

USDA Forest Service

Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry

Wood Innovations Funding Opportunity — Review Panel

FS-1500-0050 (REV. 03/2026)

**Re: Letter of Support — Town of East Montpelier Advanced Wood Heat Boiler Expansion Initiative**

**To the Wood Innovations Review Panel:**

I am writing to express my strong support for the Town of East Montpelier's Advanced Wood Heat Boiler Expansion Initiative and to urge the USDA Forest Service Wood Innovations Review Panel to fund this application.

East Montpelier's initiative represents exactly the kind of rural economic investment that Vermont communities need and deserve. Vermont ranks among the highest states in the nation in per-capita heating oil consumption. Our rural households — many of them on fixed incomes, many of them in older, energy-inefficient homes — are disproportionately exposed to the volatility of fossil fuel heating markets. The NH Department of Energy currently tracks #2 heating oil at \$5.47 per gallon. The economic burden this places on working Vermont families is real and growing.

The East Montpelier program addresses that burden directly, using federal pass-through funds to cover the upfront equipment cost that has prevented willing households and farms from making the switch to advanced wood heat. Every installation reduces a family's dependence on imported fossil fuels. Every pellet burned comes from Vermont fiber, processed by Vermont workers, delivered by a Vermont company. The economic multiplier of keeping those energy dollars circulating in Vermont's rural economy is significant.

I am also proud to support a program that takes Vermont's working forests seriously. The collapse of the regional pulp and paper market has left Vermont's low-grade fiber economy without a foundation. Programs that create durable new markets for that fiber — as East Montpelier's initiative does — are exactly the kind of demand-side investment that supports active forest management, reduces wildfire risk, and sustains the loggers, mills, and landowners whose livelihoods depend on healthy, productive Vermont forests.

East Montpelier is stepping up to be a model. I ask the Review Panel to give them the tools to do it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Watson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Anne Watson  
State Senator for the Washington District  
Senate Natural Resources and Energy, Chair