VNRC Vermont Natural Resources Council

Get Involved | Visit Our Website | Give

June 2014 E-News

This summer, VNRC is walking the walk - literally!

Last Thursday, we received the Way to Go! Carbon Cup award for the small business with the highest number of participants who signed up to walk, car share, telecommute, bike, or ride public transportation during a single week in spring. The annual challenge is a great way to help us think about how we can lower our commuting impact, so we cut down on fuel use and air pollution and - for those of us who can walk or bike to work - get some exercise. (In photo at left are VNRC staff Kate McCarthy, in blue shirt, and Mari Zagarins, holding plaque.)

On another note, we are pleased to announce the release of two new publications to our ever-expanding and informative library this month. We're also presenting this Thursday the screening of a great documentary, DamNation, about dam removal in the United States. Read on to learn more about these items and more!

As always, we thank you for everything you do.

Connect

Join VNRC!

Get involved

Events
Donate
Volunteer
Influence Legislation

Be a Recurring Member!

Donate a fixed amount every month

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.

VNRC NEWS

VNRC Publishes New Reports on Forest Fragmentation, Subdivision Trends

VNRC recently published two new resources to help people understand trends that pose threats to the state's landscape. The resources also offer solutions for reducing these threats.

Last month, VNRC published a Forest Fragmentation Action Plan which includes a menu of nine priority strategies that, if implemented, can reduce forest fragmentation at the local, regional, and state levels. For each strategy, the plan includes recommended actions that can be taken by local, regional, and state entities to ensure a brighter future of Vermont's forests. Download the plan here>>

Also VNRC recently completed additional research – building on a 2010 study – of land subdivision trends in Vermont. This enhanced study, which examines subdivision trends, their relationship to zoning and subdivision regulation, as well as Act 250 and the Current Use Program, offers several recommendations for state and local policy changes to help reduce the impacts to forests of land subdivision. Download the report>>

VLS Students Erika Brotzman and Thea Reinert Join VNRC for the Summer

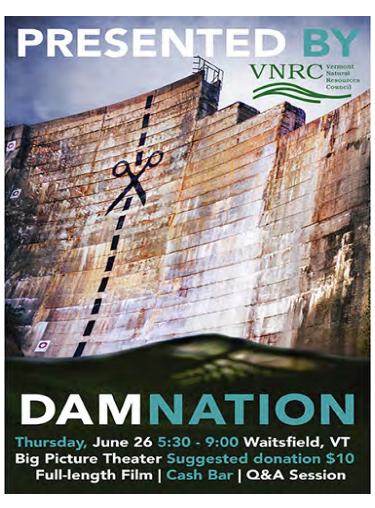
VNRC is pleased to have help from two talented legal interns from Vermont Law School this summer.

Erika Brotzman (on left with pink shirt) has completed one year of law school and among other projects at VNRC is evaluating statewide and local zoning that addresses community and town center development. Prior to law school, Erika was a competitive cyclist internationally and most recently was a professional ski instructor in Montana.

Thea Reinert (on right) is VNRC's 2014 Mollie Beattie Intern. The internship, which is named in the honor of the late Mollie Beattie, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 1991-1996, is awarded to a highly motivated graduate level student, or a recent graduate with a natural resources or law degree, who intends to pursue a career in environmental or natural resources policy or law.

Thea is entering her third year as a joint Masters of Environmental Law and Policy/JD student at VLS. She has certificates from Vermont Law School in Energy Law and Climate Change Law and has a background in organizing around climate change, energy regulations and renewable energy. At VNRC, she is helping prepare a community solar guide to be published at the end of the summer, and is also working on climate change legislation and forest fragmentation policy.

Dams, Rivers, and Water: Movie "DamNation" Coming Tomorrow Night to Big Picture Theater



A powerful new award-winning movie highlighting a resurgent movement to remove dams across the United States will be shown tomorrow night, Thursday, June 26, at the Big Picture Theater in Waitsfield. We hope you can make it!

The movie, DamNation, includes dramatic footage of immense dams being jackhammered and blown up, big water flowing, and salmon leaping.

Doors open at 5:30 pm, and guests are encouraged to purchase dinner and drinks from the Big Picture Theater's Night Menu. The movie starts at 6:30 pm. The showing is hosted by VNRC.

VNRC's Water Program Director Kim Greenwood will be on hand after the show to discuss Vermont's dams in particular.

"We will talk about the impacts of dams, the tradeoffs we make when they are in our rivers, and what we are doing in Vermont to take out deadbeat dams," Greenwood said. "We hope this film makes you look at dams in a whole new light."

According to the Agency of Natural Resources, there are at least 1,200 dams in Vermont – many of which are deadbeat dams, or dams that can no longer serve any useful purpose.

VNRC will be asking for a $10 donation at the door.

Watch the trailer>>

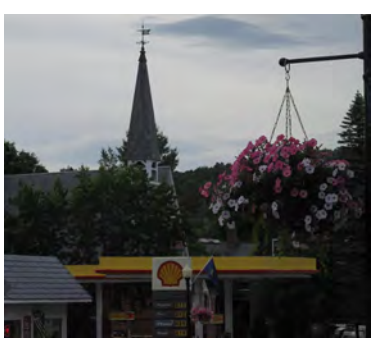
VNRC's Smart Growth "Tools" Expanded and Updated and Available for Free

VNRC recently released of several new forest-themed modules in our on-line Community Planning Toolbox. The toolbox, originally developed by Smart Growth Vermont, presents information to help local decision makers take action on topics ranging from downtown development to natural resources.

The new modules provide an overview of the issue of Forest Fragmentation, information about Conservation Easements and Road and Trail Policies, and case studies showing how Vermont landowners and towns have put these tools to work.

Check out the forest fragmentation module>>

Vermont Attorney General Sues Gasoline Refiners, Citing Groundwater Public Trust Law

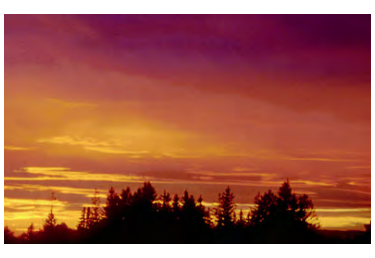


The Vermont attorney general's office recently brought legal action against several fuel refiners alleging they have polluted Vermont groundwater with MTBE, or methyl tertiary butyl ether. The suit relies in part on the state's Groundwater Protection Act of 2008, a law that declared groundwater to be a public trust resource. VNRC along with partner organizations, and Vermonters from Randolph, Dorset, East Montpelier and other communities had a big hand in the passage of that law.

The complaint was lodged against some of the largest oil companies, including Exxon/Mobil, Irving and Shell among several others. In it, the Vermont attorney general's office refers repeatedly to the fact the state holds groundwater resources in trust for the benefit of the public and alleges that the oil companies have interfered with those rights.

"Many Vermonters teamed up to push for this law," said Kim Greenwood, VNRC's water program director and staff scientist. "Legislators deserve credit for its passage. We knew it was important then, and this case is a great example of why we still believe it's a critical component of protecting our groundwater," she said.

Vermont Climate Assessment: State Should Cut Emissions, Adapt



The recently released Vermont Climate Assessment is the first state-level report in the nation detailing the environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change on an individual state. Partnering with the National Climate Assessment, the report offers a more in-depth focus the different regions of the state and sectors of Vermont's economy.

"This assessment, and the National Climate Assessment, together suggest that the risks of inaction – not mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and not adapting to our changing climate – are far too great to ignore," said Johanna Miller, director of VNRC's Energy and Climate Action Program.

Scientists from the University of Vermont's Gund Institute for Ecological Economics, and many other contributors, break the findings and analysis into sectors that include a Vermont climate overview, policy options, community development, water resources, forests, agriculture and food systems, recreation and tourism, human health impacts, transportation, and education and outreach.

Read more about the awards>>

Second Round of Working Lands Grants Announced

The Working Lands Enterprise Board recently approved over $1 million in funding for 37 projects reaching every county in Vermont. There were eight forestry projects, 28 agriculture projects, and one agriculture and forestry project. The awards leveraged $1.8 million in matching funds.

The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, Act 142, is administered by the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and is in partnership with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, as well as the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Working Lands Enterprise Board, comprised of public and private sector members involved in agriculture, forestry, and/or forest products is concluding its second year of funding.

Read more about the awards and see a list of recipients>>

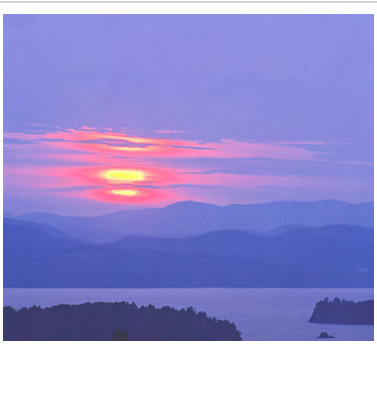
Wood Pellet Heating Retrofit Incentives Available in the NEK

If you live in the Northeast Kingdom, you might be eligible for a subsidy to put in a pellet central heating system in your home, small business, or in a community facility. The subsidized boilers are bulk-fed and high efficiency and can completely replace oil fired boilers.

The program is being made possible by the Model Neighborhood Project. The project will subsidize boiler retrofits in Lyndon, Burke, Sutton, Newark, East Haven, Sheffield, Wheelock, Kirby and Stannard. For more information on non-residential projects, contact Maura Adams at 603-229-0679. Homeowners should contact RuralEdge or call 800-234-0560 x 1330.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Information Sessions on the New Shorelands Protection Law Set for Summer



Vermont's new shoreland protection standards take effect on July 1 and the Department of Environmental Conservation is hosting a series of information sessions and training workshops to explain the new regulations.

The intent of the act is to prevent the degradation of water quality in lakes, preserve habitat and natural stability of shorelines and maintain the economic benefit of lakes and their shorelands.

The sessions include what activities are covered, when permits are needed, and field techniques. For updates and more information, check the Shoreland Permit Program webpage.

Cold Climate Heat Pump Information Session Set for Tonight in Middlebury

Creating Local Energy Solutions
Acorn Energy Co-op
www.acornenergycoop.com 802/385-1911

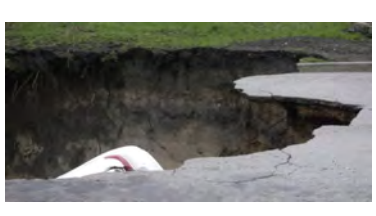
The Acorn Renewable Energy Co-op is excited to announce the roll-out of an exciting new Cold Climate Heat Pump initiative. You've probably heard the buzz: due to some recent breakthroughs in air source heat pump technology, a whole new category of cold climate heat pumps has hit the market in cold northern climates (like Vermont's).

Want to save money on your heating bill while reducing your dependence on fossil fuels at the same time? Come to Acorn Renewable Energy Co-op's information session tonight, Wednesday, June 25 from 7 - 9 pm at the Ilsley Public Library in Middlebury.

Learn more>>

NATIONAL NEWS

Local Governments Outside Chicago Have Been Sued for Ignoring Climate Change



Farmers Insurance Group has filed lawsuits against local governments in the Chicago area, claiming that they were aware that climate change is leading to heavier rainfall, but failed to prepare accordingly. The lawsuits state that nearly 200 Chicago-area communities are responsible for flood damages caused by a major rainfall in 2013. The lawsuits could foreshadow more legal wrangling over who is ultimately liable for the costs of climate change.

"Most insurers, including the reinsurance companies that bear much of the ultimate risk in the industry, have little time for the arguments heard in some right-wing circles that climate change isn't happening, and are quite comfortable with the scientific consensus that burning fossil fuels is the main culprit of global warming," reported the New York Times.

Read the full story>>

Vermont Natural Resources Council
9 Bailey Ave, Montpelier, VT 05602
Phone: 802.223.2328 | Fax: 802.223.0287 | Email: info@vnrc.org

Privacy Policy | Visit Our Website | Unsubscribe