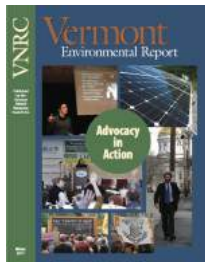




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E-News February 2017



The assault on clean air, clean water, the climate, and public health being waged by the Trump administration and GOP-led congress continues as Trump lumbers his way into his second month in office. [With more action poised to unleash serious harm](#) to our natural resources and public health the need for advocacy and activism has never been higher. And in Vermont, we still have a responsibility to address the big environmental issues facing the state, from cleaning up our waterways to fighting forest fragmentation to continuing our transition off of fossil fuels.

At VNRC, advocacy takes many forms, combining research, litigation, education, technical assistance, coalition building, and advancing responsible public policy. Having a diverse set of tools at our disposal

will be critical to confronting the problems coming out of Washington and ongoing environmental challenges here at home.

To add to the discussion of advocacy in this time of uncertainty, we are pleased to announce the arrival of our Winter edition of the *Vermont Environmental Report*, which dives deeper into the many ways VNRC uses advocacy to safeguard our natural resources and communities. Members will get a hard copy in the mail in the coming days and you can find an [online version here](#).

VNRC NEWS

Dam Safety in the Spotlight in Vermont and California



Last week, California officials [issued an evacuation order](#) to hundreds of thousands of Californians ahead of heavy storms that threatened the stability of Oroville Dam. Like California, Vermont is susceptible to the threats of aging dams languishing in our waterways, and is host to over 1,000 dams, many of which are relics from the industrial era. Currently, the state regulates its larger dams, but doesn't have adequate information about the location, ownership or condition of dams that impound less than 500,000 cubic feet of water. And while California officials were working around the clock to manage the Oroville crisis, Vermont lawmakers had been presented with an opportunity to take meaningful steps to avoid the

threats of dam failure in the state with dam safety legislation that was introduced earlier this month.

Just last week, VNRC provided testimony in support of the bill, [H.92](#), which aims at improving dam safety through registration and inspection of Vermont dams.

[Read a recent op-ed](#) penned by VNRC's Brian Shupe and the Nature Conservancy Vermont Chap Executive Director Heather Furman on the need for dam safety legislation and our partnership working on dam removals in the Lake Champlain Basin, and [sign the petition supporting dam safety legislation](#).

VNRC Weighs in on Helping Forest Landowners



VNRC continues to advocate for policies to maintain the integrity of the state's forests through enhanced local and regional planning, proactive land use regulation under Act 250, and incentives for enabling forest landowners to keep their forests intact for the next generation. On that last front, VNRC's Jamey Fidel recently provided testimony to the House Committee on Ways and Means in support of several strategies, including robust funding for existing, effective Vermont Housing and Conservation Board programs, and a group of options that would create

incentives for landowners to plan for the long-term conservation of their forestland.

[Read Jamey's testimony here.](#)

VNRC, Partners, Host Webinar on Climate Action Without Washington



Last week, nearly 1,000 Vermonters joined VNRC, Senator Bernie Sande State Senator Chris Bray and our partners to learn what we can do in Vermont to move forward on climate action without leadership in Washington, DC.

Didn't catch the webinar? Not to worry! You can read more and find a recording [here](#).

Lawmakers Working to Address Threats of Toxic Chemicals



This week, legislators are starting the critical work of addressing gaps in the laws aimed at protecting Vermonters from exposure to toxic chemicals. With one bill already introduced in the House ([H.268](#)) and another being introduced in the Senate this week, lawmakers are digging into a [number of recommendations](#) that would improve the state's ability to detect and protect against toxic chemical exposure. Improvements would lead to a reduction in the use of toxic substances like PFOA in the state, and would give Vermonters better legal tools to defend themselves and hold polluters accountable in the event of an exposure.

VNRC, Vermont Conservation Voters, Vermonters exposed to PFOA contamination, and other allies will join legislative leaders at an event at the State House this week to highlight the need for action on legislation to strengthen safeguards against toxic chemical exposure.

Read a recent commentary by VNRC's Brian Shupe on the threat of toxic chemicals and opportunities for action [here](#).

VERMONT NEWS

What Dismantling the EPA Means for Vermont



Earlier this month Associate Director of the Center for the Advancement of Public Action at Bennington College David Bond and Williams College Professor Phoebe Cohen penned a commentary describing what the Trump administration's attack on science means for the state. In it they write, "This politicking with EPA portends a world where Flint, Michigan, is not the egregious outlier but the frightening new norm."

[Read more.](#)

UVM Leading Project to Improve Electric Grid's Uptake of Renewables



The U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative has awarded UVM with \$1.8 million for research aimed at improving the electric grid's ability to accommodate power generated from renewable energy sources. UVM is one of 13 groups across the country that will be working with the SunShot Initiative to enhance real-time grid integration of renewable energy.

[Read more.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Rescheduled: Seward Weber Lecture



The Seward Weber lecture has been rescheduled to **March 16th, starting at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Church, 130 Main Street, in Montpelier.**

You're invited to join VNRC, Audubon Vermont, and the Vermont Land Trust at this year's Seward Weber lecture featuring **Tom Wessels**, faculty emeritus at Antioch University New England and author of a number of books, including *Reading the Forested Landscape*. Wessels will discuss the importance of old-growth forests as a functional part of our regional

landscape.

Opportunity to Support Renewable Energy and State's Transition off of Fossil Fuels



Vermont should be investing in our transition off of fossil fuels and advancing our goals of getting 90 percent of our energy from renewable sources by 2050 – not building more fossil fuel infrastructure. Vermont must both call for policy solutions to advance our fossil-free transition and push back against new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure. There is an opportunity to do both at an upcoming public forum on the Vermont fracked gas pipeline being held on **Wednesday, February 22, from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Montpelier High School auditorium.**

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Save the date for the 9th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival, scheduled for Thursday, **April 13th at Main Street Landing in Burlington.** Join VNRC and co-host Patagonia Burlington to watch incredible adventure and activism-based films, enjoy locally sourced food and drink, and connect with others who care about protecting our planet. All proceeds go to supporting VNRC's work safeguarding our natural resources and communities.



Finding Your Voice, Finding Your Community Writing Workshops



Two writing professors will be holding four guided writing sessions at Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library in March, where attendees will have the opportunity to explore ways to move forward in these challenging times through the writing of songs, essays, poems, opinion pieces, or any other written form that speaks to each participant. The free sessions will be held every Saturday morning from 10am-12pm starting on March 4th through the 25th and no advance registration is needed.

For more information contact [Professor Marjorie Ryerson](#).

NATIONAL NEWS

Vermont's Congressional Delegation Continues to Lead on Environmental Issues



The national League of Conservation Voters is set to release its 2016 National Environmental Scorecard, and the Vermont delegation is once again among the greenest in the country. Senator Leahy received a perfect environmental score of 100 percent and Congressman Welch received a 97 percent. While Senator Sanders missed a number of votes this year, he maintains a lifetime environmental voting record of 95 percent. While on the campaign trail, Senator Sanders' environmental leadership was on display as he highlighted the urgent need for action on climate change and our right to a clean, healthy environment at events across the country.

Stay tuned to www.vermontconservationvoters.org for the release of the LCV Scorecard and to find out more about the environmental voting records of Vermont lawmakers.

Conservative Case for a Price on Carbon Pollution



A group of senior Republicans from the Reagan and both Bush administrations, along with a former adviser on the Council of Economic Advisers, and Rob Walton, the former chairman of Wal-Mart, presented the Trump administration with a proposal to put a price on carbon pollution earlier this month. While the proposal includes some troubling provisions, like removing the Clean Power Plan and protecting fossil fuel companies from lawsuits over the damage their products have caused the environment, it marks the first time Republicans have put forth a "concrete, market-based climate solution," according to one of the paper's authors. [Click here to read the proposal.](#)

[Read more.](#)