

12. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. State of the Economy in the TRO Region

The TRO Region is rural and sparsely populated, as is typical of most of Vermont. Most towns in the Region have a low level of commercial development, typically many small commercial operations in the form of home-based businesses. Regional occupations are diversified across the professional, technical, service, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors, with the Region’s economy not dominated by a single business type. Our landscape and scenery form the basis for many place-based businesses in tourism, recreation, food, wood products, and the arts. The Region’s economy began as agrarian and moved to manufacturing. Recent economic trends, both local and statewide, have moved towards service-based economies.

The TRO Region’s economy is dominated by outlying areas that present significant opportunities for future economic development based on strong job markets, developed infrastructure, extensive services, and proximity to educational/health institutions. Rutland to the west and Montpelier/Barre to the north are within a 30-minute drive of parts of the Region, but the largest of these outlying areas, spanning two states, encompasses the towns of Hartford and Norwich in Vermont and the towns of Lebanon and Hanover across the Connecticut River in New Hampshire. This area is the core of what is known as the ‘Upper Valley.’ Our regional economy is intricately interwoven in the fabric of the greater Upper Valley area.

23 Internal subregional economic centers include Randolph, Bethel, Royalton,
24 Rochester, Woodstock, and Bradford. These areas are economic hubs and
25 continue to expand but have limited suitable locations for growth as well as
26 supporting water and wastewater infrastructure.

27 Job growth in the Upper Valley and the Region has been modest, and
28 unemployment in the Region has been low. While low unemployment rates have
29 their positive attributes, there are negative ones as well. Low unemployment can
30 be regarded as a barrier for businesses looking to expand or relocate to the
31 Region because not enough skilled and available workers exist in the area. Wage
32 rates have been growing but still lag slightly behind the State as a whole.

33 Several smaller towns in the Region are “bedroom communities” that provide
34 housing opportunities for workforces that commute. Many residents in the
35 Region routinely travel outside of their towns for shopping, but also for work
36 opportunities. [With respect to jobs, 72.7 percent of workers in Orange County
37 and 54.8 percent of workers in Windsor County are employed outside of their
38 county of residence.](#) These rates far exceed those rates seen at the statewide
39 level, due to the ease of access from the Region to outside work markets.

40 Most towns in the Region are close to major interstates (I-89 and I-91), making
41 access to distant employment areas easier and allowing many to live farther from
42 work. This has escalated the trend of extending growth and development away
43 from historical settlement areas throughout the Region, placing strain on the
44 provision of municipal services and businesses. The addition of remote working

45 enabled by the Internet has allowed many residents to work outside of their
46 towns but not commute to work, though they still drive to services.

47 B. Workforce Composition

48 A workforce is defined as all adults aged sixteen years and over who are currently
49 employed and unemployed but still able to work. Individuals who are held in an
50 institution (for incarceration, mental health, or other health-related reasons), or
51 are in the Armed Forces are not a part of the workforce. The workforce does not
52 typically include those who are full-time students unless they happen to work
53 while in school. For more information about who counts towards the workforce,
54 please read [U.S. Bureau of Statistic's explanation](#).

55 Though our Region includes towns in parts of four counties, using Windsor and
56 Orange Counties' data is a good proxy for the overall Region and offers the most
57 accurate data. Knowing this, the [2023 Economic & Demographic Profile](#) published
58 by Vermont Department of Labor concludes that our Region's labor force
59 increased since the COVID-19 pandemic (Windsor County by 5%; Orange County
60 by 2%). To see the most up-to-date labor market information by county, please
61 visit State of Vermont's [Labor Market Data Dashboard](#).

62 The TRO Region has seen significant shifts in certain workforce age groups in the
63 past decades. A steadily aging workforce is already upon the State, as many baby
64 boomers have entered retirement. Having a young workforce capable of replacing
65 the established workforce is necessary for economic vitality for the Region.

66 According to the 2022 American Community Survey, Vermont’s median age was
67 43 years old—an increase by two years since 2010. Many baby boomers (people
68 born between 1946 and 1964) have entered their retirement years, and about
69 40,000 people from ages 65-79 were added to Vermont’s population since 2010.
70 [In Windsor County, the number of people who are 65+ years old \(typically](#)
71 [considered as outside the workforce\) is projected to increase by 61 percent by](#)
72 [2030, while Orange County will expect a 97.3 percent increase.](#) At the same time,
73 the state also saw a decrease in working-age people in the 40 to 54 age group, a
74 trend that is severely pronounced in our Region. The Region will not fill vacant
75 positions while simultaneously driving additional job growth unless this
76 demographic trend is reversed and the Region attracts thousands of younger
77 replacement workers.

78 In agriculture, this problem is much worse. For instance, the average age of
79 Vermont farmers is 56, with over a quarter 65 and older. While farm operations
80 are often family owned, there is no guarantee that a family member will take over
81 the farm. Luckily, there are a growing number of young people interested in
82 becoming farmers or starting a food enterprise business. The challenge is that
83 farms are expensive to purchase and operate for new farmers. Most farms also
84 require one or more family members to hold a full-time job to supplement farm
85 income and maintain access to health insurance.

86 A well-educated workforce bodes well for having a skilled workforce capable of
87 attracting higher-paying, specialized jobs to our 30 towns. In 2022, many working-
88 age residents had completed, were pursuing, or had pursued higher education
89 qualifications beyond a high school diploma (44.2%); this is higher than the

90 national average of 35.6 percent. (To see the most current information on
91 Vermont’s education attainment, please visit [this interactive map](#) created by the
92 U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

93 As previously mentioned, many industries routinely struggle to find qualified
94 workers. This problem is multifaceted in that it reflects a too-small, qualified
95 workforce, an inability to retain and train from within local communities to fill
96 positions, and the struggle employers face to recruit from outside the Region.
97 According to findings presented in the [2014 Upper Valley Workforce Needs](#)
98 [Assessment](#), developed by the Green Mountain Economic Development
99 Corporation (GMEDC), three key industry areas that require skilled workers are
100 the health care and social assistance sector; manufacturing; and professional,
101 scientific, and technical services industries. This assessment still holds true today.

102 There are many workforce development and training programs throughout the
103 State that are run through the [Agency of Commerce and Community](#)
104 [Development \(ACCD\)](#), the [Department of Labor \(DOL\)](#), and the [Agency of Human](#)
105 [Services](#). (See Chapter 8 for a list of adult and secondary vocational education
106 centers in our Region).

107 Another way to bolster educational opportunities for the Region’s burgeoning and
108 existing workforces is to promote the creation of continuing adult education
109 opportunities throughout the Region. The workforce needs experience with
110 learning day-to-day job skills but also with more general business and personnel
111 management skills. Training in these areas can be in the form of practical on-site

112 job training opportunities or courses and accreditation programs outside of the
113 workplace that supplement existing job skills.

114 **Income and Poverty Levels**

115 Windsor County has a higher per capita income than the state average and is the
116 fourth highest out of the 14 counties in Vermont. In contrast, Orange County
117 ranks tenth among Vermont counties. As incomes are increasing in the TRO
118 Region, the number of households on state public assistance programs is
119 continuing to decrease.

120 However, an overview of the U.S. gender wage gap demonstrates a decreased but
121 persistent wage gap between women and men. Despite the gender wage gap
122 having closed since the 70s, the rate at which the gender wage gap has declined
123 has stalled. [Since the early 2000s, the female-to-male earnings ratio has](#)
124 [fluctuated between 79 percent and 83 percent.](#) Employers addressing the gender
125 wage gap will help lower the number of disadvantaged women, minimize job loss
126 for all workers, and raise the fixed incomes of elderly people (which tend to skew
127 more heavily female) when they reach retirement.

128 According to 2022 American Community Survey (ACS), Vermont has a poverty
129 rate that stands at 10.4 percent. That being said, the method in which the [Census](#)
130 [Bureau calculates poverty](#) is still debated on how to improve, as the official
131 poverty measure does not account for numerous non-cash benefits such as
132 housing and energy programs, or regional differences living standards in
133 purchasing powers. Therefore, federal-level poverty statistics cannot be the only
134 way to assess our Region's quality of life.

135 In January 2018, nearly 5,000 households, representing just above 14 percent of
136 those in Orange and Windsor Counties, were enrolled in Vermont’s cash
137 assistance programs, which assist those below recognized income levels. The
138 communities with the highest percentage of households that receive benefits are
139 Bradford and Corinth. Each of those towns has more than 19 percent of their
140 households involved in public assistance programs.

141 While our Region has lower rates of poverty compared to other counties, the
142 [Upper Valley Haven](#) suggests that individuals experiencing poverty feel their
143 economic hardships more acutely while living in the Region. The services provided
144 by The Haven have come under increasing demand in recent years, especially
145 from families. This is directly related to the interaction between the Region’s
146 increasing housing costs, as described by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency in
147 their 2021 [Housing and Wages Report](#). Without addressing these trends, the
148 Region will continue to see rising numbers in both individuals and families slipping
149 into poverty or increased numbers of residents emigrating to more affordable
150 areas.

151 C. Employment Sector Characteristics

152 Employment by Occupation and Industrial Sector

153 Nearly 79 percent of the Region’s jobs fall within the service producing sector
154 (such as information, education, and hospitality), whereas jobs in the goods
155 producing sector (such as natural resources, construction, and maintenance)
156 account for only 21 percent of all jobs in the Region. While most sectors from
157 2018 to 2022 experienced moderate shifts in their number of employees, some

158 jobs have seen significant growths or declines. Occupations that experienced a
159 decreasing trend in workforce participants were primarily in wholesale trading (-
160 34.9%), utilities (-12.8%), and the information sector (-8.8%). On the other hand,
161 the top three job positions that have seen tremendous growth were managerial
162 positions in businesses (67.7%), mining (45.1%), and educational services (18.6%).

163

164 The educational services continue to have a major impact on the growth of the
165 Region’s jobs. This is attributed to the existence of major academic institutions,
166 which account for all the municipal and private schools, and higher education
167 institutions like Dartmouth College, Vermont Law and Graduate School, and
168 Vermont State University. Unfortunately, the Region saw a drop in health care
169 and social assistance employees, which underscores the need for planning the
170 future of high-quality health care services in our Region. The number of unfilled
171 jobs in the health sector is huge, with local clinics being short-staffed, and
172 Dartmouth-Hitchcock regularly having several hundred job openings.

173 **Agriculture and Silviculture**

174 In 2022, it was estimated that the agricultural economy had almost 11,500
175 businesses employing nearly 64,000 Vermonters, according to [Vermont Farm to
176 Plate’s 2022 Annual Report](#). It is estimated that during the same year, the direct
177 agricultural revenue in Vermont was \$781 million.

178 Dairy remains a multimillion-dollar industry in both Orange and Windsor Counties,
179 accounting for 66 percent of farm revenue for Orange County and 43 percent for

180 Windsor County. Over the years, however, both Windsor and Orange Counties
181 experienced a decline in the number of dairy farms.

182 [The 2017 Census of Agriculture](#), published by the USDA National Agricultural
183 Statistics Service, shows that Vermont farms have become fewer in number but
184 larger in size. This trend is also evident in our region; [Orange County](#) experienced
185 a 25 percent decrease in the number of farms but saw a seven percent increase in
186 average farm size, and [Windsor County](#) saw a 12 percent decrease in the number
187 of farms but a 26 percent increase in the average size of farms.

188 In our Region, the reduction in the number of farms occurred the most with farms
189 that sold less than 50,000 dollars' worth of products—particularly in mid-sized
190 farms (grossing between 5 to 10 thousand dollars' worth of sales). From 2012 to
191 2017, the number of mid-sized farms dropped nearly 30 percent (specifically, 241
192 farms in 2012 to 174 in 2017). While the number of small-scale farms (farms that
193 sell products at \$2,500 or less) comprise nearly 40 percent of our Region's total
194 number of farms, they generate less than one percent of Vermont's total
195 agricultural income.

196 With respect to the silviculture industry and value-added wood products, there
197 are major regional employers that rely on forestland products, such as Copeland
198 Furniture in Bradford and the Pompanoosuc Mills Corporation in Thetford, each
199 with a workforce varying between 100 and 249 people. Numerous smaller
200 operations exist too, such as local sawmills and lumberyards, firewood
201 processors, maple sugaring businesses, Christmas tree farms, and furniture
202 producers. Initiatives like the Forest Products Value Chain Investment Program (a

203 collaboration between the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, the Northern Forest
204 Center, and the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board) seeks to enhance the
205 economic competitiveness of the forest products industry in the Region by
206 exploring ways to access new markets outside the State, developing new products
207 that could be produced using Vermont wood, encouraging innovation, and
208 facilitating collaboration among industry members.

209 **Tourism**

210 No exact numbers exist to show how many people in the Region work specifically
211 in jobs catering to tourism; however, if we combine the number of individuals
212 working in entertainment, the arts, recreation, and food services with those
213 working in the retail trade, roughly 21 percent of the Region's workforce directly
214 and indirectly have a part in the Region's tourism industry. Thus, the tourism is a
215 key component to the Region's financial success. There is not simply one tourist
216 attraction that is the anchor for the entire Region; rather, there are a multitude of
217 year-round opportunities that visitors flock to the Region to explore and enjoy.

218 To illustrate how important tourism is for the Region, in 2022 the U.S. Bureau of
219 Economic Analysis (BEA) Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA) calculated
220 that outdoor recreation (e.g., skiing) generated [\\$1.9 billion](#) for Vermont. A key
221 area of concern within the tourism sector is the need to diversify this part of the
222 economy in the Region, and to attract visitors on a season-to-season basis instead
223 of attracting a niche tourist base at only certain times of the year. Further,
224 ensuring that the tourism industry is equipped to face future impacts from
225 climate change is critical to ensuring business continuity and financial and

226 economic resiliency. This is of particular importance with respect to the winter
227 sport industry, as it is most vulnerable to increasing temperatures and reduced
228 snowpack levels.

229 **Major Regional Employers**

230 The TRO Region is home to several important economic activities that employ
231 many of our residents. The largest sector in the Region is the education and
232 health care sectors, with academic institutions like Vermont Law and Graduate
233 School and Vermont University and medical centers like Gifford Medical Center
234 and the VA Medical Center being among the largest employers in the Region, and
235 Dartmouth-Hitchcock and Dartmouth being nearby. The second largest sector,
236 leisure, and hospitality, employs 23 percent of our Region’s employees. Lake
237 Morey Resort, the Woodstock Inn and Resort, and the Quechee Club are all large
238 employers that contribute to this sector. With almost half of our Region’s labor
239 listed under educational, medical or hospitality sectors, these are clear anchor
240 institutions within our local economies.

241 **D. Regional Challenges and Opportunity Areas for Economic** 242 **Development**

243 **Telecommunications**

- 244 - Parts of the TRO Region still need access to fast, affordable, and efficient
245 Internet, data, and cellular technologies to promote business growth and
246 attract prospective employees. According to a Vermont Public Service

247 Department January 2018 report, 9,000 buildings in Orange and Windsor
248 Counties are underserved even for basic Internet speeds.

249 **Housing**

250 - Providing ample workforce housing, in both rental and home buyer
251 markets, is key to meeting the needs of the TRO Region’s workers. The
252 Region is short several thousand housing units of the type and price needed
253 to attract new workers.

254 **Sewer and water supply**

255 - While some areas in the Region have ample infrastructural capacity to
256 handle any anticipated growth, only small parts of nine of the Region’s 30
257 towns currently have both municipal water and sewer services. Expansion
258 and updates to existing services and the creation of such systems in other
259 village and town centers is needed (where practical) for economic growth
260 and to attract new businesses.

261 **Workforce**

262 - Anecdotal evidence from local businesses suggests a labor shortage in the
263 Region. This is due to lack of housing opportunities and essential services,
264 low wages, and inadequate number of qualified workers. The Region’s
265 workforce is rapidly aging and needs a more diverse, younger population to
266 live and work here.

267 **Existing buildings and brownfields**

268 - A better understanding of sites suitable for reuse or redevelopment as new
269 business headquarters or for the expansion of existing businesses is needed
270 in core town and village locations. Appropriate grant funding such as [EPA](#)
271 [brownfields funding](#) can help communities and businesses advance the
272 revitalization process.

273 **Plans and permitting**

274 - Lack of clarity in municipal plans makes it difficult for town officials,
275 residents, and developers alike to properly discern which locations are
276 most desirable for new business growth as well as what types of growth is
277 preferred. Further, inconsistencies between some municipal plans and their
278 corresponding implementing bylaws also confuse those making investment
279 decisions.

280 **Public transit and transportation**

281 - There is a distinct lack of public transit routes in most of the Region's towns
282 and within the regional growth centers, which makes commuting to jobs or
283 for services difficult for people who are elderly or disabled. Many towns in
284 the Region lack even a single transit stop (for policies addressing this issue,
285 please refer to chapter 4 of this Plan.) Only the area of Hartford near the
286 state line has good transit service.

287 **Tourism**

- 288 - The tourism industry in our Region can promote diverse seasonal
289 recreational opportunities such as leaf-peeping and winter sports, which
290 many tourists associate with Vermont.

291 **Creative Economy**

- 292 - The creative sector is made up of people employed in creative industries, and
293 those employed in creative occupations that are not in creative industries.
294 The [CreateVT Progress Report](#) and the [Action Plan](#) produced by the
295 [Vermont Creative Network \(VCN\)](#) found that creatives face limited higher
296 end venues for professionals, lackluster educational programs in the arts,
297 and small networking opportunities. [Cornerstone Creative Community of
298 Vermont \(3CVT\)](#) aims to boost economic prosperity and networking for
299 creatives in east central Vermont.

300 **Value-added agriculture**

301 While Vermont-based dairy and maple products have successfully reached
302 national, and even international markets, our Region’s value-added food
303 products can experience a renaissance. As identified in the [Vermont
304 Agriculture and Food System Plan 2021-2030](#), opportunities include
305 teaching entrepreneurial skillsets to young farmers, increasing
306 collaboration with restaurants, and supporting on-farm processing facilities
307 for small-scale producers.

308 **E. The Future of Economic Development**

309 **A Vision for the Future**

310 The [2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#), updated
311 every five years, is an economic roadmap designed to diversify and strengthen
312 our economy by helping to guide growth throughout the 40 towns of [East Central](#)
313 [Vermont Economic Development District](#), which includes the TRO Region. The
314 plan contains workforce development strategies through education, housing
315 infrastructure, and quality of life improvements. A CEDS is required by the [U.S.](#)
316 [Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)](#) for
317 districts to be eligible for planning and construction funds. TRORC has used
318 fundings made available by the preparation of a CEDS to support work around the
319 creative economy as well as health and wellness planning throughout the Region.
320 The dynamic process of developing a CEDS is heavily dependent on the
321 coordinated efforts of regional planning and economic development
322 organizations, town governments, interest groups, and private industries that are
323 concerned about the economic development of a Region. The most recent CEDS
324 contains an increased focus on resilience to both economic shocks as well as
325 climate related disasters.

326 TRORC recognizes that the Region has a few unique characteristics that provide
327 the opportunity for a high quality of life. Like other parts of Vermont, it is blessed
328 with mountains, lakes, open fields, and villages. The Region’s residents have ready
329 access to the natural environment, yet they also have good access to culture,
330 technology, transportation, and other characteristics typically associated with
331 urban life.

332 Building on the assets of our place is the cornerstone of our economic strategy.
333 While some believe that enticing large new employers is the preferred means of
334 promoting economic development, this approach does not focus on the best
335 source of jobs in our region: small business growth from existing employers.
336 Enticing large new employers also usually involves public subsidies and creates
337 vulnerability in the event of future closure. TRORC advocates that the region
338 focuses on development based on our local assets and existing small businesses,
339 including cottage industries, which will enable a more stable economy that can
340 grow and flourish. We can also grow local entrepreneurs and attract workers who
341 can telecommute remotely for employers outside of the Region. Given the
342 current shortage of housing, training employees from amongst our current
343 workforce may be easier than attracting outside employees in some cases.
344 However, we also need a concerted effort to attract new working-age adults to
345 augment our aging population.

346 As noted within the “Major Regional Employers” section of this chapter, higher
347 education and health institutions comprise two of the most significant sectors of
348 our regional economy. Instability of any of these institutions, be it Vermont
349 University, Vermont Law and Graduate School, Gifford Medical Center, or
350 Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, would trickle down to communities
351 throughout our Region, prompting job loss and adverse financial impacts to the
352 towns and businesses that depend on their continued existence.

353 In 2022, the Vermont Department of Labor published a [long-term projection of](#)
354 [occupations](#) that are anticipated to see job growth and decline across the State.
355 However, it is important to note that the projections are not absolute, as many

356 factors constantly influence employment trends (such as the COVID-19 pandemic
357 and emergence of new occupations). It is worth noting that, of all the major
358 occupation groups that are set to see the most growth, many do not pay high
359 wages. For instance, restaurant cooks are predicted to grow by 5.5 percent—
360 more than any other jobs—but the median pay is \$17.73 dollars per hour. Looking
361 at the state-level data, it is highly likely that occupations that require less
362 educational or professional qualifications will have the highest growth in our
363 Region.

364 While providing jobs is important for both attracting and retaining residents, our
365 Region needs to ensure that there are ample services and housing in place.
366 Childcare services contribute to the regional economy as a business and employer
367 and as a service industry that provides crucial support to employers and
368 employees. Ample supply of childcare services and facilities allows parents in the
369 regional economy to work, and their importance to the local economy cannot be
370 overstated if we wish to see an influx of workers to the Region. Further, providing
371 increased housing opportunities is critical, especially near job centers.

372 A more robust transit system will increase people’s access to both work and
373 services, and increased high-speed Internet and cell coverage will increase the
374 area’s viability for prospective residents to the Region. Multimodal opportunities
375 influence diverse settlement patterns, as [vehicle ownership is due to](#)
376 [demographics and life choices](#). Similarly, [a 2015 study by the Vermont](#)
377 [Transportation Board](#) conducted eight forums at various college campuses, and
378 found that young Vermonters believe that the state would be a more attractive
379 place to settle for young adults if there were alternative means of transportation.

380 Regional infrastructural improvements will lead to lower costs of living, increased
381 community vitality, and a wider array of professional opportunities for residents.

382 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Economic**
383 **Development**

384 **Goals**

- 385 1. Economic development, community development, and land use policies
386 and plans improve the Region’s unique quality of life.
- 387 2. Essential elements for attracting new younger residents are in place.

388 **Policies**

- 389 1. Public and private infrastructure shall be planned and funded to support
390 our economy and the natural environment.
- 391 2. Regional development activities should support the diversity of the
392 Region’s economic base by encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting local
393 businesses, and attracting new businesses that are consistent with the
394 Regional Plan.
- 395 3. New workforce housing development is supported in villages and
396 downtowns.
- 397 4. Economic development strategies between TRORC, ECVEDD, and other
398 regional economic development consortiums should align to support a
399 diverse and resilient regional economy.
- 400 5. Efforts should be made to engage and assist institutions with community
401 dialogue and business continuity planning.

402 **Recommendations**

- 403 1. TRORC will assist towns with Act 250 support, zoning bylaw revisions, and
404 grant and loan management to further the development of desired job
405 growth and workforce housing close to our Region’s core economic areas.
- 406 2. TRORC will assist towns in asset management, capital budgeting, and
407 shared services/purchasing to lower costs and stabilize taxes.
- 408 3. TRORC will participate in discussions to improve the regulatory system at
409 the state level and improve permitting coordination between local and
410 state levels of government.
- 411 4. TRORC will work with Vermont state agencies, regional and local
412 development groups, trade associations, Chambers of Commerce, planning
413 commissions, and other groups to integrate land use planning with
414 economic planning and development programs based on our Region’s
415 assets.
- 416 5. Public agencies, schools, and private businesses should expand workforce
417 training and education that aligns with the strategic needs of our Region’s
418 current and future employers.
- 419 6. TRORC will work with the Vermont Arts Council to support regional and
420 statewide creative zones.
- 421 7. TRORC will work with towns and development organizations in the Region
422 to identify and undertake brownfields assessments to rehabilitate
423 underutilized sites and buildings most suitable for near-term commercial
424 and residential development in existing downtowns and villages where
425 water, sewer, power, Internet, and roadways have capacity.

- 426 8. TRORC should work with local producers, development corporations,
427 educational programs, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and other
428 organizations to identify and create needed processing, storage, and
429 distribution capacity for locally made food and forestry products.
- 430 9. TRORC should work with land trusts and local conservation commissions to
431 inventory farm and forest lands to understand where parcels are available
432 that could provide opportunities for new farm and forest businesses and to
433 assist towns in crafting regulations to reduce fragmentation and leave land
434 available for farming, forestry, and other land-based businesses.
- 435 10. TRORC strongly supports property tax reform efforts at the local and state
436 levels that would reduce the costs of land ownership for farming and
437 forestry, while protecting against the Current Use Program's use as a low-
438 cost vehicle for speculative holding of property for future development.