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January 2014 E-News



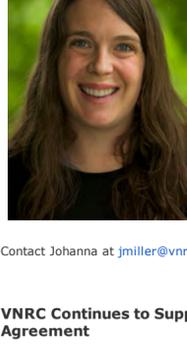
Now that the ice in our parking lot has finally been covered by a layer of fresh snow, we have much to be excited about at VNRC. Before we pile on our scarves, mittens, and hats and hit up the nearest sledding hill, we wish to thank those among you who donated money or became members in 2013. A significant portion of our annual revenues comes from individual supporters, and your annual dues and donations go far in helping us continue our work to promote environmental causes and clean energy solutions. If you have yet to donate or become a member of VNRC, please consider **joining today**. It only takes a minute!

With the start of a new year and a new legislative session, we are eager and ready to keep up the good fight for a healthy Vermont. Read on and learn about the projects we're working on in and out of the Legislature, meet our Energy Program Director, and mark your calendars for several exciting upcoming events.

As always, thank you for all that you do.

VNRC NEWS

Staff Profile: Johanna Miller, Energy and Climate Action Program Director



Johanna is an energy policy expert, organizer, writer and coalition builder at VNRC. She also serves as the coordinator of the **Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network**, the umbrella organization of over 100 community energy committees and support organizations in Vermont. Johanna works to shape clean energy and climate action solutions from the grassroots to the Legislature, partnering and coordinating with organizations, public officials and citizens.

Before joining VNRC in 2005, Johanna spent five years as an organizer, editor, and policy specialist for the Michigan Land Use Institute — a planning and smart growth policy organization. Johanna has served on numerous boards of directors and currently serves on the board of the national nonprofit SEEDS and on the Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee. Johanna received a B.A. in English and Environmental Studies from the University of Vermont. She lives in Montpelier with her husband Chris and daughter Lila, and enjoys skiing, biking and hiking.

Contact Johanna at jmiller@vnrc.org or (802) 223-2328 ext 112.

VNRC Continues to Support a Healthy Connecticut River as State, VY, Enter Agreement



In late December, the State of Vermont and Entergy announced a settlement, which supports the continued operation of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant through 2014, while outlining provisions for economic development in Windham County, site restoration and decommissioning. The settlement defers the issue of the thermal discharge (dumping of hot water) to the Agency of Natural Resources and their discharge permitting process.

VNRC has been arguing, along the Connecticut River Watershed Council, that Entergy's discharge permit is flawed, outdated and will negatively affect fish in the Connecticut River.

"We will continue to advocate for the health of the Connecticut River through this process," said Jamey Fidel, General Counsel for VNRC.

The Public Service Board still needs to issue a permit or "CPG" approving the plant's operation for another year, and the Board has scheduled a round of hearings and briefs over the next month to determine if they will accept the terms of the agreement between Entergy and the State of Vermont. Stay tuned!

Jared Carpenter, VLS Grad, Helping VNRC Track Legislation at the State House



Jared Carpenter, a recent graduate of Vermont Law School, will be helping VNRC track legislation this year. Jared serves on the board of Friends of the Winooski River and on central Vermont's Mad Dog Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Jared grew up in Connecticut, attended the University of Colorado - Boulder for undergraduate education and is now a resident of Montpelier. When he has free time, he is probably fishing.

"I'm looking forward to working with the VNRC team to advance good legislation this year, particularly to protect our lakes and rivers," he said.

VNRC's Greenwood Talks Water Quality at Local Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Kim Greenwood, VNRC's water program director and staff scientist, recently met with the Mad Dog Chapter of Trout Unlimited and discussed VNRC's work on various water quality fronts.

Kim was part of a panel that included Anthony Iarrapino from Conservation Law Foundation, Ann Smith of Friends of the Winooski River, and Rep. David Deen, chair of the House Fish Wildlife and Water Resources Committee.

The panel took place during the monthly meeting of the chapter. Panelists discussed work they are doing to protect and improve water quality in rivers as well as lakes.

Kim discussed groundwater, river management, and dam removal as well as the how intact and healthy forests keep water clean.

The Mad Dog Chapter of Trout Unlimited covers the general watershed area of the Mad and Dog Rivers.

VERMONT NEWS

For a Working Lands Update, Take This Digital Tour of Vermont's Rural Renaissance



Rural entrepreneurs are putting to use the new capital created by the Working Lands Initiative by creating value added products coming from Vermont's farms and forests. See some of those entrepreneurs in this digital [tour](#).

This year, Gov. Shumlin has proposed increasing funding for the program by five percent, bringing the allocation to nearly \$1.5 million.

"The Governor and legislators recognize that this initiative is an investment in jobs, the economy, and our distinctive landscape," said Kate McCarthy, VNRC's Sustainable Communities Program Director. "They deserve credit for supporting it and as part of the Working Lands Coalition, we look forward to working with legislators to maintain this in the budgeting process," she said.

Current Use Moving in Senate; VNRC Supports Incentives for Long-Term Enrollment



The Vermont Senate will soon begin debating a bill making changes to the Current Use program, and Vermonters will have a chance to weigh in on the issue next Tuesday, January 28 at the State House in Montpelier.

In 2013, the Vermont House passed [H.329](#) that would, among other things, raise the penalty for taking land out of the program and developing it.

The Senate is now considering [other changes to Current Use](#), but instead of raising the penalty for people who develop their land, a proposed Senate bill would penalize people who are enrolled in the program by capping the benefit.

"The Senate is not considering raising the penalty and is looking at a misguided solution in its place," said Jamey Fidel VNRC's forest and wildlife program director. "We should not penalize people who are in the program."

He said that raising the penalty is a better idea because it would deter land speculators from abusing the program by "parking" land in Current Use for a few years, reaping the tax benefit, paying the currently modest penalty, and then developing the parcel. It also would bring several million dollars of additional revenue into state coffers to the support the program.

[Here is an overview of the issue prepared by VNRC.](#) Email [Jamey Fidel](mailto:Jamey.Fidel@vnrc.org) for further information, including details about the upcoming hearing.

Vermont Legislature Kicks Off Work for 2014, and VNRC Staff is Tracking, Testifying



Lawmakers have been in Montpelier for about two weeks, and as they grapple with a variety of issues, VNRC is focusing principally on four major initiatives: shorelands protections, changes to electric net metering, the Current Use program, and growth center designation improvements. VNRC has been testifying on much of this legislation, and as always, expects to be present in the State House until the final gavel this spring.

"We are working closely with partners, legislators, and the Gov. Shumlin administration to be sure these measures are good for the environment and continue to spur a cleaner, renewable energy future," said Jake Brown, VNRC's Communications/Government Affairs Director. Please contact him at jbrown@vnrc.org with questions or to learn how you can get involved.

New Stream Alteration Rules, Spurred Partly by Post-Irene River Digging, Now in Effect



The Rivers Program at the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation has finalized new rules governing human-made alterations to streams, like installing culverts, building bridges, and berming channels. These regulations, which, for the first time in any state, are based on the science of stream geomorphology, require activities to be evaluated based on the impact to stream equilibrium conditions, or the least erosive form to which a stream may evolve.

The rules give the state a well-defined process for authorizing stream activities during and after an emergency, and cities and towns also have clearer reporting requirements.

Some of the requirements in the new rules were spawned by the unauthorized and damaging river work that occurred in the immediate wake of Tropical Storm Irene.

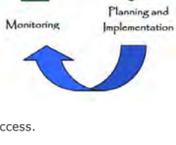
[Learn more on the Department of Environmental Conservation's website>>](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Proposed Amendments to Vermont Water Quality Standards: Information Session Set for Feb 3

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Watershed Management Division is initiating a pre-rulemaking stakeholder outreach meeting on Monday, February 3 in the Winooski Room of Montpelier's National Life building from 10 am to 12 pm. The Department will present an outline of proposed amendments including:

- Amendments to E. coli criteria.
- Amendments to Criteria for the Protection of Human Health and Aquatic Biota, presented in Appendix C of the Water Quality Standards.
- Addition of Criteria for Chloride, to be contained in Criteria for the Protection of Human Health and Aquatic Biota, presented in Appendix C of the Water Quality Standards.
- Addition of Criteria for Total Phosphorus in Wadeable streams and inland lakes and ponds.



The Department will present an outline of each of these four amendments and take questions from the public. This meeting is intended as an initial presentation, to be followed by specific meetings on each amendment based upon interest from participants.

[Read the current Water Quality Standards>>](#)

[One-page summaries describing the proposed amendments>>](#)

access. Contact Neil Kamman, neil.kamman@state.vt.us, for more information or to RSVP for remote access.

The Tar Sands Exposed: Exploring the Human and Environmental Costs at UVM Event This Friday



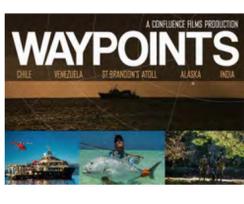
The development of tar sands oil in Alberta is being called one of the most environmentally destructive energy extraction projects ever on our planet. Transporting tar sands has also proven to have more frequent spills than traditional oil. The Mikisew Cree, Beaver Lake Cree, and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations are being affected with rapidly rising cancer rates as toxins enter their waters and land, and losing access to traditional territories because of tar sands development and spills.

[The Tar Sands Speakers Tour](#), organized by 350Maine, features powerful images and stories by National Geographic Photographer Garth Lenz and First Nations Activist Crystal Lameman.

Friday, Jan 24th at the Ira Allen Lecture Hall, UVM, Burlington

Saturday, Jan 25th at Catamount Arts, St. Johnsbury

Waypoints Fly Fishing Film Showing in Waitsfield Thursday, February 6 at 7 pm



Calling all anglers and adventure enthusiasts! Come see Waypoints, a new film about fly fishing, at the [Big Picture Theater](#) in Waitsfield on Thursday, February 6 at 7 pm.

This Confluence Films production covers angling in off-the-grid locations from the Indian Himalayas to Chile.

(This is the perfect way to pass a cold winter's evening in Vermont!)

[Watch the trailer>>](#)

Free Workshop: How We Can Move, Together, Toward 100 Percent Renewable Electricity by 2050



The Citizens Awareness Network (CAN) is partnering with the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (IEER) to train organizers to organize on local and state levels for sustainable energy solutions.

The workshop will provide details on how the U.S. electricity sector can be converted to an efficient and 100% renewable system by 2050, perhaps earlier. With rapidly declining costs of rooftop and other small and medium-scale solar photovoltaic installations, an opportunity is emerging to "democratize" the energy sector. We will cover how variability of wind and solar can be addressed so that reliability and affordability are maintained.

There is no fee to participate in the workshop; participants will be asked to contribute financially to a catered lunch.

When: February 1, 9:30- 4:00

Where: Park House 6039 Main Street, Manchester Center, VT 05255

Please contact the Citizens Awareness Network at (802) 767-9131 for more information or to sign up.

NATIONAL NEWS

Fossil Fuel Extraction and Transportation Continuing to be Dangerous Across North America



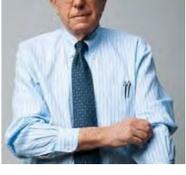
Increased fossil fuel extraction and transportation in North America continues to pose significant risks for human health and safety, the environment and climate. Another spate of accidents has added to the saga of North America's rush to capitalize on fossil fuel resources.

Two weeks ago, [7,500 gallons of chemicals](#) used to process coal leaked from a storage facility into the Elk River in West Virginia, leaving 300,000 people without water for five days.

In late December a training [carrying crude oil derailed in North Dakota](#), spilling more than 400,000 gallons of oil. The accident occurred just a week after a [freight train carrying oil and propane derailed and exploded in Plaster Rock, NB.](#), causing 150 residents to evacuate their homes. These incidents come just five months after a train carrying crude derailed and exploded in Lac Megantic, Que., killing 47 people.

Many Vermonters and organizations are taking proactive steps to keep unconventional fossil fuels, like tar sands, from passing through or being used in Vermont. Check out 350Vermont's website for more information and how you can take action.

Sanders to Big Networks: Put Climate Change, The Greatest Crisis Facing the Planet, on Television!



Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is pushing networks to cover climate change more. Specifically, he and other senators are urging them to dedicate more time to the issue on the Sunday morning political shows, like Face the Nation and others.

"This is the greatest crisis facing our planet, and the major networks on their important Sunday news shows have devoted all of eight minutes to discuss that issue," Sanders said. "That has got to change."

A [letter calling on the networks to cover climate change more](#) was signed by Sen. Sanders as well as Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chairman of the Senate environment committee, and by Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and Chris Murphy (D-Conn.). All of the senators who signed the letter are members of a newly formed Senate Climate Action Task Force.

The senators noted that big oil and coal companies spend significant amounts of money advertising on the commercial television networks. "We hope that this is not influencing your decision about the subjects discussed or the guests who appear on your network programming," they said.

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VNRC's Mission

Through research, education, collaboration and advocacy, VNRC protects and enhances Vermont's natural environments, vibrant communities, productive working landscapes, rural character and unique sense of place, and prepares the state for future challenges and opportunities.