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April 2014 E-News



With legislative adjournment about three weeks away, several important conservation-related bills are moving into the home stretch.

VNRC staff is tracking and testifying regularly now on a range of bills – most of which represent – for now – at least moderate gains for Vermont’s natural resources and communities.

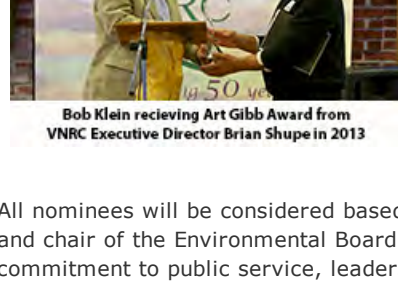
A very positive [energy bill](#) has already been signed into law; a [shoreland protection bill](#) appears to be in final stages of negotiation, and four important land-related bills, on [current use](#), [forest fragmentation](#), on [strip development/downtowns](#), and [agricultural soils](#), are all moving as well. Also in play are some very modest [Lake Champlain cleanup measures](#), and a bill to require the [inspection of dams](#).

If you have any further questions about any of this legislation or anything else, please contact Jake Brown at jbrown@vnrc.org.

Now, read on for more information about our work and interests beyond the State House. And as always, thanks for all you do!

VNRC NEWS

VNRC Now Calling All Nominations for the 2014 Arthur Gibb Award!



Bob Klein receiving Art Gibb Award from VNRC Executive Director Brian Shupe in 2013

VNRC is accepting nominations for the 2014 Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership. This year, we seek to honor an individual whose leadership at the local or regional level has brought about positive and lasting change in the way his or her community integrates growth and conservation. (Individuals who have demonstrated such leadership at the state level will be honored in alternating years.)

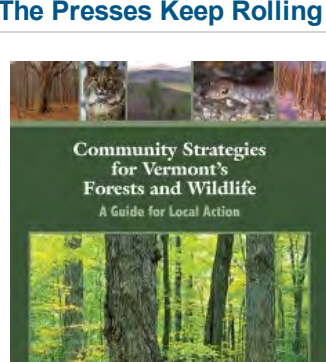
If you know a land use leader in Vermont who’s work you’d like to recognize, [we encourage you to nominate him or her](#).

All nominees will be considered based on qualities exemplified by the late Arthur Gibb, Vermont legislator and chair of the Environmental Board who dedicated much of his life to public service. These include: commitment to public service, leadership, vision, humility, creativity, balance, and integrity.

Smart Growth Vermont founded the Arthur Gibb Award in 2006, and merged with VNRC in July of 2011. VNRC is committed to continuing the important work of Smart Growth Vermont, including celebrating Vermont’s land use leaders.

We look forward to receiving your submission on or before Thursday, May 15.

The Presses Keep Rolling at VNRC, Bringing Information to Vermont’s Communities

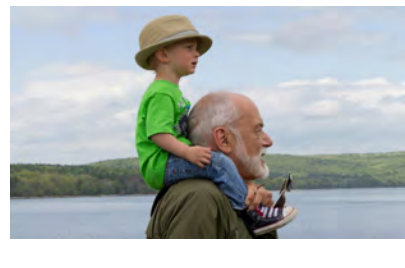


During the legislative session when so much focus is on the State House, it’s easy to forget that VNRC works closely with communities all year round.

Many of our publications, including the recently-released *Community Strategies for Vermont’s Forests and Wildlife*, are designed to help Vermonters understand what they can do in their own communities to protect their natural resources, become more resilient, and move toward a cleaner energy future.

These publications are available in PDF form for free right on our website – visit vnrc.org and scroll to the bottom left and scan through Featured Resources. We think you’ll like what you see!

Recent Bequest to VNRC Highlights the Long-Term Power of Planned Giving



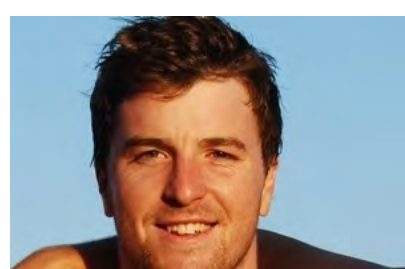
VNRC recently received a bequest from a long-time Burlington resident who passed away earlier this year, underscoring the sustaining value of gifts we can invest for the long-term.

“This gift to VNRC will be managed in a way so that it provides income for VNRC into the future,” said Brian Shupe, VNRC’s executive director. “We are deeply grateful for it and for this member’s support and his demonstration, through this bequest, of long-term confidence in VNRC.”

VNRC members can effectively continue their support, even after their death, through bequests. Based on historical interest rate trends, leaving a bequest of, say, \$3,000 that is managed as an investment, ensures an annual income to VNRC of over \$100 a year, in perpetuity. (That’s more than double VNRC’s basic annual membership of \$40.) Based on a conservative estimate of 3.5 percent annual investment growth, a \$1,000 bequest provides \$35 a year, a \$5,000 bequest provides \$175 a year, and a \$10,000 bequest \$350 a year.

If you are contemplating the future of your estate, please consider talking to a professional financial advisor. You can also contact our development director Stephanie Mueller at 223-2328 x113 or visit join.vnrc.org to find out more about planned giving options.

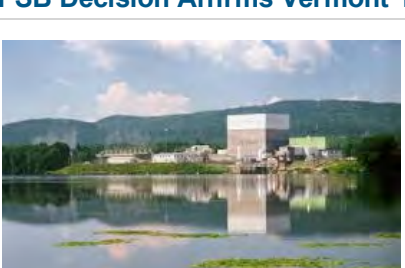
Keil Corey, Americorps Member, Reflects on his Service to VNRC, VECAN



For the last three years, VNRC and the [Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network](#) have had the privilege of hosting an AmeriCorps member to support our grassroots clean energy and climate action efforts. Native Vermonter Keil Corey has offered his service to VNRC and VECAN’s work for the past two years.

[Recently Keil described why he serves](#) – and why public service matters so much. It’s a powerful perspective from a young leader who cares deeply about the future. And it makes us proud to have Keil as part of our team!

PSB Decision Affirms Vermont Yankee Will Cease Operations by End of This Year



The Vermont Public Service Board issued a decision March 28 putting the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant under the legal obligation to cease power generation at the end of 2014. The decision also means Entergy, the owner of the plant, must provide \$10 million to promote economic development in Windham County and commit to site restoration measures.

During the proceedings, VNRC and the Connecticut River Watershed Council worked hard to be sure regulators addressed Vermont Yankee’s discharge of hot water into the Connecticut River. Now, the Agency of Natural Resources is reviewing Entergy’s discharge permit.

“Updating VY’s discharge permit is long overdue, and we call on the ANR to implement a revised discharge permit that protects the ecological health of the Connecticut River,” said Jamey Fidel, VNRC’s general counsel.

[Read VNRC’s full statement on the decision>>](#)

VERMONT NEWS

Watch It: Grassroots Energy Action at the Waterbury LEAP Energy Fair



Vermont’s town energy committees are a powerful force for clean energy and climate action at the local level and beyond. Each year, one of the state’s most active energy committees – Waterbury LEAP – hosts a fantastic fair to showcase the many, diverse solutions at our fingertips. Check out *Seven Days’ Stuck In Vermont* video about the recent LEAP Energy Fair and all that this committed grassroots group is helping to catalyze.

Waterbury LEAP has a lofty goal of making Waterbury the greenest community in the state by 2020. In the video, Eva Sollberger speaks with students who have been participating in the school’s new Sustainability Program. With the recent addition of two solar arrays, Crossett Brook Middle School in Duxbury has the largest solar capacity of any school in the state.

Inspired? Get active! Start or join an energy committee. Visit www.vecan.net.

Chittenden County Earns A+ on Compactness; Franklin, Grand Isle Need Improvement



A [recent study by Smart Growth America](#) compared American cities on their tendencies towards sprawl. Researchers used four primary factors – residential and employment density; neighborhood mix of homes, jobs and services; strength of activity centers and downtowns; and accessibility of the street network – to assign a score to each area studied.

In Vermont, Burlington and South Burlington were ranked fourteenth most compact and connected among small metro areas. Chittenden County received a total score of 120.78, among the highest of the counties included in the study. Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, with overall scores of 83.25 and 79.60, respectively, were identified as more inclined toward sprawl.

The Smart Growth study also revealed that people living in sprawling areas have fewer transportation options than residents of compact cities, as well as higher combined costs of housing and transportation. Residents of compact metro areas also have longer, healthier lives, with lower blood pressure and fewer car crash fatalities, according to the study.

Cold Climate Heat Pumps Are Hot!

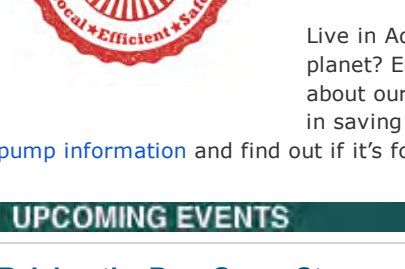


More Vermonters have – or want to – cut their heat bills by half with heat pumps. VNRC is working with a coalition of groups, including VPIRG, who are promoting heat pumps in Addison and Chittenden County as a particularly powerful alternative to shortsighted solutions like expanding natural gas infrastructure.

Live in Addison and Chittenden and want to save big and help save the planet? Email VPIRG’s Julia Michel at jmichel@vpig.org to find out more about our “Heat Clean” campaign. Live elsewhere in Vermont and interested in saving big and saving the planet? Check out [Efficiency Vermont’s heat pump information](#) and find out if it’s for you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Raising the Bar: Green Stormwater Infrastructure Planning and Design Workshop



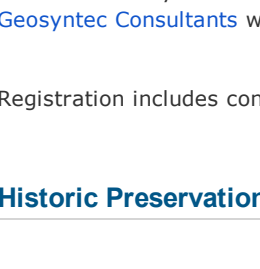
Stormwater runoff, caused by precipitation running off of impervious surfaces and developed lands, is a leading cause of surface water pollution. Join Green Works Vermont for *Raising the Bar*, a two-day intensive workshop on April 22 and 23 at the DoubleTree Hotel in South Burlington, and learn how to use green stormwater infrastructure systems to manage the quality and quantity of this runoff.

The workshop will include an overview of why and how the national stormwater world is shifting to place more focus on volume reduction, small-scale practices close to the source of runoff, and green practices that utilize soils, vegetation, and the natural process to reduce the volume and remove pollutants from stormwater. Presentations by the Center for Watershed Protection, Watershed Consulting Associates, LLC, and Geosyntec Consultants will focus on green stormwater design practices and principles.

Registration includes continental breakfast and lunch. [Register today!](#)

Historic Preservation and Downtown Conference Set for May 2 in Island Pond

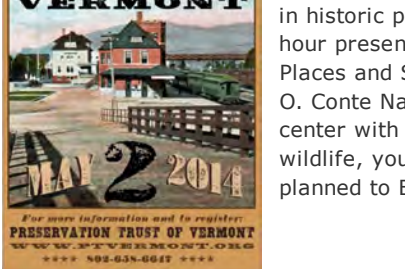
Preservation Trust of Vermont will be hosting the 20th Annual Historic Preservation & Downtown Conference May 2 in Island Pond.



Keynote speaker is Nancy Boone, formerly Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and now the Federal Historic Preservation Officer for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Conference day will feature the 2014 Preservation Awards recognizing the best in historic preservation over the last two years, followed by duo-tracks of half-hour presentations: crisp, fast-moving TED-like talks built around Historic Places and Strengthening Communities. There will also be a tour of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge-Nulhegan Basin Division visitor center with an optional mile hike along the Nulhegan River where, besides wildlife, you can see a historic truss railroad bridge. There is also a visit planned to Brighton State Park. For more information, information click [here](#).

Reject and Protect Against the Development of Tar Sands

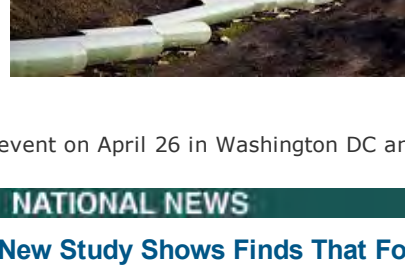


The world’s leading scientists say that stopping the development of tar sands – and their transport to markets – is key to stopping runaway climate change. The Keystone XL pipeline is at the epicenter of this debate. It’s expected that soon the U.S. State Department could make its recommendation to President Obama on KXL.

This is a crucial moment! There are a few events coming up aimed at raising people’s voices on this issue and motivating President Obama to reject the KXL. Find out more about the [Reject and Protect events](#) coming up, including a solidarity event on April 26 in Washington DC and a likely U.S. National Day of Action on May 17.

NATIONAL NEWS

New Study Shows Finds That Forests Around Chernobyl Aren’t Decaying Properly

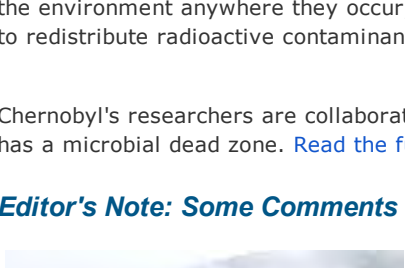


You’ve probably heard about the ongoing effects of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl nearly thirty years ago. And now it appears that there’s even more going on than meets the eye. [According to a new study](#), microbes, fungi, and other organisms that drive the process of decay, have also suffered from the contamination. These decomposers, ordinarily responsible for recycling organic matter back into the soil, are unable to perform their jobs effectively.

The authors of the study believe that this could have a compounding effect on the entire ecosystem. For example, the accumulation of 27 years’ worth of non-decomposing leaf litter puts the entire Chernobyl area at risk of fire. Fires, which can be destructive to the environment anywhere they occur, present a particular threat in Chernobyl because of their potential to redistribute radioactive contaminants to an even larger area.

Chernobyl’s researchers are collaborating with scientists in Japan to determine whether Fukushima also has a microbial dead zone. [Read the full story in the Smithsonian>>](#)

Editor’s Note: Some Comments on Beef, Water and Vermont’s Small Farms



Two readers took us to task recently for the article that ran in our March Enews on the water required to produce various food products. The article highlighted some research that showed that, on average cross the globe, it requires a massive amount of water, or a large “water footprint” to create a relatively small quantity of beef.

Readers of our Enews pointed out the article could unfairly suggest that raising grass-fed beef raised on small farms in places like Vermont is hugely resource-intensive.

While in the story we noted that these “water footprints” vary by region, we could have been clearer on that point. We understand that a small-scale farm in Vermont is a very different enterprise than a western mega-farm with feedlots, and we urge Vermonters to buy local agricultural products whenever possible.

-JB

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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.