

Bullis Savage Farm – Earth Day w/Senator Welch 4/21/23

\$440,000 REAP

[Salutation]

We're grateful to the Senator for his enduring commitment to Rural Development, both in the general sense and to the agency I'm honored to work for, which does incredibly important and lasting work on the ground by sending federal grant and loan dollars directly into rural communities through low-income single-family housing programs, public facilities and utilities, and business programs.

Your promotion and knowledge of our energy impacts in all of these departments is unquestioned, and reflects your greater devotion to the place you love and the people who long ago established its unique status among all others. The Green Mountain State is complex. It alludes to immovable and independent-minded resistance to a changing world, and it also reflects the rock-solid leadership of those who anchor their efforts—and indeed, their lives—in acknowledging and addressing those changes.

For rural residents, small business and communities, this is a difficult time to navigate economically, there is no doubt. But through energy-efficiency upgrades and renewable energy systems, USDA Rural Development is helping residents with home repairs, providing communities with infrastructural improvements, and growing businesses with operational upgrades.

Through the historic Inflation Reduction Act, the REAP program was funded dramatically across the country, resulting in higher maximum grant levels and lower match requirements. Under the revisions, eligible renewable energy projects can now receive up to \$1 million in grant funding, and qualified energy-efficiency projects, up to \$500,000. And the match has come down from 75 to 50 percent.

Over the last five fiscal years, roughly \$12 million REAP dollars have flowed through Vermont—and more is coming—to give small businesses that crucial push they need to make their unique formulas work and work better. This funding provides long-term resilience and reduced costs to effectively combat the mounting strains on operations due to an unreliable supply chain and climate change.

This is why we look to you, Senator, to show your colleagues in Washington how our good work on the ground is making a difference in people's lives and livelihoods. Thank you for your continuing support and promotion of our very important mission; we can't do what we do without your help, and you've helped at every turn, so on behalf of my staff and partners, please accept my sincere and genuine thanks.

[Handoff]