5234 (802) 223-4223 fax www.vlt.org

REGIONAL OFFICES

Central Vermont 8 Bailey Avenue Montpelier, VT 05602 (802) 223-5234

Champlain Valley P.O. Box 850 Richmond, VT 05477 (802) 434-3079

Northeast Kingdom P.O. Box 427 St. Johnsbury, VT 05819 (802) 748-6089

Southeast Vermont and Mountain Valley 54 Linden Street Brattleboro, VT 05301 (802) 251-6008

Southwest Vermont and Mettowee Valley 10 Furnace Grove Road Bennington, VT 05201 (802) 442-4915 Patrick H. Berry, Commissioner Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department 103 South Main Street Waterbury, VT 05671-0501

Re: Letter of Agreement for the Johnson Farm: VLT Conveyance of 269-Acre Natural Area Portion to VT Fish & Wildlife

Dear Commissioner Berry:

This letter serves to identify the responsibilities of the State of Vermont, Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) regarding the conveyance of the 269 acres of the natural area portion of the Johnson Farm in Canaan and Lemington, Vermont from VLT to the DFW. In addition by signing this letter, it provides VLT with adequate assurance of DFW's commitment to contribute to this project, accept the 269 acres as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and therefore enable VLT to invest organizational and financial resources toward completion of the project.

I. Mutual Goals of the Project

The goals of the project are to conserve 586 acres of farmland to be sold to a qualified farm buyer and to convey 269 acres of wildlife habitats to DFW to be managed as a WMA. The Johnson Farm is a large, productive and well-known dairy operation that plays an important role in the local economy. The farm is also notable for its significant habitat diversity, its long and scenic Connecticut River frontage, and an abundance of significant natural features. The Johnson agricultural lands are interspersed with valuable oxbow wetlands, shrub wetlands, emergent marshes, and floodplain forests. The plan developed by VLT and its consulting conservation partner, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), in conjunction with the Johnsons and DFW will: 1) prevent development, fragmentation, and degradation of the core farmland, ensuring continued productive agricultural use; 2) enhance high priority natural features on the property by protecting and restoring floodplain forest and wetland areas, expanding Connecticut River and tributary buffers improving fish and wildlife habitat, and protecting water quality; and 3) provide public access to the Connecticut River, the 269 acres of natural areas to be conveyed to DFW and the special treatment areas located on the farmland parcel.

In support of these goals, we seek to achieve a number of objectives, including the following:

- Conservation of 586 acres of farmland owned by Bill and Ursula Johnson by their conveyance of a conservation easement to VLT, VHCB and VAAFM;
- VLT will purchase of the 586 acres of conserved farmland and the adjacent 269 acres of natural areas from the Johnsons;
- VLT will execute a request for proposals leading to the identification of and sale to a qualified farm buyer of the conserved farmland;
- VLT shall convey the 269 acres of wildlife habitats to DFW to be managed as a Wildlife Management Area;
- VLT shall convey to DFW the public access and management rights within the riparian buffer areas and special treatment areas (146 acres) on the conserved farmland in exchange for renewable leases by DFW to the current and future farm owners for the use of the 50 acres of agricultural lands located within the 269 acres of wildlife habitats.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

Project Funding: DFW will secure \$75,000 in funding from the Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program through the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) or \$50,000 for the Duck Stamp Fund for associated costs in exchange for its acquisition of the 269 acres of wildlife habitats on the Johnson Farm. DFW submitted an application for said funds on June 30, 2011 to the DEC and the funding will be awarded during the fall of 2012. DFW will pay VLT said \$75,000 or \$50,000 for the conveyance of the wildlife habitats from VLT to DFW which is currently expected to occur no later than May 31, 2012. VLT will take responsibility for securing all other necessary funding for the project.

<u>PILOT Presentations/Town Support</u>: VLT and DFW will work collaboratively to secure the necessary town support and approvals for VLT's conservation of the farm parcel and DFW's acquisition of the wildlife habitats.

<u>Legal Documents and Closing(s)</u>: VLT will be responsible for drafting all necessary and relevant legal documents and all tasks related to the closing with the Johnsons, the farm buyer and DFW. In addition, VLT will be responsible for securing the necessary survey work and permits necessary to separately convey the farm parcel and the wildlife habitats.

DFW will work collaboratively with VLT and the farm buyer to finalize the necessary documents to facilitate a timely closing on the conveyance of both the farm parcel and the wildlife habitats. Said documents will include: the deed from VLT to DFW, the lease between the farm owner and DFW on the agricultural lands within the WMA it acquires from VLT, the assignment of the public access provision of the farm conservation easement and the management rights agreement between the farm buyer and DFW for the special treatment areas and riparian buffer areas on the farm parcel.

DFW will be responsible for all necessary approvals for its acquisition of the 269 acres WMA from VLT, including the approvals of the Governor and Joint Fiscal Office.

<u>Due Diligence</u>: DFW will accept title to the wildlife habitats from VLT "as is" with no further conditions, relying on the following reports to be obtained by VLT for the benefit of VLT and DFW:

- Hazardous Waste: VLT is securing a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for its purchase of the Johnson Farm. This report will run to the benefit of DFW in support of its acquisition of the natural areas. Unless this assessment results in the need for a Phase II assessment, VLT and DFW will not require any further evaluation.
- Title Examination: VLT has secured a title certification of the Johnson Farm and this title report shall run to the benefit of DFW in support of its acquisition of the natural areas. DFW will not require any further title examination. At its election, DFW will be responsible for securing and paying for an owner's title insurance policy.

Publicity and Outreach. Through the duration of the project VLT will lead the public relations effort with support from TNC and DFW. This includes announcements of the funding awards and all communications with media including printed material, such as press releases. Outreach materials and all messaging during and after the project shall be jointly approved by TNC and VLT. The work of both VLT and TNC should be acknowledged and the benefits of the partnership between VLT, TNC and DFW should be promoted. In addition, it is critical that all partners fully acknowledge the role of all funders including New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (MEF), VHCB and USDA NRCS.

Conservation Easement. The 586-acre Johnson farmland parcel conservation easement will be held by VLT, VHCB and VAAFM. During the period of VLT's ownership of the property, VHCB will be the primary steward of the conservation easement but upon VLT's conveyance of the property to the farm buyer, VLT will become the primary steward of the conservation easement. The 269 acres of wildlife habitats will be conveyed to DFW without any conservation restrictions other than preexisting CREP contracts on portions of the riparian buffer that will limit public access in these areas through the term of the contract, about seven years. Information about the CREP contracts has been provided to DFW. DFW will be obligated to lease back the agricultural fields to the farm owner in exchange for the public access and management rights within the river buffer area and special treatment areas on the farm parcel.

This is a very exciting opportunity and we look forward to working together to achieve the project goals. Please counter-sign this letter, return the original to me and keep a copy for your records.

Sincerely,

Director of Conservation Programs

Approved:

9/23/11

Patrick Berry, Commissioner

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department



Fish and Wildlife Department Barre District Natural Resources Office 5 Perry Street, Suite 40 Barre, VT 05641 www.vtfishandwildlife.com

[phone] 802-479-4405 [fax] 802-476-0129 Agency of Natural Resources

MEMORANDUM

To:

Sarah London, Governor's Legal Counsel

From:

Jane Lazorchak, Land Acquisition Coordinator

Date:

March 21, 2012

RE:

Governor's Approval for the Fee Acquisition of 5 parcels in two separate ownerships (Bill and Ursula Johnson and Gerald and Jacqueline Leigh) in the Towns of Lemington and Canaan.

Enclosed is an approval to be signed by Governor Shumlin for the acceptance of 283-acre s by the State of Vermont. The Fish and Wildlife Department is acquiring this land in order to provide permanent protection of public access for hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, other wildlife dependent activities and conservation of significant wildlife habitat including Connecticut River influenced wetlands. The total estimates set for the project include \$85,000 for the Leigh parcel and \$1,750,000 for the Johnson Farm. The Fish and Wildlife Department's contribution to this project total \$160,000 and come from a \$75,000 Ecosystem Restoration Grant from the Department of Environmental Conservation, \$35,000 in Duck Stamp Funds and a \$50,000 grant from the Connecticut River Mitigation Enhancement Fund. Other significant sources of funding contributed to this project come from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Connecticut River Mitigation Enhancement Fund and the Pew Charitable Trust.

Included with the Governor's approval memo are two maps of the project, a copy of the review and approval by the Agency Land Acquisition Review Committee and copies of the letters signed by the towns of Lemington and Canaan Select Boards stating town support for the state acquisition of these parcels.

If you have any questions regarding this easement project, please contact me directly at 479-4405 or at jane.lazorchak@state.vt.us, thank you.

cc:

Patrick Berry, Commissioner

John M. Austin, Lands and Habitat Program Director



Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioner's Office 103 South Main Street 10 South Waterbury, VT 05671-0501 802-241-3730

TO:

Peter Shumlin, Governor

THROUGH:

Deb Markowitz, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources

FROM:

Patrick Berry, Commissioner, Department of Fish and Wildlife

SUBJECT:

Department of Fish and Wildlife, Fee Acquisition, Johnson Farm

Conservation Project, Lemington and Canaan, VT

Recommendation: Approve the acquisition of 283-acres on 5 parcels of land to create a new Wildlife Management Area.

Description of Project

The Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have invited the Fish and Wildlife Department (FWD) to collaborate on a project to permanently protect a large dairy farm along the upper Connecticut River. The property is known as the Johnson Farm in Canaan and Lemington, Vermont and encompasses 1,023 acres along over six miles of river shoreline. The Johnson Farm is notable for its significant habitat diversity, its long and scenic Connecticut River frontage, and abundance of significant natural features. It is also a large, productive and well-known dairy farm which plays an important role in the local economy. The agricultural lands are interspersed with high quality oxbow wetlands, scrub-shrub swamps, emergent marshes, and floodplain forests. VLT and TNC have been presented with a unique opportunity to work with owners Bill and Ursula Johnson to craft a conservation strategy that will:

- a) protect and enhance high priority natural features including floodplain forest and wetland habitats, expanding and enhancing Connecticut River and tributary buffers, and protecting water quality;
- b) prevent residential development, fragmentation and degradation of the core farmland, ensuring continued productive agricultural use, and;
- c) prepare the property, through various protection mechanisms and agreements, for a transition out of the Johnson family's ownership that will include a mix of agricultural and conservation ownerships.

The Johnson Farm supports over eight miles of river and stream frontage, including 6.1 miles along the Connecticut River, 0.4 miles along Leach Creek, 0.9 miles on Capon Brook, and 0.6 miles along Willard Stream. Most of this shoreline area has well established riparian habitat or was subject to an extensive buffer restoration project in 2005-2006 through the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Approximately 192 acres (18%) of the Johnson Farm is covered with open or shrub

wetlands. The majority consists of old "oxbows", former river channels now dominated by alder swamp or sedge meadow. Five outstanding oxbow wetland complexes incorporate eight different wetland community types. Most are in good condition without invasive species, and the project will enlarge areas where at present only minimal buffers separate them from adjacent land uses. The wetland natural community types include alder swamp, sedge meadow, shallow emergent marsh, deep broadleaf marsh, cattail marsh and river mud shore. Approximately 21 acres (2%) of the Johnson Farm is covered by seven small floodplain forests, ranging in size from 0.8-6.7 acres. Most are in good to very good condition, though small and in an agricultural setting. Two uncommon plant species have been discovered as well, Wiegand's wild rye (*Elymus wiegandii*) and satiny willow (*Salix pellita*) The Connecticut River is also an important travel corridor along the Atlantic Flyway for many species of migratory birds, especially waterfowl. Based on this assessment of habitat on the property, the predicted number of bird species for this area is 185 species, of which 99 would likely breed on the Johnson Farm property.

In addition to natural heritage and agricultural values, the Johnson property holds great recreational significance, treasured locally for duck-hunting and fishing. Parts of this site will make an excellent Wildlife Management Area. The FWD has worked collaboratively with TNC and VLT to determine the boundaries of the area that would come to the state. Following significant research, field verification and negotiation with the Johnsons, a map of the division between the expanded natural areas and a future farm property has now been completed and is included with this package (See Exhibit 1). The configuration includes 266 acres of the property to be permanently protected, through public ownership as a Wildlife Management Area. This acreage encompasses the majority of the high quality oxbow ponds, shrub-scrub swamps, emergent marshes, and floodplain forests located on the property. This configuration also includes an additional 100 acres that are currently farmland that will be restored after acquisition to wetland or buffer.

In addition to the Johnson Farm itself, an opportunity has presented itself to add a small but strategically-located parcel to the larger Johnson Farm Conservation Project. This 16.7 acre parcel is owned by Gerald and Jacqueline Leigh. It is surrounded on three sides by the Johnson Farm project (See Exhibit 2). Abutting it to the north and east is a portion of the farm that will be conveyed to the Fish and Wildlife Department (FWD), which contains a large and beautiful oxbow wetland complex with some of the best waterfowl habitat on the entire property. To the south, the Leigh property abuts natural area that will remain with the farm but will be protected in the farm easement as a "special treatment area" (STA). This STA includes the stream that drains the swamp directly into the Connecticut. As such, the FWD seeks approval to add the Leigh parcel to the WMA because it provides an excellent site for public access – for parking and for access along a mowed path that presently circles the property along the boundary with Johnson.

Another benefit of owning the Leigh property to the FWD is its abundant frontage along Route 102. The other portions of the Johnson Farm coming to the FWD only have short access points along Route 102. This property provides a central point of access, as well as an ideal location to place signage for the WMA. The total acreage to be owned is therefore 283 acres.

Need and Cost

The FWD is acquiring these parcels in order to provide permanent protection of public access for hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, other wildlife dependent activities and conservation of significant wildlife habitat including the Connecticut River influenced wetlands. The total estimates set for the project include \$85,000 for the Leigh parcel and \$1,750,000 for the Johnson Farm. The Fish and Wildlife Department's contribution to this project totals \$160,000 and comes from a \$75,000 Ecosystem Restoration Grant from the Department of Environmental Conservation, \$35,000 in Duck Stamp Funds and a \$50,000 grant from the Connecticut River Mitigation Enhancement Fund. Other significant sources of funding contributed to this project come from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Connecticut River Mitigation Enhancement Fund and the Pew Charitable Trust.

Your approval of this acquisition is required by 10 V.S.A. §4144, which states in part that "the secretary, with approval of the governor, may exchange, sell or lease lands under the secretary's jurisdiction when, in his or her judgment, it is advantageous to the state to do so ..." This project has already been reviewed and approved by the Agency's Land Acquisition Review Committee at their meeting (See Exhibit 3). In addition, the Towns of Lemington and Canaan support this acquisition as documented in the letters from the Select Boards (Exhibit 4, 5 & 6).

APPROVAL FOR PURCHASE OF LAND

We the undersigned, hereby approve the purchase of land by the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife to protect public access and the natural resources on the 283 acres belonging to Bill and Ursula Johnson and Gerald and Jacqueline Leigh in Lemington and Canaan, VT. This approval is required by 10 V.S.A.

§4144 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.

Peter Shumlin Governor State of Vermont

3-27-12 Date

Deb Markowitz

Secretary

Agency of Natural Resources

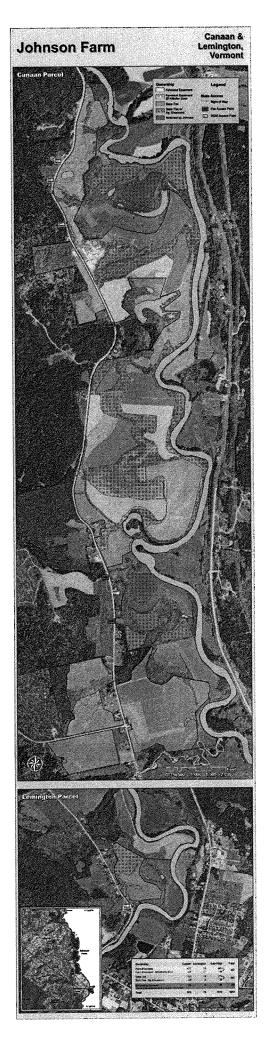
3/26/12 Date

Patrick Berry

Commissioner

Fish and Wildlife Department





August 22, 2011

Jane Lazorchak

VT Fish & Wildlife

5 Perry St. Suite 40

Barre, VT 05641

Dear Ms. Lazorchak,

Thank you for meeting with us at our August 22, 2011 Select Board meeting to discuss the Fish & Wildlife Department's (FWD) proposed acquisition of a portion of Bill and Ursula Johnson's farm in Canaan, VT along the Connecticut River. We are writing to offer our support for the FWD's involvement in the purchase of the property because of the property's significant wildlife habitat as well as the opportunity to provide for additional public access in the area. Thank you for meeting with us.

Sincerely,

Vernon L. Crawford

Select Board Chair,

Town of Canaan, VT

Canaan Select Board

February 6, 2012

Dear Ms. Lazorchak,

Thank you for meeting with us at our February 6 Select Board meeting to discuss the Fish and Wildlife Department's (FWD) proposed acquisition of the Leigh property in Canaan, VT. We are writing to offer our support for the FWD's involvement in the purchase of the Leigh parcel. More specifically, the town supports the FWD purchasing the property because of the property's significant wildlife habitat as well as the opportunity to provide for additional public access in the area. Thank you for meeting with us.

Sincerely,

Select Board, Chair

Lemington Select Board

February 14, 2012

Dear Ms. Lazorchak,

We are writing to offer our support for the Fish and Wildlife Department's (FWD) involvement in the purchase a portion of the former Johnson farm in Lemington. More specifically, the town supports the FWD purchasing the 39-acres because of the property's significant riparian lands, wildlife habitat as well as the opportunity to provide for additional public access in the area.

Sincerely,

Select Board, Chair

-03-15-12

may 503-13